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Some moderators of the work stress- burnout relationship

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9. Do you generally feel more satisfied when you are PERSONALLY responsible for a certain task or when you SHARE responsibility with others?

I generally feel satisfied with:
a. Tasks with personal responbility much more than with tasks with shared responsibility.
b. Tasks with personal responsibility a little more than with tasks with shared responsibility.
c. Tasks with personal responsibility and tasks with shared responsibility to the same extent.
d. Tasks with shared responsibility a little more than with tasks with personal responsibility.
e. Tasks with shared responsibility much more than with tasks with personal responsibility.

10. Do you generally feel more satisfied when your task involves CALCULATED RISK or when its accomplishment is ENSURED?

I generally feel satisfied with:
a. Tasks involving calculated risk much more than with tasks whose accomplishment is ensured.
b. Tasks involving calculated risk a little more than with tasks whose accomplishment is ensured.
c. Tasks involving calculated risk and with tasks whose accomplishment is ensured to the same extent.
d. Tasks whose accomplishment is ensured a little more than with tasks involving calculated risk.
e. Tasks whose accomplishment is ensured much more than with tasks involving calculated risk.

11. Do you generally feel more satisfied when your task requires PROBLEM-SOLVING or tasks that have to be carried out by following CLEAR instructions?

I generally feel satisfied with:
a. Tasks requiring problem-solving much more than with tasks carried out by following clear instructions.
b. Tasks requiring problem-solving a little more than with tasks carried out by following clear instructions.
c. Tasks requiring problem-solving and with tasks carried out by following clear instructions to the same extent.
d. Tasks carried out by following clear instructions a little more than with tasks requiring problem-solving.
e. Tasks carried out by following clear instructions much more than with tasks requiring problem-solving.

12. Do you generally feel more satisfied when the performance of your task might meet your NEED TO SUCCEED or when it ensures AVOIDANCE of failure?

I generally feel satisfied with tasks that:
a. Meet the need to succeed much more than with tasks that ensure avoidance of failure.
b. Meet the need to succeed a little more than with tasks that ensure avoidance of failure.
c. Meet the need to succeed and with tasks that ensure avoidance of failure to the same extent.

d. Ensure avoidance of failure a little more than with tasks that meet the need to succeed.
e. Ensure avoidance of failure much more than with tasks that meet the need to succeed.

The last few questions refer to your daily life i.e. how you act in your daily performance.

13. Do you usually undertake to perform tasks that involve UNCERTAINTY or tasks with SURE OUTCOMES?

I usually undertake to perform:
a. Tasks involving uncertainty much more than tasks with sure outcomes.
b. Tasks involving uncertainty a little more than tasks with sure outcomes.
c. Tasks involving uncertainty and tasks with sure outcomes to the same extent.
d. Tasks with sure outcomes a little more than tasks involving uncertainty.
e. Tasks with sure outcomes much more than tasks involving uncertainty.

14. Do you usually undertake to perform DIFFICULT tasks or EASY tasks?

I usually undertake to perform:
a. Difficult tasks much more than easy tasks.
b. Difficult tasks a little more than easy tasks.
c. Difficult tasks and easy tasks to the same extent.
d. Easy tasks a little more than difficult tasks.
e. Easy tasks much more than difficult tasks.

15. Do you generally undertake to perform tasks over which you are PERSONALLY responsible or tasks over which you SHARE responsibility with others?

I usually undertake to perform:
a. Tasks with personal responsibility much more than tasks with shared responsibility.
b. Tasks with personal responsibility a little more than tasks with shared responsibility.
c. Tasks with personal responsibility and tasks with shared responsibility to the same extent.
d. Tasks with shared responsibility a little more than tasks with personal responsibility.
e. Tasks with shared responsibility much more than tasks with personal responsibility.

16. Do you usually undertake to perform tasks involving CALCULATED RISK or tasks whose accomplishment is ENSURED?

I usually undertake to perform:
a. Tasks involving calculated risk much more than tasks whose accomplishment is ensured.
b. Tasks involving calculated risk a little more than tasks whose accomplishment is ensured.
c. Tasks involving calculated risk and tasks whose accomplishment is ensured to the same extent.

d. Tasks whose accomplishment is ensured a little more than tasks involving calculated risk.
e. Tasks whose accomplishment is ensured much more than tasks involving calculated risk.

17. Do you usually undertake to perform tasks whose performance requires PROBLEM-SOLVING or tasks that have to be carried out by following CLEAR instructions?

I usually undertake to perform:
a. Tasks requiring problem-solving much more than tasks carried out by following clear instructions.
b. Tasks requiring problem-solving a little more than tasks carried out by following clear instructions.
c. Tasks requiring problem-solving and tasks carried out by following clear instructions to the same extent.
d. Tasks carried out by following clear instructions a little more than tasks requiring problem-solving.
e. Tasks carried out by following clear instructions much more than tasks requiring problem-solving.

