

## An MBA to suit each person – Recharge, self-improvement, transformation and start

*Each person has a different reason for getting an MBA. There are many graduate schools which each provide different programs, with different policies. What each individual learns on the program, when they decide to take it, and the way that they make use of their MBA degree upon graduating differs depending on each individual situation. Some people want to evaluate their working experience so far. Some people want to recharge themselves. Some people aspire to use their MBA as a turning point for a career change. Each person has his/her own MBA story. Four MBA holders talked to us about their MBA stories.*



**Takanori Izumi**  
Graduate School of Accountancy, Waseda University (GSA)  
Nomura Research Institute, Ltd.



**Takahisa Nagai**  
Tama University Graduate School (TGS)  
ICP Marketing Manager Advanced, Software Group, IBM Japan, Ltd.



**Tomoko Tanabe**  
Temple University, Japan Campus (TUJ)  
Operation Manager Japan, Jonckers Translation & Engineering KK



**Takashi Tsutsumi**  
McGill MBAJapan (McGill)  
General Manager, Investment & Development Department, MITSUI SUMITOMO INSURANCE Venture Capital Co., Ltd.

**Could you briefly introduce yourself and explain your motivation for taking an MBA and your preparation for it?**

**Nagai:** After working in areas such as product planning and presales, and as a product development manager, I am now working as a marketing manager in Software Group in IBM Japan, Ltd. Eight years ago, when I was 38 years old, I wanted to study as I felt it was necessary for me as a marketing manager to structure a framework to develop my work and improve my marketing skills. I attended Tama University Graduate School (TGS) from April 2000 until March 2002. I looked at several schools which would allow me to study while continuing to work. I chose TGS because I was inspired by a series of interviews in the newspaper with Professor Iwao Nakatani, who later became President of TGS. The application process consisted of a study plan and an interview.

**Tsutsumi:** I joined Nichimen Corp. (now Sojitz Corp.) in 1991. As an integrated trading company employee for nine years, I was responsible for business development and marketing in high-tech industry, partnering with overseas companies, which experience led to my career change to the field of venture capital, and am now working for MITSUI SUMITOMO INSURANCE Venture Capital as an investment manager. When I started to think about the career change, I researched VC firms in North America, where the VC industry originated, and I found that an MBA was one of the minimum requirements, so I decided to apply to a program. I also wanted to organize the knowledge I had accumulated while working. At first, I thought about studying abroad, but after getting a new job at a VC firm in Japan, I changed my mind and decided to

study here. I decided to opt for a North American graduate school to make use of the GMAT score that I had already gotten, so I chose McGill MBA Japan (McGill). I started in June 2001 and graduated in May 2003. The application process consisted of a TOEFL test, GMAT, an essay and an interview. I studied at a preparatory school for a year and half to improve my score.

**Tanabe:** I entered Temple University, Japan Campus (TUJ) in May 2005 and graduated April 2007. After graduating from college and working in several jobs, I studied Public Administration at the graduate school of University of Pennsylvania in the U.S. After graduation, I worked at a localization company in the U.S. and enjoyed the job very much, partly because localization itself, which was a new industry, was interesting and partly because working in the U.S. where the industry had originated was exciting. I came back to Japan after living in the U.S. for six years and have continued working in the localization industry. Gradually I felt like I was worn down, and I aspired to absorb something new. I chose TUJ because I wanted to study Business Administration in English and the main campus of Temple University is in Philadelphia, U.S., which is home to University Pennsylvania and was familiar to me. The application process was the same as for McGill MBA Japan. I was exempted from the TOEFL test because I had graduated from an American graduate school. I'm now Operation Manager Japan of Jonckers Translation & Engineering KK.

**Izumi:** I am studying at Graduate School of Accountancy, Waseda University (GSA) and graduating in March 2008. I studied financial accounting as an undergraduate and graduated from the university in 2006. With aspirations to study accounting further, and by the recommendation of my former professor, it was a natural step to proceed to graduate school, where I majored in management accounting. I'm going to work at Nomura Research Institute, Ltd. from this April. I had to take an accounting test and have an interview for the application process. In the interview, I had to give my thoughts on given topics, however, I didn't find this too difficult as I was used to presenting my own opinions. For preparation, I concentrated on practicing for the accounting test while using a calculator.

**Please tell us about your study experience and any particular highlights or hardships during the program. Also how have you made use of your MBA since graduating?**

**Izumi:** I had classes at GSA from Monday to Friday. I took many classes in finance and statistics to improve ability in such fields, which required mathematics knowledge including standard deviation, differential and integral. It was very hard, since I originally preferred social science and was not so good at mathematics. I didn't have as much trouble with accounting, but as some people had already passed the certified public accountant exam, I had to study a lot harder to compete with them. I was happy to be taught by excellent professors, whom I respected and was able to have a good relationship with. As I went to the campus every day, whenever I had questions I could go and ask their advice. Sometimes, we all went out for a drink together. I was also fortunate to have classmates who had business experience, as some people had been sent to study by their companies and one person had quit his job at a bank. I was interested in their first-hand experiences of the business world. I was able to enjoy studying without feeling too much pressure and enjoyed campus life.

