Boost for serial entrepreneur

MBA programme offered by East Asia Institute of Management helps Ms Pamela Orlanda Ardana hone her business skills

Aaron Tan

HAVING set up two companies — one in the midst of expansion — within a year, Ms Pamela Orlanda Ardana is the envy of many young entrepreneurs.

After less than six months in business, her bag retail company, No Faux Official, had already appointed retail representatives in Hong Kong, China, Indonesia and Thailand.

Ms Ardana also plans to expand the company's footprint in Middle Eastern countries such as Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.

"It wasn’t easy starting my own business from scratch," Ms Ardana says. "It takes a lot of courage, meticulous planning and a good strategy to kickstart a business that utilises low capital and high bottom line profitability."

Deeper skills needed

While those business skills helped Ms Ardana, 26, to kick off her businesses, she realised she had to acquire deeper skills to take her ventures to the next level.

That was why she decided to enrol in a Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme awarded by Edinburgh Business School (EBS) at Heriot-Watt University in Scotland.

Offered through the East Asia Institute of Management (EASB), the MBA programme prepares students for professional and business life and honed critical thinking skills and entrepreneurship to help students excel at a managerial level.

"I have gathered a lot of valuable lessons and insights from EBS. The lecturers here are practitioners and professionals with a lot of experience to be shared with the students," Ms Ardana says.

"through the programme, I learnt the importance of business negotiation. "We all negotiate on a daily basis. On a personal level, we negotiate with friends, family, landlords, car sellers and employers, among others," Ms Ardana says.

"Negotiation is also the key to business success. No business can survive without profitable contracts. Within a company, negotiation skills can lead to your career advancement and business development."

But to excel in negotiation is not easy, Ms Ardana says. "We all need to know what motivates others and develop a specific strategy catered to different situations that will help us close a deal in a win-win situation."

Ms Ardana says the negotiation module in the programme had provided her with a thorough understanding of the science and practice of negotiation.

"This module also provided me with effective negotiation skills, improved my ability to analyse a problem and determine the interest and issues of each party to reach solutions or goals," she adds.

Fear of accounting

The lecturers at EASB also helped Ms Ardana overcome her fear of accounting. "I was afraid of accounting because I thought it was a very complicated and difficult module. However, the way the lecturer taught me in my EBS MBA programme gave me a new understanding of the subject."

"The module was very interesting and not too difficult to understand. My professor taught the students in an interesting yet intensive way that utilised problem-based solving and other techniques so the students wholly understood the module," she says.

Mr Ardana eventually scored an A grade in accounting, which has helped her tremendously in her business.

Although she has not completed the MBA programme, she has received some job offers from multinational companies in Singapore. Ms Ardana, who will graduate at the end of the year, declined the offers, as she wanted to focus on growing her other fledgling business she is working on with her postgraduate classmates.

"I am entering the coffee industry, with supplies from Indonesia, which produces one of the highest quality coffees in the world," she says, adding that her company, Luwak Coffee Global, will look to source the coffee in China through contacts she had made in the programme.

"I am entering a lot of contacts from my EBS MBA programme. We are business-minded people and share the same interests. This postgraduate degree has helped to build up my network worldwide," she says.