18. Do you usually undertake tasks that meet your NEED TO SUCCEED or tasks that ensure AVOIDANCE of failure?

I usually undertake to perform tasks that:
a. Meet my need to succeed much more than tasks that ensure avoidance of failure.
b. Meet my need to succeed a little more than tasks that ensure avoidance of failure.
c. Meet my need to succeed and tasks that ensure avoidance of failure to the same extent.
d. Ensure avoidance of failure a little more than tasks that meet my need to succeed.
e. Ensure avoidance of failure much more than tasks that meet my need to succeed.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR TIME AND COOPERATION

Earlier this year you participated in the first part of a survey investigating stress in MBA students. Your contribution in completing the first questionnaire is greatly appreciated - quite a few people mentioned that it was a pleasure, and thank you also for your various comments!

Being of longitudinal design, the survey is concerned with the way stress changes over a period of time, and therefore it is particularly important that people who completed the initial questionnaire now do so again. As the university has again kindly agreed to administer it for us, we hope you will feel it worth while to participate in this final questionnaire. Bear in mind that the personal information you give will be treated as strictly confidential, and that the study is being conducted independently of the Graduate School of Business.

A cross (X) is usually all that is needed. Please be sure to answer ALL the items in ALL the questionnaires, as the data they generate is inter-related. Please don't leave out any items and also don't spend time pondering unduly over any particular question.

After completion you may collect the envelope marked with your name. A re-evaluation of your current stress level and other information will be mailed to you in about six weeks' time.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR VALUABLE TIME AND PARTICIPATION.

Name .....

Dear MBA student,

Thank you for completing the second and final questionnaire; your participation will contribute to a greater understanding of work related stress issues.

With regard to the questionnaire you filled in during March of this year, bear in mind that the rating suggested by your answers to the specific stress section is only an indication of your 'stress level' at that time. In extreme cases the maximum stress experience could be rated as 200. According to the March survey the mean for your group of MBA students was ...., and your personal rating was calculated as ..... Among the many factors influencing the level are: mood state while completing the questionnaire, your level of stimulation during the MBA programme, amount of social support you receive, pressure of forthcoming assignments and exams., your coping abilities, and so on.

After the current questionnaires have been analysed you will receive a revised rating and some indication of your susceptibility to work related stress and burnout. For your interest some additional information will also be included related to personality factors conducive to the experience of stress, and some suggestions about improving one's coping strategies and dealing with the effects of stress.

Thank you again for your most valued contribution.

Name ..... November

Dear MBA student,

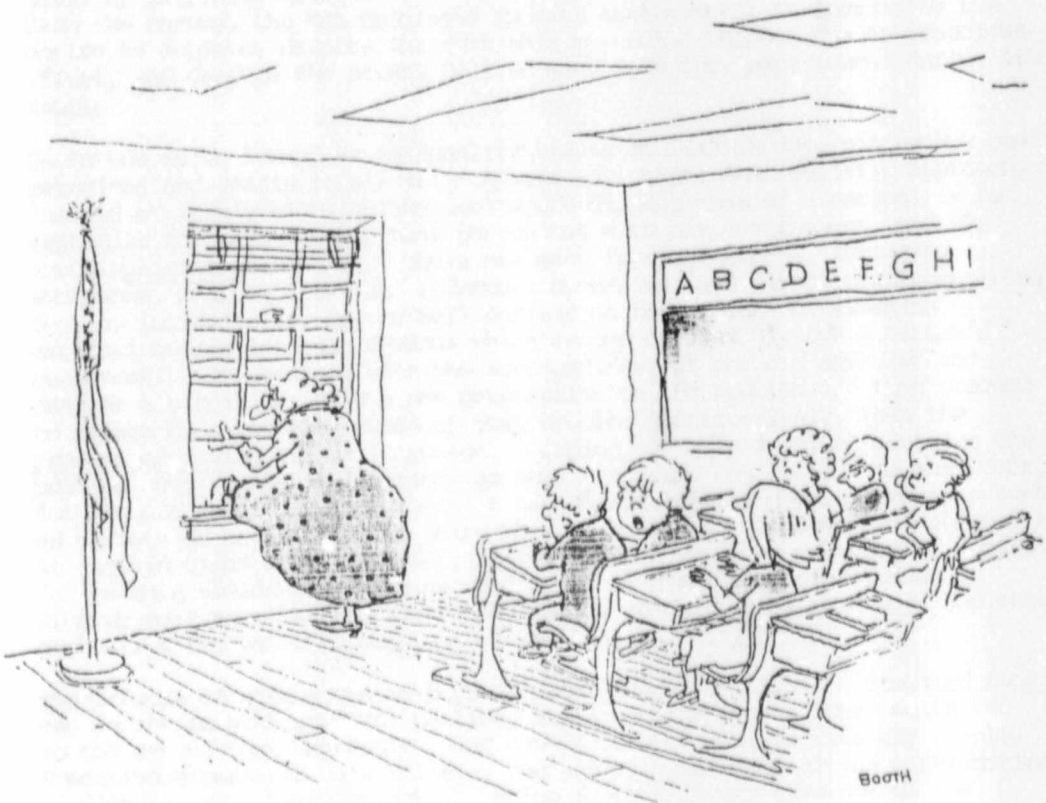
The second set of stress questionnaires you recently completed have now been analysed to provide some feedback on your joint contribution, and it seems an appropriate time to give a short overview of the study as a whole.

