

BUSINESS EDUCATION

BECOMING A COMPLETE EXECUTIVE

Learning to express emotion, develop self-awareness and contribute to the community is all in a day's work for the students of the John Molson EMBA program at Concordia University

Jordan LeBel was sitting in his office when he heard the shouting. He rushed out to find students of the Executive MBA program at Concordia University's John Molson School of Business (JMSB) in Montreal doing theatre exercises as part of Orientation Week. In one, they learned how to express emotions. In another they learned how to "own" a room when giving a presentation. In a third, they learned what their body language tells others.

"We brought in experts with opera, theatre and circus training to facilitate this special session," Professor LeBel, the director of the school's next-generation EMBA program, explains. "You should have heard what I heard. I raced to the dining room. I thought, 'that's it, my job's going down the tubes.' I get in there and the students are all in their sweatpants and they're doing an exercise of expressing and reading emotions, something many business people don't do well. And the feedback we got is that they definitely appreciated and valued the opportunity."

It was all aimed at breaking out of the box of management studies, and developing what JMSB calls a "complete executive" — a well-rounded, healthy, self-aware leader who contributes not only to a profitable business but to a thriving community and sustainable environment.

"Why does there have to be a box?" Professor LeBel asks. "Management students, and I guess students in every discipline — fine arts, design, engineering — are often developed to think a certain way. By virtue of self-selecting into that field, and then being trained in its ethos, they put themselves within its box and don't even realize it. They see maybe 25, 30 per cent of what's on the radar screen. We help them develop a broader field of vision."

Thus, the mortar of the school's EMBA program is as important as the bricks, Professor LeBel says. The bricks are the academics, and these courses form a solid foundation. The curriculum is arranged in four themed terms: Mastering the Fundamentals, Integrating



Andrew Molson on executive leadership: "You are there to serve and the emphasis is on serving." Mr. Molson serves as a "champion" for Executive MBA students at the John Molson School of Business, class of 2016

Globally, Thinking Outside the Box and Leading Change. Each term is capped by an intensely practical program — a live case study, a week-long foreign business trip (the current class will head to Chile), a pitch to venture capitalists, a launch of a business venture with a social entrepreneurship component.

The mortar, pulling everything together, is made up of three special features. The **Healthy Executive** program focuses on nutrition, physical fitness and mental well-being, and involves individual testing and professional advice from certified exercise physiologists and registered dietitians at the PERFORM Centre, a state-of-the-art clinical research and fitness facility at Concordia.

As part of the **LEAD Coaching** component, a master coach is assigned to every four or five students to assist them

in defining and reaching their personal and business goals. As part of this component, students take a battery of self-assessment tests to develop self-awareness. And in **Executive Connects**, the students develop networking skills; meet with and listen to speakers who have shaped the business community in Montreal and beyond; and meet periodically with their "champion." For the class of 2016, the champion is Andrew Molson, the 7th-generation member of the family whose 18th-century founder provides the name of the school.

Mr. Molson, the chairman of Res Publica Consulting Group Inc., which owns National Public Relations and Cohn and Wolfe Canada, and vice-chairman of Molson Coors brewing company, said he shares the school's view of the importance of self-awareness in an executive.

"I look at a leader as being a servant, a servant-leader. A servant to the institution that has decided that this person would be the leader. And in serving this institution, the executive has to really know herself or himself well in order to better serve others."

The school's target audience is "today's and tomorrow's movers and shakers," Professor LeBel says. They're slightly younger than those in most other executive MBA programs; some students are as young as 30. The program encourages women, entrepreneurs and managers with experience and ambition, and its structure — classes one day a week (two Fridays and two Saturdays a month) over a 20-month period — makes it accessible for those balancing busy schedules of work and family.

Andrea Limbardi, a vice-

president at a large national retailer who is in her mid-30s, hopes to be a chief executive officer someday. She said she chose the program because it has "a holistic approach to preparing executive leaders for the future and not just for today." The emphasis on physical and mental well-being was important to her, she said, to "make sure we're ready to take on and live with the pressures that will only compound as we become more globalized and technologically advanced."

