Kevin Neeson

PGDip in Leadership Development alumnus

Kevin Neeson's motto in life is that you can never stop learning. Despite being blind, he has completed various courses and degrees. He applied for the PGDip in Leadership Development, and passed it cum laude, because he wanted to acquire the knowledge, skills and tools to grow his leadership abilities.

There are always new insights to discover

I have been working at Old Mutual for the past 17 years where I am the head of Business Research. I have done various courses in leadership, customer experience and competitor analysis, and I have studied with different universities, including doing my MBA through Cardiff Business School in Wales. I enjoy learning and believe that I must continue to learn and grow. I think it is dangerous when you get to that point where you think that you know everything because there are always new information and insights to discover. That is why I enrolled for the PGDip in Leadership Development as part of my continuous development.

I have not previously studied at Stellenbosch University and wanted to expose myself to this leading university. The location of the business school was also important as it is relatively accessible and easy to get to in terms of transport.

A good support system

I cannot speak on behalf of other people with disabilities, but based on my own experience, as a person who is completely blind, I found the premises and lecture venues to be accessible. I received my scanned text book chapters, journal articles and pre-reading in an accessible electronic format as and when required. This was a key highlight for me as I have studied at various universities, and the support I received from Stellenbosch University's Disability Support Unit was exceptional.

A core learning of the PGDip in Leadership Development is the benefits of co-creation and collaboration. The support from my fellow students and especially my study group was a highlight.

I have made a number of new relationships and friendships over the past year and believe that many of these will continue long after graduation. My wife, children and my team and seniors at work also supported me during this time.

The PGDip is both challenging and rewarding.

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A journey of personal awareness and discovery

The PGDip in Leadership Development is both challenging and rewarding. It requires commitment and dedication. It requires personal sacrifice, examination and exploration. Through diligence and effort, this has helped me to enhance my leadership profile within my working environment. It has also positively influenced my personal and family relationships.

The learnings and rewards extend beyond the classroom and workplace, and have the potential to influence broader society. I have been asked many times why I had decided to take this programme, as I already have a higher qualification (the MBA). While the PGDip in Leadership Development can be used as a pipeline qualification to further studies, I selected it for its own merits and what it could and has done for me. Other degrees teach you about the "what" of business and leadership, but no one tells you about the "how" and the "why".

A key characteristic of the programme is that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to leadership. It is a personal exploration of yourself as a leader. It examines the root causes of leadership behaviour and identifies individual changes and shifts that need to be made. I have discovered new insights about myself, and how my experience and values influence my leadership practices. The programme is a journey of personal awareness and discovery, reflection and reawakening. I would strongly recommend it to potential students.

What's next?

I am involved with a Senior Leadership Learning and Talent Management Programme at work that I need to complete this year. Then in 2020 I might do another Master's degree or start with a PhD – I still need to decide what field I want to explore.

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