



**Alumnus** Riadh Negra  
**Subject** MBA  
**Graduated** 2008  
**Place of Work** BP  
**Position** Internal Auditor



BP is a British multinational oil and gas company, the third largest energy company and the fourth largest company in the world. It has operations in every area of the oil and gas industry, including exploration and production, refining, distribution and major renewable energy activities. Having completed his Masters in Tunisia, Riadh was awarded a scholarship to study the MBA in International Management. As an Internal Auditor at BP, Riadh is responsible for identifying gaps in existing processes and developing new opportunities for business.

# Great minds *go on to* great places

## What made you decide to study an MBA?

My background is in accounting, having completed my undergraduate studies and an MSc in Accounting and Auditing in Tunisia. I spent two years at Deloitte doing auditing, before being awarded a Chevening scholarship to study in the UK. At that point in my career, I was specialised in the field of auditing but did not have much experience of the other aspect of management such as HR or Marketing. The MBA was a high level course, designed to give you a complete picture of an organisation, so it was the ideal qualification for me. I went from an auditing and consulting background to understanding the business from different angles.

## What was the most relevant part of the qualification?

Obviously the accounting courses did not add so much to my knowledge, but I enjoyed the Strategy course a lot. There were also consultancy project every day of class, which really equipped me with the skill to identify problems in a particular business practice, to come up with solutions as well as report on these to the group. Networking was a very important aspect of the programme as a whole. Coming from a different country, I had to work hard to build up my network of contacts,

so that meant a lot of exposure to different people and different cultures. I gained a lot of confidence throughout the course, and it opened so many doors for me.

## What did you enjoy most about the experience?

The exposure to different cultures. There were at least ten nationalities in my class, so you really learnt a lot about how people from different countries operate, how their behaviours are different and so on. I am still in touch with many of my classmates and, because I travel a lot in my current role, it is great to know that wherever I am I can nearly always meet up with someone I know. I also really enjoyed the John Molson Consultancy Competition, which took place in Canada in January 2008; again, this gave me great exposure to other MBA candidates. It was a great experience.

## How did your career develop after having completed the qualification?

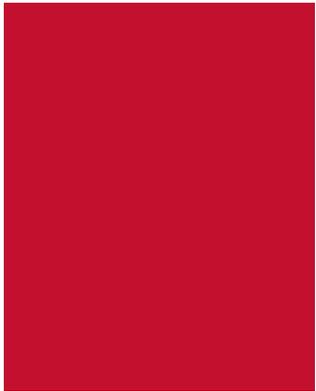
After graduating, I applied to Ernst and Young's graduate programme, so it wasn't an MBA role at all. After two years there, I moved to Centrica and that was where my MBA started to

become particularly useful. The experience on the programme enabled me to develop from taking on financial and auditing projects to working on more consultancy based projects. I am now at BP working in internal audit, which involves project management skills that I learnt on my MBA course. I also recently qualified with ACCA.

## Tell us about your role at BP.

My role is mainly focused on identifying problems or gaps in the processes used by different area of the company. For example, I am currently working on an upstream project, which is to do with the exploration, development and production of natural gas or oil sites globally; I look at best practices, performance management, how a particular project can come in on budget whilst achieving the highest quality. So it's a lot like project management. Another aspect of the role is to do with how you can implement a project to embed change. I travel all over the world, visiting sites, and looking at the different projects. My role doesn't sit within the business; our department reports to the Board of Directors, so we're like the eyes of the Board! Having completed field work, I will work with a team of 3 – 4 others to propose a final solution, discuss recommendations and agree actions with the business.





# people *with* passion

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### What happens in a typical day/week?

Interviewing is a big part of my job. For instance, last week I was interviewing regional Presidents of the company, people who report to the CEO of BP. You have to know how to speak to these kinds of senior people; you don't ask detailed questions because they are operating at a much higher level. So it's a completely different set of skills, and now my MBA is working for me 100%. The MBA teaches you to look at the big picture, to look at every aspect of the business, because there are so many things to take into account. For instance, I'm not from this industry background – I don't know so much about petroleum geosciences or geology, but I can adapt myself to conversations really quickly, to manage the discussion so that it doesn't get bogged down in technical jargon.

### What are the best parts of your profession?

I really enjoy field work: speaking to people, understanding the business, implementing governance principles. I want to identify developing opportunities for the business, so I have to understand the root cause of a particular issue. I know that I am really adding value to the company, because I am coming up with detailed and bespoke solutions. You learn a lot as well, and you get to manage and guide people: you don't do the job

yourself. It's a steep learning curve to begin with, but you get to network with high level people, keep in touch with them, and then that leads to opportunities further down the line.

### Where do you hope to be in 3 to 5 years?

I hope to still be at BP. Having moved around, I know that it's the right company for me. Ideally I would like to be working in upstream, in Finance, Performance Management or Strategy. I don't mind where in the world. That's the great thing about BP: it's a global company but everywhere shares the same culture and ways of doing things.

### What is the best piece of advice you can give to MBA students?

Make the most of the networking opportunities. When I first started I did not value it as much as it was not so embedded in my culture, nor linked to getting your foot in the door. But the fact is that who you know will get you to the point you want to be. The challenge is, however, to maintain that network, to continue to make an impact after the first exchange of business cards. If you can develop these skills whilst you are still a student you will be in good shape for when you graduate into the world of work.

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