The research being undertaken is investigating both work-related stress and burnout, where burnout constitutes a syndrome which includes such outcomes as discouragement and apathy, constant tiredness, rigidity in thinking, sleep disorders, withdrawal from personal contact, tedium, and so on. It is particularly prevalent in situations where there is intense involvement with other people over a period of time. It has unfortunately not been possible to rate participants' susceptibility to stress and burnout sufficiently to include any definitive results in this letter, but the general trends are worth consideration. Briefly, the research hypothesis proposes that certain personality variables, for example 'hardiness' and achievement motive, have the potential to moderate the effects of stress and the burnout process.

Some interesting findings emerged. In the second questionnaire, most people calculated their own 'stress levels' way in excess of the scores actually indicated by the specific stress section. Thirty percent of you rated yourselves as feeling very stressed indeed; however, it transpired that only approximately thirty-six percent of the total sample in fact tested as experiencing marginally increased stress by the second date, which demonstrates that MBA students are probably in general far more resilient than many would give themselves credit for. The greater proportion indicated they were less stressed toward the latter part of the year.

While everyone needs a certain amount of stress in order to function, every individual also has an optimum level for doing so successfully. Work-related stress can build up to the point where it can exacerbate stress in other areas of one's personal life, but it appears that MBA students characteristically summon up superior inner resources geared to coping with the stresses and pressures specifically related to managerial work.

Personality factors do play a part, as does one's personal attitude and outlook, in the perception and handling of stress. It is generally accepted that there are those who are particularly stress prone, and everyone has heard something of the so-called Type A/Type B personalities. On the other hand, extraverts appear to handle the impact of stressful life events and change more easily than most. Less well known than the A and B types are those with a predisposition to what is termed the 'hardy' personality - these individuals typically welcome challenge and manifest a strong sense of commitment in what they are doing. Knowing why stressful events are being faced, and knowing how to face them allows people a feeling of power to cope, and consequently they can engage in behaviours that resolve stressful situations and so transform them into potentially beneficial ones. The other dimension of the 'hardy' personality is thus control. These dimensions of challenge, commitment and control act as resistance resources



"Teacher burnout."

in mediating the strain arising from precarious stress levels. It appears that the 'hardiness' variable, at least on initial scrutiny, might very well be established as a factor significantly associated with MBA's.

It has been argued that one s perception of stressful events is influenced by the sense of control one has over any particular situation, whether one is 'hardy' or not. Individuals tend to vary in the extent to which they believe 'external' (for example fate, luck, environmental, the unpredictable) agents are responsible for outcomes, and the degree to which they believe events are contingent on behaviour and that at least some control resides in the self. The survey indicated, almost invariably, that those persons with a high sense of the latter form of control over their environments experienced a decrease in stress over the year. Though this locus on control was originally believed not to fluctuate during one's life, it is now thought to be subject to reshaping as one matures.

Having looked very briefly at one or two attributes of the personality and outlook apparently associated with the MBA programme, and finding control, challenge and a sense of power (compared with powerlessness to act, and a sense of alienation) to be significant, it was not surprising to find the level of intrinsic motivation among the participants also highly appropriate. From the survey, the MBA programme appears instrumental in increasing the motive to achieve, despite the fact this may not have been due to conscious effort, and despite the stress toll so many felt they experienced during its course.

Up to now we've looked at personality traits as perhaps determining how one perceives and reacts to stress. A more insightful and realistic approach, instead of merely highlighting traits and dispositions of a person, is to emphasize the relationship that person has with his environment, and the actual process of coping. There are many forms of coping, including avoidance, magical thinking, information-seeking, and direct problem-solving. Coping, incidentally, may be well defined as the process of managing external and/or internal demands which exceed or severely tax a person's resources. In reacting with the surroundings, if one can appraise and analyse a situation, gain a new perspective on the problem and then proceed to manage or alter the source of that problem constructively, then the process of coping is set in motion. Coping not only involves managing the problem, but regulating emotions as well - the one can facilitate the other, for example where a person feels it necessary to first control emotions such as anxiety or anger prior to being able to engage in problem-solving activity. At certain times it is necessary to rely more heavily on one form of coping, for example avoidant strategies, and at other times on another, such as problem-solving. As the situation changes so does one's strategy, and this emphasizes the value of constant reappraisal.

The effects of stress can be physiological and/or emotional; combined they can result in both physical decline, and a decline in emotional wellbeing to the extent that depression, and even a loss of will to live may result. Executive stress can be a killer - one has only to think of the contribution of diet to, say, heart attacks. White South Africans have one of the highest coronary heart disease mortality rates in the world, through all age groups, and it is continuing to rise. Life style and diet often lie at the root of the problem, while in the work area, excessively high responsibility

Health

Health is the most important thing . . .



"I've known that all my life. I'm using it to cure a craving for alcohol."

for others, work overload and shortage of quality management all contribute. Add to this the current economic climate, racial tensions and political pressures, and an inadequately educated labour force often aspiring to different cultural values!

How do we cope? The answer has to lie in individual choice. There are countless suggestions on ways to alleviate all types of stress, ranging through exercise, workshops, therapy, hobbies, redefining your needs and goals in life, time management, and so on. Common relaxation techniques alone include breathing, progressive relaxation, self hypnosis, meditation, yoga, massage and biofeedback. One well known businesswoman displays a card prominently on her desk which reads "RELAX - it pays".