Professor LeBel says the program is "a different kind of EMBA that's not just about making more money for yourself, but about improving your own conditions and those of people and communities around you, true to the ethics of John Molson, who invested not just in people and enterprises but in society."

JUST TALKING

The Servant-Leader

Being comfortable with oneself is an important step to becoming a visionary leader who serves others, business executive Andrew Molson and Concordia University academic Jordan LeBel say

Q: What does being a complete executive mean to you?

Andrew: I look at a leader as being a servant, a servant-leader. A servant to the institution that has decided that this person would be the leader. And in serving this institution, the executive has to really know herself or himself well in order to better serve others. A leader or key executive needs to have emotional intelligence, needs to be able to listen, needs to be able to exercise judgment swiftly, often in very tense situations. From a health perspective, they need to be quite balanced in order to deal with certain situations when they heat up.

Q: In your career, what was a key challenge as you developed as an executive?

Andrew: Being comfortable with myself. Completely understanding my strengths and my weaknesses. Feeling comfortable about who I am and what I'm doing. It's only through knowing who I am that I can be of better service to others. It goes back to the concept of learning to be a servant-leader. You are there to serve and the emphasis is on serving; it is not on making more money and thinking about yourself and self-interest. So you can exercise your judgment, make your decisions in very intense situations in a straightforward manner where you're thinking about the company, and the importance of the strategy for that company.

Q: What could you advise young people about intense moments?

Andrew: I have been in very stressful situations. I believe that many of the people in our class of 2016 have also been in similarly difficult and demanding situations. I think you learn from such situations. The more you learn, the better prepared you are to handle these situations. If you can find a way to keep your head above the trees and learn to look at the entire forest, and take yourself away from the situation that you're in, it can be very beneficial. Learn to look at crises as opportunities in disguise.

Andrew Molson, a seventh-generation member of the Molson brewing family, is a partner and chairman of Res Publica Consulting Group Inc., and vice-chairman of Molson Coors brewing company. Mr. Molson became a member of the Quebec Bar in 1995 after studying law at Laval University in Quebec City. He holds a bachelor of arts degree from Princeton University and a masters of science in corporate governance and ethics from University of London (Birkbeck College). He serves on several boards of directors, including boards of non-profit organizations. He is serving as champion for the Executive MBA class of 2016 at Concordia University's John Molson School of Business, thus continuing his family's longstanding relationship with Concordia University.



Q: What is your school's vision of a complete executive?

Jordan: A complete executive is someone who looks beyond the traditional sphere of business experiences and the surface appearance of things, someone who understands the role of good health and peak performance, who seeks to learn from and develop others. In other words, someone who doesn't just think business in the old profit and loss way. Let's have a broader vision and a more complete one.

Q: How will that broader vision help someone be a better businessperson?

Jordan: A broader vision allows you to tap into the insights of other fields and collaborate with other disciplines to develop more powerful solutions. Look at some of the developments in energy — engineers working with designers and architects, with anthropologists, with people who know nothing about energy. To dance that pas de deux across disciplines and sectors you need to keep an open mind and have a broad field of vision.

Q: Why the focus on physical and mental well-being?

Jordan: If you want to achieve and maintain a level of peak performance, you can't keep taxing your body, or even your mental capacity. Successful leadership over time requires health—both physical and mental—as well as strength and stamina. And many high performing executives tend to be Type A and don't pick up on the signs their body sends them — slow down, I'm running out of fuel here. It's not just about managing one's time, it's also about managing one's energy.

Q: Tell me about having Andrew Molson as champion for the students.

Jordan: I think it is incredibly fitting that he is our inaugural champion. You talk to Andrew and find out how incredibly committed he is with volunteer causes and how involved he is. These are the types of things you learn best in candid conversations — things you can't find in any management textbook. These lessons stick with you, especially when shared by leaders like Andrew Molson.

Jordan LeBel, Ph.D., is director of the Executive MBA program at Concordia University's John Molson School of Business, where he is also the director of the Luc Beauregard Centre of Excellence in Communications Research and a professor of Marketing. He was an early adopter of online teaching technologies more than 10 years ago. He began working in professional kitchens at the age of 12, and is recognized as a world expert on chocolate. He is a recipient of the 3M National Teaching Fellowship.

