



AALTO UNIVERSITY MBA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ALUMNI UPDATE 01/2016

The New MBA Alumni Board

This year has started with speed, and our new Board has convened already twice - it feels great.

In January, the Annual General Meeting (AGM) elected ten Board members. We have a good mix - seven old members and 3 new ones with new ideas how to develop our activities and co-operation. Board members with knowledge from the previous years are; Kullah Andersson, Piia Heikkilä, Jaakko Jauhiainen (Vice Chair), Elina Karjalainen (Secretary), Tarvo Viita-Aho (Treasurer), Juha Wiskari and me, Hanna Komusaari (Chair). New board members are Sankalp Ahuja, Antti Heiskanen and Helena Tadinen. We have a nice combination of representatives from different industries, positions, experience, knowledge and connections.

We had a good discussion in our last meeting about the Association's tasks and targets, and we got great insight to Alumni expectations and development ideas from the recent the Alumni survey. The Board agreed unanimously that networking and co-operation are our main tasks & targets for this year. The Alumni survey and our internal discussion prioritized these tasks. The most important partners include Association's members, MBA Alumni, students working hard for their eMBA or MBA degree and of course Aalto EE. Company visits have been highly valued, and continue to provide the main platform for networking and cooperation.

We need your feedback and comments on how to develop our activities and events further, to provide value for the membership.

The MBA degree has been a good investment, and by means of events and networking we are doing our best to keep you in touch with your fellow Alumni, and ensure that your MBA degree maintains its the value and is appreciated in the future.

I am looking forward to this new year and your co-operation - see you in our events!

Hanna Komusaari
HSE Class of 2006
Chairman of the Board
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MANAGE FOR ME

Elina Karjalainen, TKK 2006

Buying B2B service is very different from buying a product. I can touch the product, look at it, feel it, study and compare the features. I do not know, nor much care, how it was created. Professional business service, on the other hand, is tailor-made for me, over and over again. Whether I want it or not, I am involved in the production process. My perception of this process has an enormous impact in my satisfaction with the end result.

The key element of success is good management. The professionals doing the work can be brilliant, but the more complicated the service and the more people it involves, the bigger the risk that management is lost. I am surprised how often this happens. Since my service is tailor-made for me and since my customer rep is supposed to know me, I want him to manage for me.

EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE OR JUST DUMB LUCK?

Exceptional customer service can be a true competitive edge. But often things which get along great with one person, start going wrong when another one steps in. Sadly, sometimes exceptional service is decent upbringing, quick wits, courage and good manners of a customer rep. Companies can take credit for good luck (ok, maybe good HR skills too), hiring people with good genes and whose parents have done a great job raising them! Many accept this de facto, as if there is nothing they can do but keep looking for new ones.

Still, there are companies who keep the service level high year after year and in spite of staff changes. How do they do this? Of course they hire great people, but if there was nothing else, sooner or later they would fail. I think exceptional companies have some mechanisms existing in the company culture making them exceptional. Intentionally or by accident.

THE MOST IMPORTANT MANAGER

In exceptional companies, customer service team is able and allowed to manage the service process. It really is just basic management: ask the right questions, ask again, enforce deadlines, push, pay attention, anticipate and take responsibility. Capable people know how to do this. Capable companies allow and encourage them to. Within the company, they are the customers and managers.

The average service team checks and double checks and asks around internally and externally before making commitments to the customer. They draw the customer deeper in the process and search for confirmations. Commitment is often vague: we try to keep the deadlines, try to deliver. They let their internal departments or their suppliers decide what to do and when. They do not feel they can influence anything because they are not the bosses. What if someone gets sick, sky falls or oceans flood and cause the failure. They are worried whether or not others keep their promises and lack means to supervise this. They are coordinators, telephone switches and email hubs, and are pushed by both, the customer and the company



CUSTOMERS ONLY NOTICE YOU WHEN YOU FAIL

If attempts to raise price do not count, customers pay attention to service only when things go wrong. Exceptional service companies know this. They try to make customers notice them in other times, too. They might do something extraordinary to prevent failure and/or keep the customer happy, and make him appreciate it! Exceptional companies surprise the customer: they set a deadline and then are ready early. Or give out small favors without extra charge. Meeting the customer expectations is plain. Exceeding them is what counts.