But perhaps one of the best strategies to ward off the debilitating effects of stress lies in endeavouring to maintain a sense of good balance throughout all spheres of our lives. This means we should enjoy involvement and satisfaction in each of the social, spiritual, family, cultural, financial and work areas, or at least bear the principle in mind as worth striving for.

Attached, for your interest, is a checklist to assess your coping ability. It is extracted from the Addison-Wesley series on occupational stress, titled WORK STRESS by Alan A. McLean, M.D., published in 1979, and forms part of the chapter 'A Method of Self-Assessment'.

With every good wish for your future business success, and thank you once again for your valued contribution.



"It's the only time Fred ever really relaxes."

THE COPING CHECKLIST

(Alan A. McLean: WORK STRESS, 1979, Addison-Wesley Publishing)

The Coping Checklist is designed to provide a very rough and superficial approximation of how well you are now coping with your job in comparison with the idealized model that I will discuss shortly.

To what extent does each of the following fit as a description of you? (Circle one number in each line across:)

		Very true	Quite true	Some-what true	Not very true	Not at all true
1	I "roll with the punches" when problems come up.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I spend almost all of my time thinking about my work.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I treat other people as individuals and care about their feelings and opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I recognize and accept my own limitations and assets.	1	2	3	4	5
5	There are quite a few people I could describe as "good friends."	1	2	3	4	5
6	I enjoy using my skills and abilities both on and off the job.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I get bored easily.	5	4	3	2	1
8	I enjoy meeting and talking with people who have different ways of thinking about the world.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Often in my job I "bite off more than I can chew."	5	4	3	2	1
10	I'm usually very active on weekends with projects or recreation.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I prefer working with people who are very much like myself.	5	4	3	2	1
12	I work primarily because I have to survive, and not necessarily because I enjoy what I do.	5	4	3	2	1
13	I believe I have a realistic picture of my personal strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	5
14	Often I get into arguments with people who don't think my way.	5	4	3	2	1
15	Often I have trouble getting much done on my job.	5	4	3	2	1
16	I'm interested in a lot of different topics.	1	2	3	4	5

		Very true	Quite true	Some-what true	Not very true	Not at all true
17	I get upset when things don't go my way.	5	4	3	2	1
18	Often I'm not sure how I stand on a controversial topic.	5	4	3	2	1
19	I'm usually able to find a way around anything which blocks me from an important goal.	1	2	3	4	5
20	I often disagree with my boss or others at work.	5	4	3	2	1

Scoring Directions

Add together the numbers you circled for the four questions contained in each of the five coping scales.

Coping scale	Add together your responses to these questions	Your score (write in)
Knows self	4, 9, 13, 18	.....
Many interests	2, 5, 7, 16	.....
Variety of reactions	1, 11, 17, 19	.....
Accepts other's values	3, 8, 14, 20	.....
Active and productive	6, 10, 12, 15	.....

Then, add the five scores together for your overall total score: .....

Scores on each of the five areas can vary between 5 and 20. Scores of 12 or above perhaps suggest that it might be useful to direct more attention to the area.

The overall total score can range between 20 and 100. Scores of 60 or more may suggest some general difficulty in coping on the dimensions covered.

This checklist is a little more serious than the usual game of twenty questions. Note that your response to each question will range from 1 to 5 (from "very true" to "not at all true"). You will find the instructions for scoring below the questions. After you have completed responding to the twenty items and completed tallying your score, you will arrive at a single numerical coefficient for coping. If it is very high, then you may have some areas of concern; if it is low, you can be fairly well assured that your response to your job situation - the way you are coping with it - is really quite good.

Please keep in mind that nobody measures up ideally; nobody is going to get a score of twenty.

HEALTHY COPING AT WORK

Now look at what would be considered by many to be a model of an ideally successful person and relate it to the Coping Checklist. It has five parts and is really a definition of successful adaptation. First, the truly successful and healthy person is one who really knows himself or herself at all levels and who understands and accepts his or her own strengths and own weaknesses. This doesn't mean that such a person lies back acceptingly and says, "Okay, I'm weak in this area; so what!" But he or she knows himself or herself well enough to know those personality factors that can't be changed and those skills - social and professional - on which to capitalize.

Second, such a person is one who, despite stereotypes to the contrary, has developed a lot of interests outside the world of work. He or she has a variety of satisfactions in life and does not get all his or her satisfaction from the job. This person has irons in many fires and these interests (as well as those relating to family and business) are regularly pursued.

Third, such a person is one who doesn't always react in the same way to factors that he or she finds stressful. The person who copes successfully doesn't always develop a headache when angry with the boss or always get depressed when faced with an apparently minor threat. Such a person doesn't always become either hyperactive or frozen by incapacity under stressful circumstances. And he or she can bounce back fairly quickly from stress reactions.

