

Case Study

MA Leadership The Henley Leadership Programme



Oliver Lester
Construction Manager,
Willmott Dixon
MA Leadership
scholarship winner

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Oliver, how did you come to Henley Business School and what were the highlights for you?

'I was originally sent on the Leadership Programme by my company, which invests heavily in the training of its people. Several of my peers had spoken highly of Henley, and Willmott Dixon has used it for a number of years to develop the potential of its people as future leaders of the business. So when I was offered the opportunity, I grabbed the chance.

At the time, I felt that I needed a greater sense of self-awareness, and whilst I felt that I understood the business well, I wanted to address the issues with a more professional, informed approach.

The programme was fantastic, especially the introduction to coaching, and I came away with a taste to do more. Meeting people from different backgrounds and industries adds a unique dynamic, and I learned a lot from the different styles. Back at work, it made me more confident.

Even away from the business, I think I have become more measured, particularly in my interpersonal skills. Before, I tended to talk first and think afterwards! Now I've realised that there's no big rush, and I focus more on considering the wider outcomes of decisions made.

Our business has been through quite a transformation recently and I feel better equipped to deal with that. We have a renewed focus on learning and leading, and I feel very comfortable that I can play a big role in the future.

I didn't think that I was doing badly before, but everyone around me seems much happier now.'

You've now been awarded a scholarship to do the The MA Leadership Programme. How did that come about?

'By the time I had completed the original Leadership Programme, I'd built a really good network of contacts amongst the lecturers and the other people in my cohort, and I was using LinkedIn to build it up further.

One day, I was browsing on LinkedIn and saw an advertisement for the Henley scholarship. If nothing else, I thought couldn't hurt to apply it would be a talking point at my next appraisal, so I duly submitted a 500-word opinion piece on the subject of management and leadership, plus 100 words on why I thought I would benefit from the scholarship. There was also the incentive that all applicants receive a discount on the MA, but I never imagined that I'd actually win.

Having found out that my submission had been successful, I realised that everything was about to change, and this would require a big commitment, but I was excited by the challenge, and so far, it has been really energising. I'm growing in confidence, and becoming ever more ambitious. Previously, it was all about projects; now, it's moving towards people and strategy.'

So what advice would you give to anyone considering these programmes at Henley?

'The surroundings at Greenlands undoubtedly make it special, and the people are so welcoming and inclusive. Having the Academic Resource Centre (ARC) at your fingertips is excellent, and the quality of the trainers is second to none. They really are titans of the industry, and it's a privilege to work with them, so if you ever had the chance, why wouldn't you go?'