

UMUC Business and Executive Programs Podcasts  
**Executive MBA Education in Global World**

**Interviewer:** Dr. Mary Ann Spilman, Executive Director of Executive Programs

**Interviewee:** Miss Patricia Thornton, Mr. Al Edwards, and Mr. Howard Wiseberg

**Podcast Title:** The Practice of Global Strategy – Part II

**Broadcast Date:** December 12, 2008

**Spilman:** Welcome to Executive MBA Education in the Global World. This is a weekly podcast that features highlights of the Executive MBA Program. Thank you for joining us. I'm Dr. Mary Ann Spilman, Executive Director of Executive Programs.

Our guests today are Miss Patricia Thornton, Director of Marketing for Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation, Mr. Al Edwards, President and CEO of Exceed Corporation, and Executive MBA Program Alumnus, Mr. Howard Wiseberg, who is Senior Transportation Engineer for Tighe & Bond Engineering Consultants.

The topic for today's show is The Practice of Global Strategy, Part II. Our guests will describe their experiences with the international business plans that Executive participants develop for sponsoring corporations. Miss Thornton will explain why Prince George's Economic Development Corporation participates in the corporate sponsorship process, Mr. Edwards will describe his company's experience as a sponsor of the business plan and Mr. Wiseberg will discuss his experience as a member of the Executive Consulting team that developed the business plan for Exceed Corporation.

Miss Thornton, what has been your role in the program? And why is the participation of Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation important to Prince George's County?

**Thornton:** Well, actually, Dr. Spilman, our participation in this program has been one of the best partnerships that we have entered into since I was a Business Development Specialist at Economic Development Corporation. It's important because we're able to have a win-win situation where the companies benefit and we're also able to benefit the students. We're able to enter into an agreement where the students have an opportunity to explore the possibilities for a company and a company has a value-added at the end of the process. It's been a very rewarding and a very enriching partnership.

**Spilman:** Thank you. Can you tell us how the companies are selected for participation in the program?

**Thornton:** Well, at Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation, we have a Visit 200 Program. That program was designed for Business Specialists to visit the top 200 companies in the county, and to find ways to add value to the companies. I was the first Business Development Specialist at EDC and as such, I was always looking for opportunities to increase the value of the possibilities for companies to reach out into other companies and to expand into other countries. And so when this partnership opportunity came about, I actually visited and attended some of the readouts and found

that it was so rewarding, when I would visit companies in the future, I would always ask the question, if in the future we have an opportunity for you to participate in such a program, would it be okay for me to contact you? So whenever we saw a possibility for a company that was a perfect match for the opportunities that your students would be seeking, we would ask that question during our business visitation.

**Spilman:** Excellent. And of course, you've attended nearly all of the presentations of the business plans at the end of this process. And what has been your perception of the companies' experiences that you've referred, as well as those that you see receiving the information at the readouts?

**Thornton:** It's been – I mentioned before that it was a rewarding experience and it was an experience where the companies have a value added in terms of their positioning and understanding of what it takes to enter their businesses or services into another market outside of the country, but it's been more than that. Words cannot even explain the extent to which a company benefits from participating in the program. They not only receive the presentation from a whole team of students, but they receive the electronic, they receive the interaction with the students during the term, and they receive the benefit of the understanding that comes out of many highly experienced students, delving to the depths of what the possibilities are for them in terms of the possibilities for them to reach into other countries. So every company that has participated in the program has come back with glowing, glowing positive statements and thank yous and as such, these students that I've talked to – because I've talked to all of the students – I try to reinforce them, I try and encourage them, and all of them, too, have had a beneficial experience because of the types of opportunities they've been given to explore.

**Spilman:** And Mr. Edwards then, as a corporate sponsor, what can you tell us about your experience, what you expected out of the experience and anything that surprised you about the final business plan?

**Edwards:** Sure, I'd be glad to. We were all very excited about the opportunity, first of all, being able to pursue business opportunities with a foreign country. So that excitement continued and even increased throughout the program involvement. The program is well organized. We found that communications was excellent. We always knew what to expect and we were kept informed of all the plans that the MBA Program had for us. Return on investment was outstanding as well. We really did not have to expend many resources to get the results that we did receive. There was quite, I think, an interesting brainstorming session initially where we outlined really what Exceed Corporation was about and what other countries might be interested in purchasing from us. So that whole experience was very, very rewarding. And last but not least, the team and the individuals on the team were outstanding as well. They were all very committed to program, they were enthusiastic about being able to support Exceed. I even felt like they had ownership in the company as we continued to have dialog. So that was very beneficial and rewarding for Exceed and our team.

