



Participant Profile – Stephane Armand

Making a personal and professional decision

Ever since highschool, I knew that I wanted to do an MBA, but I needed 10 years of experience to be ready to pursue an MBA – to know what kind of skills and tools I needed to fulfill my professional goals and responsibilities. Over this time, my life changed significantly: ten years ago, I wasn't married, I didn't have children. I delayed my decision while I founded a family and had my first daughter. Finally, in 2007, my wife and I decided together: it's now or never. If I hadn't had the support of my family, I couldn't have taken this step. I'm so proud to be part of this program, and I'm very happy to be where I am right now.

Maintaining professional activity

I knew that I wanted to do my MBA at HEC: when you really have something in your heart, you have to go for it! I didn't want to look back 10 years from now and regret not doing it, or only doing it halfway. So, I was really focused on HEC, and I learned that they were about to launch a Part-Time Program. I was initially a bit hesitant, because I was programmed to think of a Full-Time MBA as the only option. But, in the end, it seemed really obvious because it was a way to see my family more, to be more present in their lives. It was less of a personal sacrifice, and also less of a financial sacrifice. I'm glad that I get to continue working not only because it allows my family to maintain our quality of life, but also because I find my job really interesting. My work is very rewarding, but it hasn't really required me to leave my geographical or linguistic comfort zone. In the future, I would like to take on a role with more international exposure within my company, and that's something that my MBA training will prepare me to do.

Seeking functional mobility

A lot of people want to be hired by Renault. I'm already there, and I'm not looking to switch jobs; that's not the goal of pursuing an MBA for me. I'm not looking for job mobility because I can have a lot of functional mobility within my company. I currently work in IT, but I can move and switch to finance or marketing, so an MBA will open doors for me at Renault that are currently closed. I know where I want to go and I know where I don't want to go: I know that I don't want to be restricted to one department after I finish my MBA. I want to increase my corporate visibility and independence. I want to choose what I really want to do; I don't want it to be imposed on me. When you are in a big company, earning an MBA is really the only way to explore and decide exactly what you want to do. Earning an MBA gives me the opportunity to make my future and my company's future more valuable.

Pioneering the Part-Time program

We are all in this together, and we have to work together in order to ensure the program's success. This is particularly true for the Part-Time Program: this is a first-time program, and we are the pioneers! This really interested me because it was a challenge. Since we are part of the program, we have to work with each other and with the full-time participants, as well as with HEC, to make the program as attractive as possible for future students and their employers. This is more interesting than just being a passive participant in a pre-made program. Our approach is incredibly interactive. I know that HEC needs me, and I need HEC, so we work together – it's a very interesting and challenging dynamic.

Learning the new rules of business

My favorite course so far is Sustainable Business Strategy with David Bevan – he is just fascinating! This course is the most philosophical one I've taken, because there is no math involved. I love math, I'm a scientist, but I also appreciate philosophy. I find this course very philosophical because it makes you look behind the façade to see the truth underneath – it's not about the image that you're projecting; it's about what's behind it. I consider myself to be a critical thinker, and I find this course very interesting for that reason. In each stage of your life, new rules emerge. Sustainability has become a new rule of business, and if you don't adapt to it, you're going to get left behind.

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Defining leadership

A leader must leave behind a good image of what he was and what he did. To leave a good image, you must have helped people to grow. For example, I appreciate that my manager has allowed me to pursue an MBA – he wasn't obligated to do so. It was a sacrifice for him as it was for me, but it will also provide benefits for us both, as I take on increasing responsibilities and add more value to my company. When I think of leadership, I see the image of my father. He was fair and honest, maybe too honest; but he knew how to motivate people and help them grow. He helped and encouraged me throughout my life, and I continue to follow his example.