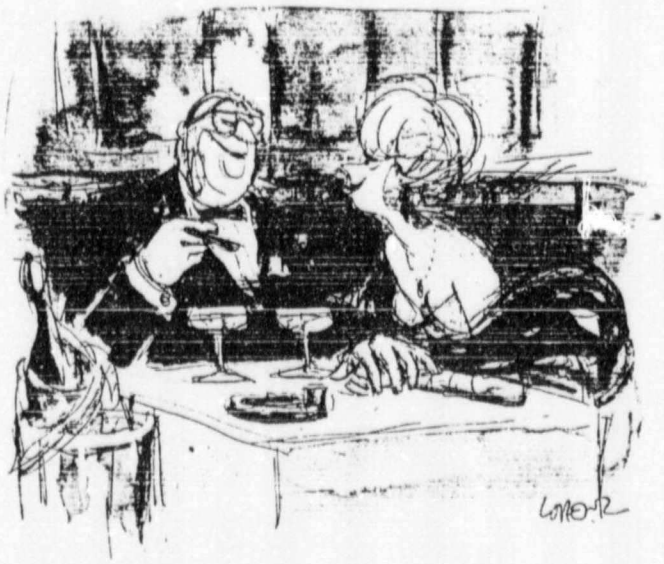
Fourth, such a person acknowledges that others have different value systems, different ways of doing things, and tends to accept this as a fact of life without attempting to build others over in either his or her own image.

Fifth, he or she is active and productive at work, without sacrificing similar activity in the community and in the home.

To summarize, a five-point highly idealized model of the successful person coping very well is a person who knows himself or herself, who does not always react the same way, who recognizes that others have different value systems and who doesn't try to change them, and finally, who is active and productive.

This definition gives us a goal. Of course, no one measures up fully in all five areas or even in most of them. But it is a model, and just as we use models in developing other behavior, so too we can use models such as this in trying to establish new coping techniques or to modify some of the ways we now cope.

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"I neither sow nor reap, Miss Conyer — I just rake it in."



"We don't have a retirement plan
Nobody lasts that long."

APPENDIX B

Findings related to demographic data

APPENDIX B

A comprehensive description of the subject sample derived from demographic data was included in the Methodology. However, additional data has made it possible to derive a profile of the typical MBA participant at Time 2, with regard to trends concerning the MBA Programme. These developed over the research period of the present study. The data was collected in order to note extraneous factors which might contribute to subjects' experience of stress. Since none of the information was directly relevant to the research hypotheses, it was not included in the main body of results.

At Time 2, taking only those subjects who answered both questionnaires (N = 53), various trends were evidenced concerning variables which may be classed as stressor or outcome variables of stress. However, since the sample size was small these trends cannot be conclusively regarded as significant.

FIGURES 8 to 12 depict bar graphs related to subjects' perceptions regarding adequacy of financial support, overall health, rewards in the form of sense of personal accomplishment, satisfaction with Programme feedback, and personal estimates of coping ability.

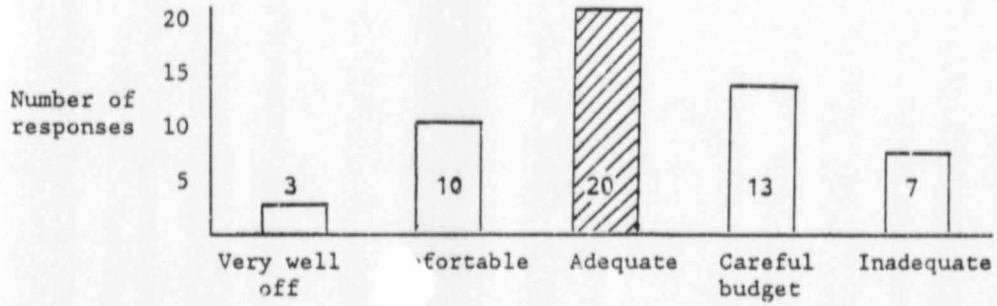


FIGURE 8: Response to question "Do you have adequate financial support during the MBA course?" (N = 53)

8 Respondents found it slightly less easy to manage financially at Time 2 than previously, whereas 14 found that the situation had eased slightly.

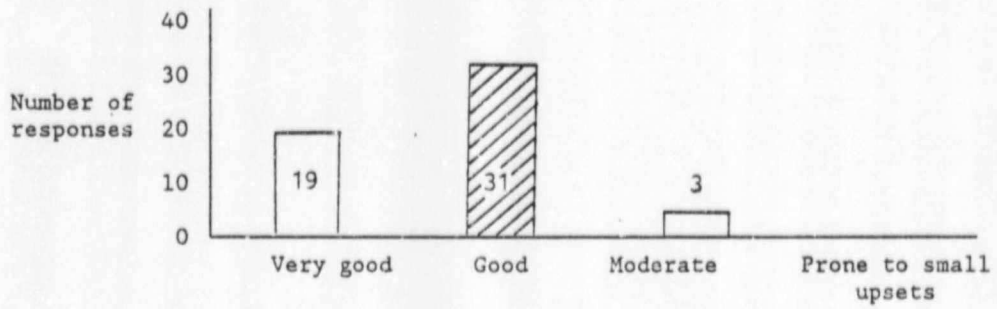


FIGURE 9: Response to question "How do you rate your overall health?" (N = 53)