Good companies provide good service and have satisfied customers. Exceptional companies have fans. They know that the management of experience during the service production is a critical part of the service. Exceptional service companies can make mistakes and end up with happy loyal customers. Good companies can keep going year after year. Invisible, silent and without major faults, they still lose to sexy competitors.

NEVER EVER

There are some things my favorite companies never do. No matter how heavy your workload may be, never, ever

- say that you are busy – I am your number one customer;
- forward me messages from your colleagues before reading and understanding them. If you do not understand them, neither will I;
- send me messages from within your company without reading them. Anticipate my questions. If you think ahead, you know what I need next and save me from having to ask;
- forward me to your different departments. If you haven't lost control yet, you are about to
- accept a no from your departments without asking why and plan B, please. Do not make me come up with a solution.
- forward my problem to your colleagues and just hope for the best. Check, control, verify and deliver. Keep track of who is supposed to do what and when. Check that all is proceeding as planned before the deadline
- inform me only when something new happens. Especially in case of a problem, keep me up to date even if you have nothing new to tell
- when something goes wrong, do not explain. Just fix it really fast.

The writer has been buying and selling B2B services for a long time, and observing with great interest how customers are treated over time by companies who all claim to provide excellent service.



Alumni Survey Results

Thank you for your replies – they were very much appreciated and we were positively surprised by the feedback!

We will try to use these little surveys a bit more in the future to engage our members - you - and to improve our operation.

Based on the answers, we want to clarify a couple of unclear issues:

First, MBA Alumni Association is not part of Aalto University but an independent Association which of course cooperates with the School. We develop the MBA Alumni network. Aalto University has several alumni groups, other than MBA, and they have (paid or free) events of their own for the entire Alumni. Our focus is only on you as MBA's and we run the Association on the side of our daily jobs with no staff or funding except for membership fees.

Second, we do have the possibility for perpetual membership (fee 400 e) as well. If you are interested in this option, just contact info@mba-alumni.fi

Now, about Survey results: About 30 % of our members replied the survey. 60% are male and 40% female. 99% live in the Helsinki area and most (82%) of them are 40-59 years old. Half of respondents (48%) had been members for over 5 years.

Apparently, our members' employment rate is twice as good as population as a whole: 89% are employed and 12,5% run their own companies. Most have stayed in their current positions for 2-5 years: there are very long work relationships but not many of them. Over half (54%) work in senior or executive positions.

Most members were working in companies employing either less than 100 people or over 1000 employees.

95% of respondents have attended our events. 45% of them are likely or very likely to recommend Alumni Association to others. Our net promoter score (NPS) is 35. Not bad, but there is room for improvement.

Membership fee value was considered to be excellent (16 %), above average (36 %), average (43 %) and below average (5%).



We got excellent feedback for our events which were considered valuable, useful and rarely accessible without membership. Last year, we had top company leaders giving presentations in many events.

On the other hand, there was criticism about contents as well: company visits were considered to include too much marketing and too little weight was on content. We agree with you and try to plan and prepare the visits better in the future. Thank you for great suggestions for events and ideas!

There was also a suggestion on providing video links and articles and other material for alumni. We will definitely take this under consideration: last year was really the first year when we were activating communications and our intention is continue to do so. Members also asked for better planning in advance, so event dates would be visible somewhere. We try to improve this as well, and they are already marked in our website calendar. However, sometimes they depend on company schedules and come unfortunately late.

An interesting result was that although 65% of Alumni keeps contact with their cohorts, 30 % does not but would like to. It is also worth considering if we could help you with this.

Enjoy spring and we hope to see you soon!
Alumni Board

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Aalto University MBA Alumni Association