

Graduation speech 28.7.2007, The Westin Leipzig
HHL – Leipzig Graduate School of Management
Senator Friedhelm Wachs

Dr. Ackermann (Deutsche Bank CEO),
Magnificence,
Honorable Guests,
Knowns and Unknowns,

it's hard to remember what my weekends and nights and thus my life were like before HHL, as the school has changed our daily life dramatically.

Many reasons might be named for choosing to do an MBA here, and the HHL experience has meant something different to each of us. So while it would be foolish to try to sum up all of our memories in one speech, there is one word that is inescapable in any description of our HHL experience, and that is "the p – word". There is only one p-word. For us, named P2, our second p is a placeholder for words like present value, presentations, phone conferences, papers, perspectives, people or parties. Those are powerful and important, but are only the variables of the equation.

But the p-word I am looking for, the one that has been the A and O of our last 2 years together, is "passion". Passion 2 perform, passion 2 present, passion to persuade, passion 2 party.

There are so many ways to demonstrate the "passion2" of our class, so many stories, that we never tire of quoting. We count among our ranks a variety of characters: sportsmen, dancers, number crunchers, gamblers, bankers, an ophthalmologist and professor, a lawyer, an architect, a chemist, a physicist and even a medieval historian. Loud people, quiet people, young people and, well, less young people.

More impressive and important to me than the variety of backgrounds or jobs or any other classification of the group of people with whom I've spent the last two years is the passion of those people. These people are AMAZING!

They love what they do. They always deliver more.

And if, sometimes, they don't love what they are supposed to do? Well, than they just don't do it, but this with the same passion. No fear of the unknown, no fear of failure. Passion. That's all what life is about.

You cannot imagine the wealth of experience, knowledge, talent, humor, culture, creativity, and even the occasional business sense that we have been exposed to at the HHL.

In his book, *The World Is Flat*, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman sees a convergence of forces creating a global, web-enhanced playing field that allows for multiple forms of collaboration, the sharing of knowledge, and work in real time without regards to geography, distance or in the near future, even language. It has, he said, flattened the world. Others call it globalization.

We just call it: The HHL P2 experience.

It is the defining characteristic of our program.

That is, what you can't get from the textbooks. And it is that, combined with the faculty's wealth of the same ingridience and with the company and campus visits in Dresden, Hamburg and Boston, which is what makes this school so outstanding.

I could spend years of my life reading management books and working, and I wouldn't come away with anything nearly as valuable as what I've gained from my 2 years at HHL.

In what job would an average 24 hours include:

- Playing football with people whose names you can't pronounce to win the Ivy League
- Heading straight from the class to a costume party at the infamous DHFK
- Dancing the night away with some of your best buddies at the Leipzig clubs, taking a shower and be back in class
- Throwing a valuable can of beer away into the sea at the Solent, the historical battlefield between France and Britain to defeat the London Business School fleet.
- Pass over half a dozen finest wines while discussing whether and how to get married or not

...every hour of sleep was an hour spent not doing one of a thousand other seemingly more valuable things.

All the while soaking up valuable knowledge and insight from some of the finest student minds and management faculty in Germany.

With all this and more available, it's no wonder that such an exceptional group of people chose HHL as the place to come to change their lives.

But to me, just as important, is that HHL students are not only came here to change themselves; the people you graduate today also changed HHL. They demanded from the beginning a journey to success to the European Top level. And they put hands on to climb on that mountain. Ivy League, Portsmouth Regatta, Negotiation Challenge, just to mention a few, should determine the way we think. It's about passion.

OK, a passionate group of people in an amazing place doing amazing things. But that's not quite the whole story, because none of us got to HHL alone, nor did any of us make it through on our own. Whether it was partners, children, parents, grandparents or other loved ones, none of us would have survived these 2 years without their never ending patience, understanding, reassuring smiles, or any of the other countless acts of love and support from those closest to us.

On top of that, we always had the guidance of a truly dedicated faculty and a fabulously engaged MBA team, at all levels of the organization.

Not to forget those Sponsors, Donors and Shareholders of the school as well as of singular activities like this graduation, that provided the foundation of our education and change here.

Basically, what I'm saying is that we have been as lucky as hell.

I'd like to ask my classmates to stand and join me in giving a round of gracious applause for the people who helped us get here today.

I would also like to extend our gratitude to five p-persons. People representing passion:

To Professor Mancke for his outreaching and thoughtful guidance to develop this internationally recognized MBA program.

To Petra Spanka for her incredible power, her smile and for her tireless organizing and promoting of this MBA program

To Stefanie Franke for making HHL such an amazing place on weekends, always feeding hungry brains.

And to our Dean Professor Wiesmeth and our chancellor Judy Marquardt in sharing our dream of HHL as one of the leading European business schools.

European business school!

Seriously, I hope you keep in mind that it is precisely because HHL is un-American in many ways that it is such a unique and wonderful business school.

Well, here we are. I want to thank you all for this fabulous 2 years, and for the honor of speaking to you today. We all have bright and challenging futures ahead of us, and I hope that the ties we have formed during our short weekends together will last a lifetime. While the thought of our separation is a hard one for me to swallow, I eagerly look forward to watching you all head off to change the world like HHL changed us: with passion.

Be strong, be resolute, be better!

Thank you!