11 Subjects estimated that their health had improved by Time 2, whereas 9 detected a deterioration.

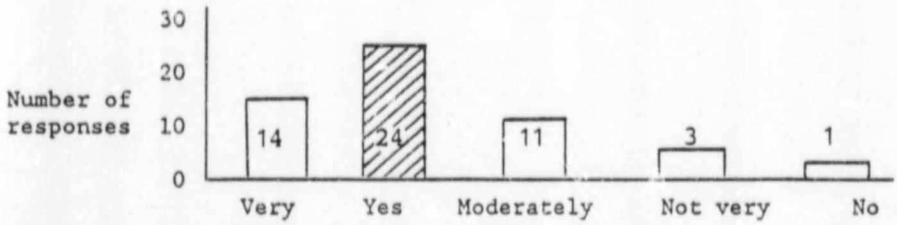


FIGURE 10: Response to question "Are you finding the MBA rewarding from a personal accomplishment point of view?" (N = 53)

19 subjects found the course more rewarding by Time 2, and of these participants 6 were registered at Johannesburg, and 13 at Cape Town. Of the 16 subjects who found it less rewarding by Time 2, 12 were registered at Johannesburg, and 4 at Cape Town. These results indicate that there was a greater overall rise in feelings of personal accomplishment at the Cape Town business school.

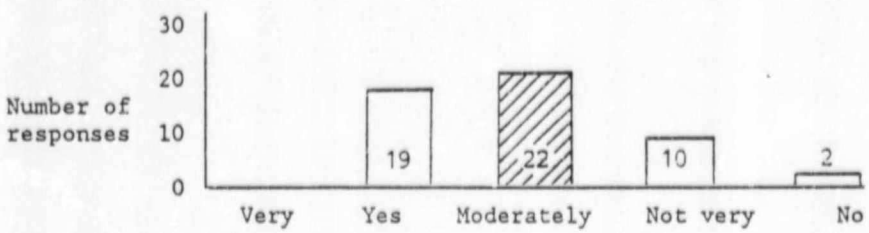


FIGURE 11: Response to question "Are you satisfied with the level of feedback on your work?" (N = 53)

With regard to feedback, 19 indicated that it had improved by Time 2 (Johannesburg = 8; Cape Town = 11) where 15 felt it had deteriorated (Johannesburg = 8; Cape town = 7).

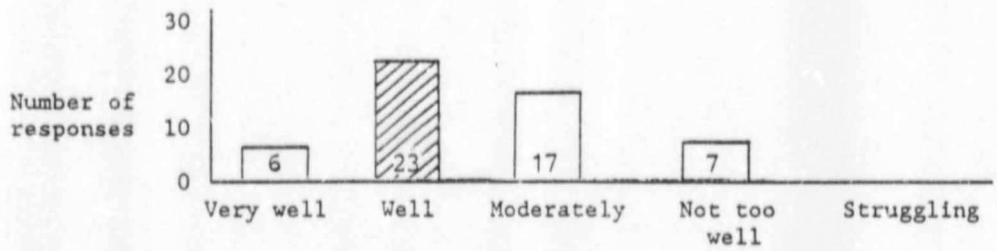


FIGURE 12: Response to question "Approximately, how do you feel you are coping/have coped?" (N = 53)

19 Subjects felt they had coped better by Time 2 (Johannesburg = 5; Cape Town = 14) whereas 8 felt they had coped less well (Johannesburg = 4; Cape town = 4).

There was a marginal preference by participants with regard to the Cape Town Graduate School of Business in terms of finding the MBA Programme promoted a sense of personal accomplishment and provided more satisfactory feedback. It is possible that this may have contributed to the heightened sense of coping adjustment.

All the results should be interpreted with caution for a number of reasons: the research represented a pilot study; the sample was too small to allow for generalisations to be made; the trends may be purely coincidental despite careful timing of questionnaire administration. A future study investigating stress and burnout which utilizes a longitudinal design could include such demographic variables for consideration.

APPENDIX C

Advertisements for the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand Graduate Schools of Business

IN ONE YEAR THE UCT MBA CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

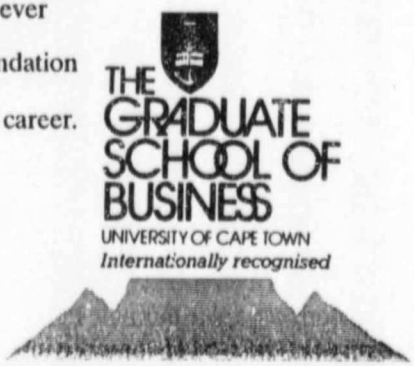
The University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business has the only 1-year MBA programme in the country.

If you are chosen to participate in the Graduate School of Business MBA program me every moment on the course will be used productively. The quality of the lecturers and the programme content is of the highest calibre and, because of this, the one year of study will be the most intensive and comprehensive learning experience you may ever have.

That one very full year will provide you with a solid foundation in business management and all its facets and an internationally recognised degree that will give you an edg in building a lifetime career.

