"The MBA Helps Me to Broaden My View"

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Johann Plenge, Legal Counsel of the recently promoted RB Leipzig soccer team, has been enrolled in the part-time MBA program of HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management since spring 2016. In this interview, the 31-year-old talks about the program, HHL's network as well as the balance between work, university and free time.

How do you as a lawyer benefit from the MBA program?

I work closely with external partners in the field of law and internally with my colleagues at RB Leipzig in sports-related matters. Against this background, the MBA allows me to broaden my view. Thanks to the MBA, I can tackle and solve problems with people outside my own field of expertise. Where else would you have the opportunity to work on a case study together with an engineer as well as marketing and finance experts? I find this incredibly refreshing since I can take a page out of their books. The theoretical MBA knowledge is also relevant to me as a corporate lawyer that often works as a service provider for specific departments within the company. What exactly is a marketing plan? How do I read a profit and loss statement? The part-time MBA is a valuable addition to what I experience as part of everyday business at RB Leipzig regarding these and other questions.

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Johann Plenge, 31, has witnessed the dynamics at RB Leipzig for almost seven years now. Plenge, who was born in Bremen, initially completed an internship in the marketing department of the soccer club. Later, he permanently joined the marketing department and then changed into finance and accounting. Johann Plenge comes from a legal background, having completed his first state exam in law in Göttingen, and has strong interest in licensing issues and contracting. He moved to Leipzig where he completed the second state exam in law. While serving his legal clerkship from 2011 to 2013, he simultaneously worked at RB Leipzig. On December 1, 2013, Johann Plenge was appointed Legal Counsel at RB Leipzig. His broad scope of work includes labor law with a special focus on the players but also company and tax law, sponsoring and other marketing contracts as well as the field of licensing and sports law.
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How would you rate the network of HHL and your class?

Pharmaceutics, energy sector or automotive industry - our class is very diverse with people from all major industries. We are constantly involved in a beneficial exchange during group work on the weekend or during the week, in the breaks or in our free time. This kind of contact we would not necessarily experience on the job. The internationality of the MBA class gives the program a very interesting global touch. I always find it exciting to see how different people work with each other. There are certainly some strong characters in the MBA class - people who have a clear idea about how things are supposed to go in their respective companies. To be able to witness how the group members adjust to each other and eventually come up with an excellent result is very educational and teaches you a lot about how people deal and interact with each other. You also learn to step back. As a lawyer, I am used to my advice being a crucial factor in the decision-making process. Generally speaking, nobody goes against legal advice. However, this is not necessarily the case during the group work in the MBA program.

What is your personal recipe for a good work-study-life balance?

Working efficiently certainly is an important key to success here. When I started the part-time program, I realized that I had become more efficient - at the office, but also in my free time, to be able to handle the academic workload. For instance, when we have a telephone conference for university we get straight to the point. We do not talk about what we did in our free time but about project-related schedules, tasks and results. This does not happen at the expense of the working atmosphere. You are simply more focused. I personally enjoy preparing topics outside my job in my free time. We are currently working on a case study dealing with the financial structure of the Marriott hotel group. Of course, this is intense and demanding, just like the whole part-time MBA program, but if you enjoy what you are doing and are enthusiastic about it, you can achieve the balance between working, studying and relaxing.

Why would you recommend the part-time MBA program to others?

... because it gives you a chance to think creatively. Everybody can benefit individually from the diversity of the class. There is no doubt about it: thanks to the excellent student services at HHL, which differ from what I experienced when studying in Göttingen, I learn a lot from the professors but at least as much from classmates. And where else would you find something like that outside your work?

+++The next intake for the part-time MBA of HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management is in March. Application deadline: January 15. Information and contact: http://www.hhl.de/part-time-mba or petra.spanka(at)hhl.de +++

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HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management
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Anlage: Bild