

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."