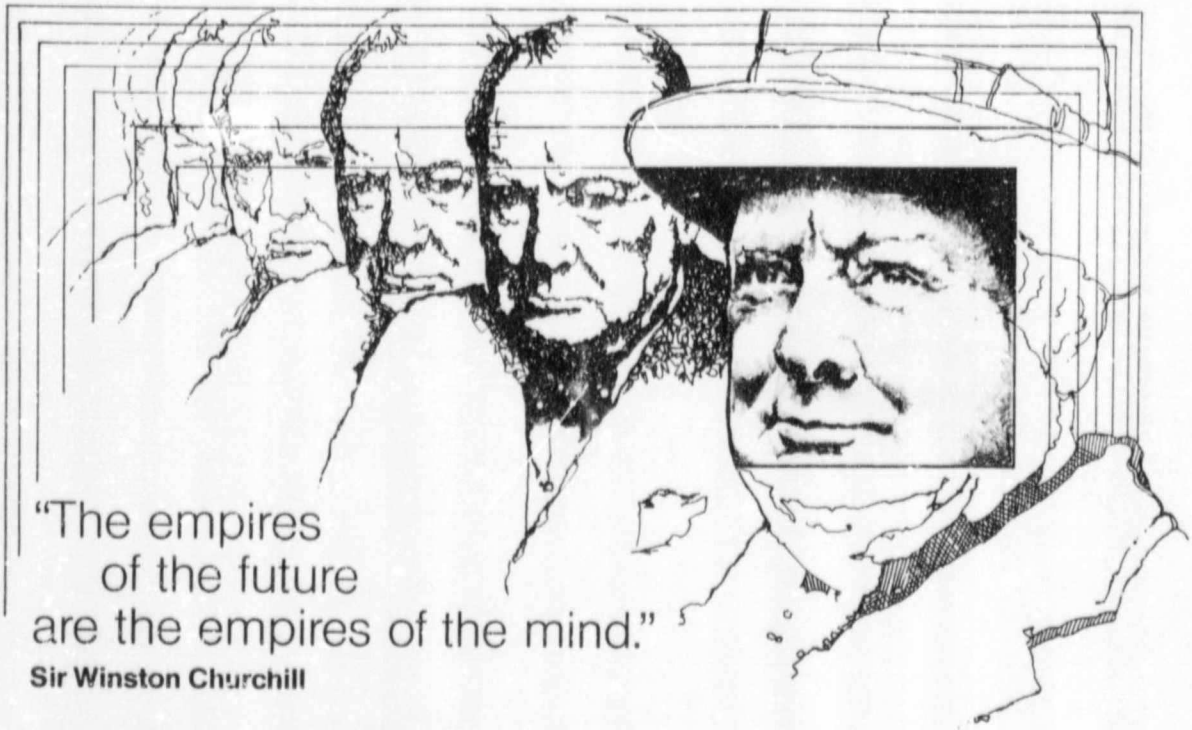
Match your ambition with your ability.

For further details, please write to or phone:
MBA Administration
Graduate School of Business
University of Cape Town
Private Bag, Rondebosch 7700
Tel. (021) 650-3000



WE TAKE THE BEST AND MAKE THEM BETTER.

Bates Wells USP Agency 11937CT/E



Wits MBA. Turning your future into reality.

The future lies not with those who dream about it but with those who reach out and take it. And those who can experience a Wits MBA on the way will be the leaders of the future.

The first challenge is to make it onto the programme. An academic or professional qualification, relevant business experience, clear career plans and expectations as well as a commitment to self development are vital attributes for acceptance. The fact that only one in four candidates meets all our entrance requirements, demonstrates our continuing pledge to maintaining our standards of academic and professional excellence.

The programme itself is demanding. The pressure relentless. But the lessons learned both inside and outside the classroom ultimately equip our graduates with the means to deal effectively with the realities of business. And to meet the challenges of the future.

Which is why WBS maintains an ongoing involvement with the commercial centre of South Africa – Johannesburg. Faculty and students interact continually with corporate leaders as an integral part of the MBA programme. After all, our students are the leaders of the future.

Another unique aspect of the Wits MBA is its flexibility. For those who cannot study full-time for seventeen months, we offer a part-time programme over three years. Or you have the option of studying full-time for ten months and then converting to part-time study.

To turn your future into reality, contact the MBA Faculty Office for further details on (011) 643-6641. Applications close 31st August 1988.

