

The MBA journey - sacrifice and incredible transformation

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During the course of his matric year in 1998, Shawn Reddy lost his father - a devastating event for him and his family that changed the trajectory of his life, forcing him into the work environment prematurely to help support the household. In the early 2000s and the years that followed, his work life began to take shape and he progressed in the automotive aftermarket industry. Despite the professional strides he made, however, not having a tertiary qualification weighted heavily on Shawn's mind - it felt like he needed to further this education to propel himself to a more senior role.



Milpark: How did you feel going into the MBA?

Shawn: I actually enrolled for an MBA with another university in 2010 but at that time I did not meet the criteria and didn't make it on the programme. That put a real damper on my spirit – I felt that maybe I'm actually not cut out for this. I went into a phase of not believing in myself and after that I gave up on doing any tertiary stuff. Then came 2019 and I said: "Okay, I'm 40 years old now. It's now or never, because if I don't do something, now, it's going to be too late". I went online and searched for a programme and came across Milpark Business School. I put through my application and in January 2020 I got my admission letter. That took me by surprise.

I felt anticipation and excitement because I knew that through this journey my educational future is going to be shaped. But as I started, to be honest, I did not believe in myself. I was nervous and questioned what did I get myself into? I kept doubting myself.

But then I had a spark of ambition that came, over me and said, "Listen, you did not come to 20 years in a senior management level where you are today, without having the knowledge to take on challenges, work through them, and navigate complex environments." So, with that I put the nerves behind me and went for it.

Milpark: How was your experience with Milpark Business School?

Shawn: The lecturers were always dedicated. Even if we had questions after the sessions, they would still take time to go through every single question or concern – even if it meant another 30 or 45 minutes. I must give huge thanks to Evelyn Kannigan, the programme manager, she was responsive and always supported us, whether it was in a group or individual setting.

Milpark: What was a highlight of your MBA journey?

Shawn: I would say our group project for the Entrepreneurship and Innovation module. We had to come up with a business idea that we could innovate into something that we can actually implement and sell. Our group idea was based on a concept I came up with, drawing on my decades of experience in the automotive industry. The concept blew the entire Milpark panel away and the head lecturer for the year said that in all his years of lecturing, he'd never seen such an innovative idea. He told us that we should patent it.

Milpark: How did you maintain your mental health and take care of yourself during the demanding MBA time?

Shawn: From a health perspective, the MBA does take a toll on your body because your sleeping patterns are not the

same. For me, the focus was on relaxing my mind, so I would make sure that I do the things that I enjoy: playing golf, going for walks, etc. I took one or two weekends to go away with my family to have that personal interaction and connection with them.

Milpark: Do you have any words of advice for prospective students?

Shawn: I think you have to have a proper, dedicated mindset that you are going to sacrifice a lot. I mean a lot. The sacrifices you make in this programme are second to none, they're not like any sacrifices that you will ever make in your life. You also have to have the support of your family; it is so important as the experience can break down communication in your family because you're not there all the time. You have to be mindful of that. Understand that you're going to have an incredible transformation on this journey. As much as it's going to be tough, especially in terms of the family time that you will lose, the end result is the achievement of having your MBA and what it's going to do for you in the future.

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