Through the MBA program, I acquired improved problem-solving skills and thinking power.

**Tanabe:** TUJ's curriculum focuses broadly on the essentials of management. Teachers come from the main campus in the U.S. and classes are taught in English. I went to the campus from 9 am to 6 pm every Saturday. The class consisted of 15 students who all worked full time in different industries, including non-Japanese people. We worked on a project together and I was interested to find that our approaches to and perspectives on the issues differed depending on which industries we worked in. I was overwhelmed by the enormous amount of homework; I had to read hundreds of pages and write papers, and sometimes slept less than two hours. As we also had to do a presentation of our group work, teammates met together even on weekdays. I learned a lot from the MBA program about educational environment, diversity and how to manage a heavy workload. As a project manager, I deal with a great number of projects and the MBA has enabled me to manage people with contradictory interests with a broader perspective than before.

**Tsutsumi:** McGill provides a program combining both general knowledge and skills essential for business management. All the professors, who come from the main campus in Montreal, Canada, teach classes in English. In addition to lecture style classes, there are many practical training classes, in which students work on case studies and practice how to deal with actual business problems. I went to the campus from 9 am to 5 pm on two weekends a month. But, before classes, I had to prepare a lot, including reading tens of pages of textbooks and analyzing cases. It was really overwhelming and required me to prioritize tasks, and later I realized that this was training in itself for time management and decision making. Active class participation was necessary to get good grades, as well as the results of tests, so I tried to speak up at every class. Students came from over ten different countries and our backgrounds, industries, gender and age were widely diverse. There was a year-long project to make a business plan in a six-person-group. At first, the members of my group could not work well together, since all of us had different perspectives and were competitive. However, by the end, we were able to create a solid business plan and I learned that output by group work was better than individually, that is power of brainstorming and teamwork. Another good thing was that I could appreciate McGill connection, not only among MBAs but also with other departments.

**Nagai:** I took five classes on Saturday and one class on a weekday. Without requisite subjects, students could pursue our own fields of interest. I majored in marketing and management. Reading about two books a week was necessary, but I enjoyed it despite there being not much time for sleep. During spring and summer vacations, students had the chance to study their favorite subject and ask three teachers for advice. Taking advantage of this system, I could complete my master thesis even though I was busy at work. Through the MBA program, I learned the framework of hypothesis testing, which occurs in actual business, as the process, including "plan, do, check and action" is necessary. TGS boasts teachers who are currently active on the front lines of business with extensive experience. The greatest asset I acquired from the MBA program was not only to earn my MBA, study specialized knowledge and obtain know-how of business but also being able to learn from teachers, whom I aspire to be like. I found that trying to continue studying hard, inspired by teachers

of superior intellect, is the best way to improve myself.

**Please summarize in one word what an MBA means for you, and give a message to our readers.**

**Izumi:** MBA means "Start" for me. MBA is neither a goal nor a complete qualification, but a method to start from. I recommend those who have the aspiration to get an MBA to take the challenge, and to consider what they will do with it once they have earned it.

**Nagai:** "Self-improvement." An MBA course provides a place to find this. It is more productive to not simply earn your MBA degree, but also while studying think about how you will utilize the knowledge and skills you acquire through the program. I hope that an MBA program is the key to your self-improvement.

**Tanabe:** "Recharge." When I was an undergraduate university student, I didn't study at all. However, since I started working, I had a strong aspiration to study again. Being able to study what I want, when I want is the most rewarding kind of study, even though making time is a little bit difficult. What I learned from the program is very helpful in business and I'm very glad to have earned an MBA.

**Tsutsumi:** For me an MBA means "Transformation," of course, in a good sense! North American MBA graduate schools are hard "boot camps" designed to foster management skills. It is hard but when you finish, you will have broadened your horizons. If you have the determination, I hope you will accept the challenge.

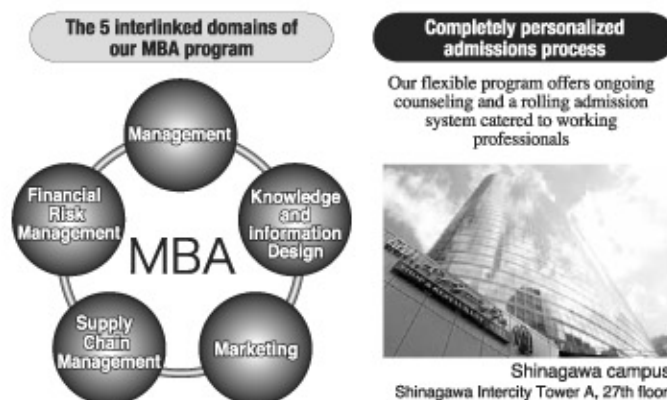


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