Academic and Professional Excellence

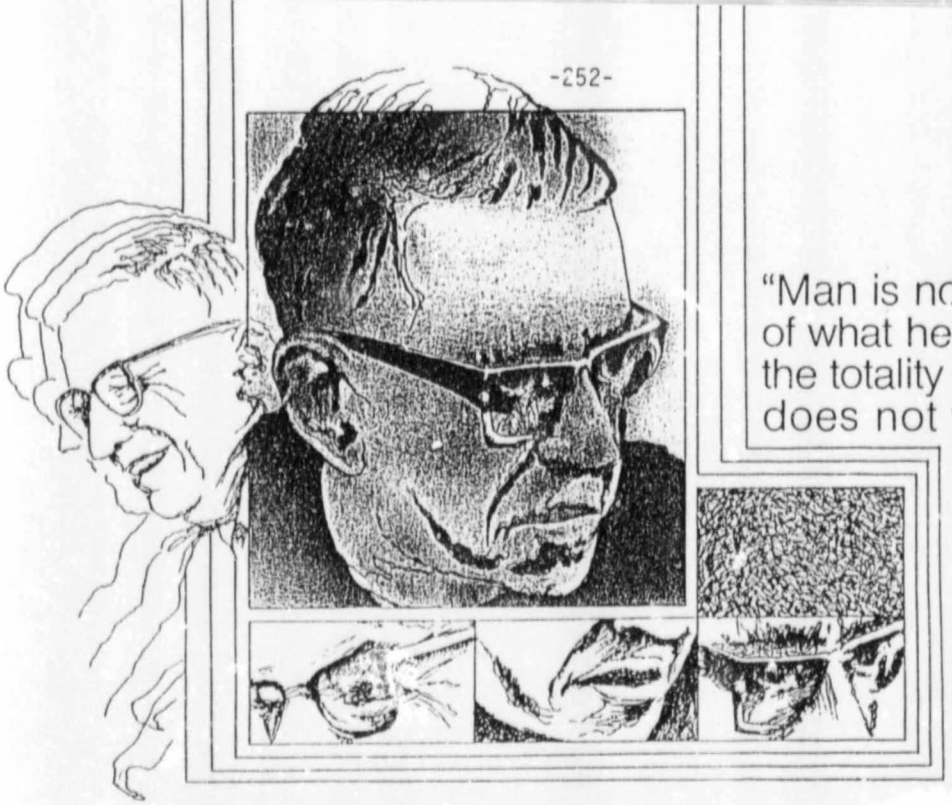
WBS

Wits Business School

PO Box 98
Wits, 2050 Tel (011) 643-6641
The Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits MBA

1522



"Man is not the sum of what he has, but the totality of what he does not yet have"

Jean Paul Sartre

Wits MBA. Because you know the extent of your vision.

You know that you have set your sights high. You realise that your goals lie far beyond the mediocre.

That's why you are not considering any MBA, but a Wits MBA.

For you are fully aware that the sum total of a Wits MBA is not only greater than the sum of its parts, but is also held in the greatest esteem. Now – as it will be in the future.

Because at WBS, we pre-empt the future. Carefully. By stimulating an insight into future business matters in our MBA students.

That's why an integral part of the Wits MBA programme is continuous interaction between leaders from the most vigorous business centre in SA, Johannesburg, our large full-time staff and our MBA students.

And that is why what's happening elsewhere in the business world – and what's likely to happen – is particularly important.

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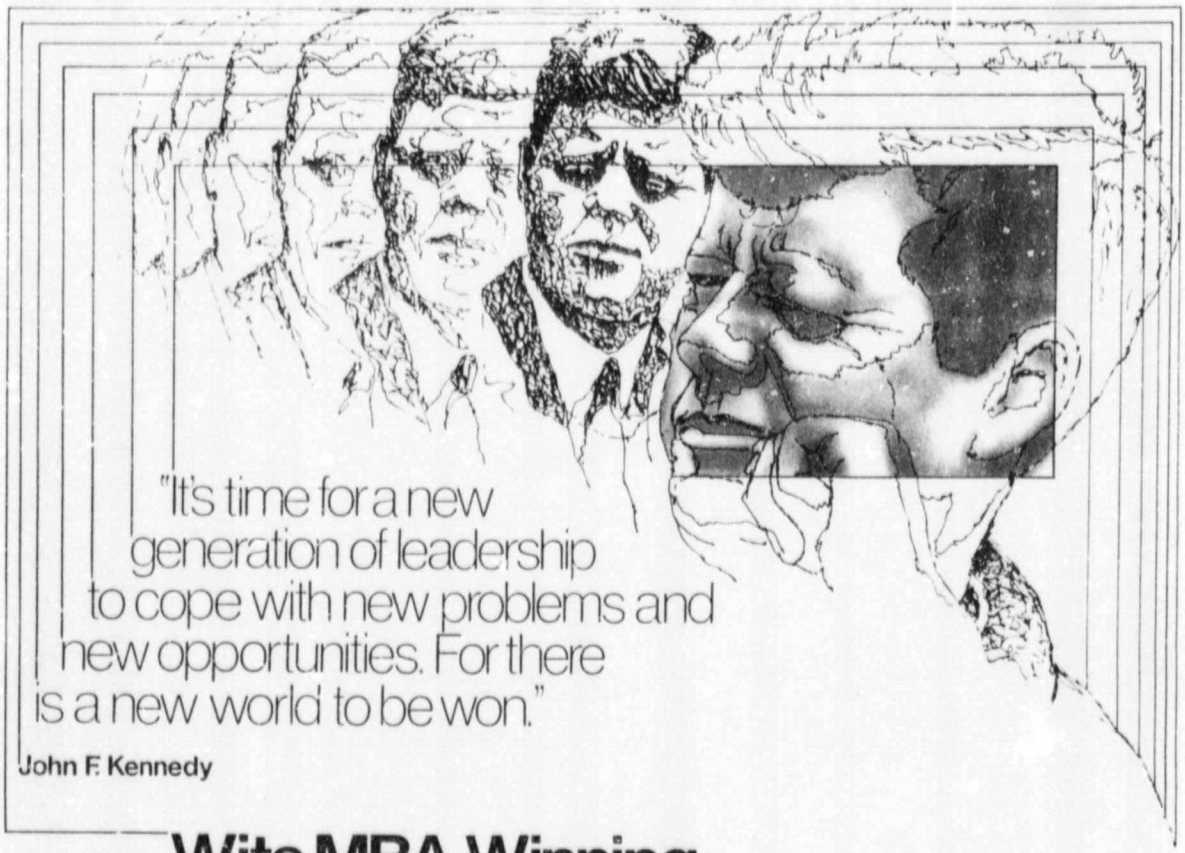
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