

Staff Profile: Mat Cridge

A STORY OF CAREER PROGRESSION WITHIN ICTS WITH A FOCUS ON CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



This January 2018, Mat embarked on his new role as Group Key Account Manager for a globally recognised Company, one of the ICTS Europe Group's biggest Clients. Mat is responsible for overseeing ICTS' operations in the UK, Germany and Italy, with a workforce of circa 2000 staff. This is a significant milestone for Mat and it follows a steady career progression within ICTS which started out in the aviation world. Continuing Professional Development has been a focus and a significant driving force accompanying Mat throughout his career with ICTS.

Mat joined ICTS in February 2006 under TUPE when ICTS won the security services contract for the provision of aviation security at Cardiff Airport. He joined as Duty Manager, having worked his way up from Security Agent, and soon progressed to Station Manager overseeing a team of 100 staff at Cardiff Airport. It was whilst he was Station Manager that Mat, backed by ICTS, decided to further his education.

WHAT IS YOUR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND?

I started a Geology degree at Plymouth University; I then dabbled with Drama in Derby, before finally settling to read for an undergraduate Law degree with The Open University. In July 2013 whilst I was Station Manager at Cardiff Airport I obtained my Professional Certificate in Management qualification with The Open University. I am very grateful to ICTS for having sponsored this course which consisted of 3 modules: Managing



Organisations and People, Managing Marketing and Finance and Managing the Integration Challenge. It was this Certificate that paved the way to my MBA.

I chose to do my MBA with The Open University Business School, to allow me some flexibility and the possibility of continuing to work full time.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO DO AN MBA?

Following completion of the Professional Certificate in Management I asked ICTS whether the Company would continue to sponsor my studies, which they did. I felt committed to ICTS and knew that I wanted my career to progress with the Company beyond my role at the Airport. I saw the sponsorship as being as much an investment in me, as for the Company.

In November 2015 I was appointed National Account Manager for a globally recognised Company. At the time of being offered this new role, I was mid-way through my MBA studies, and I knew it would be pivotal to my success in the role.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO COMPLETE YOUR MBA?

I have just completed the course, having started at the end of 2013, so 4 years.

HOW DID YOU FIT IT ALL IN, WORKING FULL TIME?

Extremely long hours.... weekends and holidays were dedicated to studying and assignments. Pastimes such as surfing were put on hold, and my night time reading list changed from F Scott Fitzgerald, Capote (and J.K Rowling) to Hertzberg, Hofstede, Porter and the like.

There were also several week-long compulsory residential courses that were very rewarding.

Having very understanding family and friends is essential.

HAVE YOU FOUND THAT THE COURSE HAS BENEFITTED YOUR PROFESSIONAL LIFE?

Absolutely. Right from the onset, I knew that it would assist me.

Together with work experience, the MBA allows you to draw on the learning of organisations, managers, and leaders, over time and across all business sectors.

Business schools don't provide you with the answers, but rather instil an inquisitive attitude, a critical approach, and provide you with a 'tool box' that better equips and guides you to make good managerial choices.

During my study, all business school modules, be it finance, strategy, or CSR, were read in relation to my industry and current role. So initially the focus was on testing models and concepts in an aviation security context, and later it moved to a different business setting.

During MBA study, you are introduced to, and encouraged to test models and frameworks, think about different strategies and explore a variety of theories: all from the unique perspective, and context of your own organisation.

Like everyone who works for ICTS, the organisation itself is unique, with its own challenges and opportunities. So, identifying existing methods that work, and modifying and applying theory for the benefit of our operation is the goal of implementing knowledge gained at business school.

Critical analysis and critical thinking (not providing more criticism!), are the underlying themes of an MBA. Becoming a reflective practitioner, is a capability crucial to good management.

CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW YOU HAVE CHANGED YOUR MANAGEMENT STYLE AS A RESULT OF YOUR STUDIES?

An early example of management practice change was whilst I was Station Manager at Cardiff. I used to chair our regular Management Meetings at the Airport. They often went off track, were too long and rather ineffective.

At the time I was reading about the benefits of relinquishing control during management meetings, to improve engagement and avoid bias by simply introducing an independent chair.

A colleague from Bristol Airport came to my assistance and became our chair. The results were instantaneous: The introduction of a knowledgeable chair, but emotionally detached from the station, led to a shorter, more succinct meeting, where more voices were heard, and considered rational decisions were more easily made. They were far more enjoyable meetings for all, and there was a positive change in the management team's morale.

One could think of this change as common sense. However, it was the course I was studying at the time, the Professional Certificate in Management, that prompted me to challenge the established way of working, and make the change. Being engaged in professional development allows one to be open to new ideas and more receptive to change.

It's not a tool for every occasion, but if appropriate, give it a try.



WHAT WOULD YOUR ADVICE BE TO OTHER STAFF CONTEMPLATING GOING BACK TO THE CLASSROOM?

An MBA is a large commitment, and not one to take lightly. The time needed to study can be challenging, so may be difficult for those with other time-consuming commitments. However, there are many routes to continued education and development, not all of which demand so much time, so I think there is an option for anyone who is considering a return to study.

I am a strong believer in formal studies and greatly support ICTS' focus on Continuing Professional Development.

ICTS' Chartered Institute of Management (CMI) Programme is excellent and really allows staff to think of their job roles differently, and provide great development opportunities.

WHAT NEXT?

A Ph.D in the future perhaps, but not just yet. I plan to enjoy a break from the studies and perhaps a holiday at some point. Although my night time reading list has been forever changed.