In terms of surprises and what we expected, I knew we would get a very good product. I mean this being the MBA Program at Maryland University, Executive MBA Program, but I had no idea that we would get what we received in terms of the level of detail, in terms of how it was tailored to the needs of Exceed Corporation, and to our strategy in pursuing business with Canada. And Canada was the country that we finally selected. So very surprised about that. Everything from the entry strategy to the exit strategy and all the studies in between, the risk analysis, the competitive analysis, the budget requirements. We had a certain amount of money that we were able and are able to allocate to this program – we'll be doing this in 2009. And they took that budget and they allocated that budget down to hourly rates and down to how much it would cost for travel and for setting up a storefront and which websites to access and register in, which companies, prime contractors we should pursue. I mean it was really, really detailed and a step-by-step approach to marketing the Canadian government.

**Spilman:** Wow, that's very impressive. What did you find most useful for your organization out of the plan? Was there anything that kind of stood out in terms of usefulness?

**Edwards:** In terms of usefulness, the plan of action stands out. Because really what it was, what it is, is a step-by-step approach to how to pursue business opportunities with the Canadian government. And this coming year, 2009, I plan to give our business development component within the company that strategy and tell them to implement the strategy. It's all there. It's a step-by-step, how-to pursue business in Canada. The plan of action, I think, was the one item that stands out.

**Spilman:** Well, it's pretty clear that you would do it again, then, but would you recommend this to somebody else to do?

**Edwards:** I would, for two reasons, one being the return on investment. You really do get a big bang for the buck in terms of resources and resource allocation. And secondly, I think with global economy that we have, today, it makes a lot of sense, really, to look at how your services, your company's services or products might be sold in a global marketplace. So yes, I would recommend it highly.

**Spilman:** And would you have any advice for other companies that may be considering participating?

**Edwards:** Get in line. Make the call and make it happen.

**Spilman:** Thank you. Let's turn now to one of the Executive Program participants who worked with his team to develop a plan for Exceed Corporation. Mr. Wiseberg, what did you find most interesting about working on the Exceed business plan?

**Wiseberg:** What we found to be most interesting was actually one of the softer components of working with clients. Trying to understand the root causes and justification for Exceed's desire to expand was one of the key components of our project. In addition, a lot of information that we needed was either unavailable or proprietary. So obtaining sufficient information to meet their needs and making sure that the assumptions we had were

valid, was a critical component and definitely required us to build a trust with Exceed. We did spend a good deal of time on it and I believe over time Exceed became comfortable with what we were presenting. We also knew that some of our analysis may be viewed unfavorably and we needed to make sure that Exceed was aware of what we were doing and once again, that any assumptions we made were valid and we found that to be a very interesting component of the project.

**Spilman:** And what did you consider the most challenging part of the project?

**Wiseberg:** On a more technical side, the most challenging part was definitely matching Exceed's core competencies and really narrowing them down and relating them to something that they could translate to the international market, in this case, Canada. Exceed performance worked for a wide variety of government agencies in the United States, but as a small company, it could not go after a wide variety of Canadian projects, so we really had to have a laser focus on what Exceed did well and could sell in a foreign market. And that was definitely difficult in terms of identifying it on both ends and trying to make sure that the match was a good match and that there was a suitable environment for Exceed to work in overseas. That was definitely the hardest part and the part that caused us the greatest amount of challenge during the semester.

**Spilman:** And has this experience proven useful to you in your current position?

**Wiseberg:** I've been fortunate to see Exceed from a number of multiple angles. Prior to this experience and during it, I worked as a government engineer in Maryland and an administrator, so I was on the receiving end of Exceed's services, essentially. I would put out contracts and receive consultant studies. After graduating, I took employment as an engineer in the consulting sector in a smaller consulting firm in New England. We experienced many of the same issues that Exceed does, such as defining market segments to pursue, how to evaluate whether they are valuable, and making sure that what we do meets client expectations.

**Spilman:** Thank you, Howard, and a very important final question. How did you feel about this project in the context of your entire Executive MBA experience? In other words, how important was the project for your Executive education?

**Wiseberg:** I believe this project was exceptionally important. What this project allowed was, it allowed us to utilize everything we learned in previous courses in the MBA Program – organizational structure, marketing, finance, international analysis – it required that we work with the client to understand their needs. It also allowed us to engage in a real-world application of all of these aspects in an environment where we had to produce a viable product, but where we were given the opportunity to fail on occasion, receive guidance, and in the end, produce something that hopefully exceeded the client's expectations.

**Spilman:** Thank you, Howard. Again, this is Dr. Mary Ann Spilman and I'd like to thank Miss Patricia Thornton, Mr. Al Edwards, and Mr. Howard Wiseberg for describing their experiences with the international business plan, which is the capstone project in the

UMUC Business and Executive Programs Podcasts  
**Executive MBA Education in Global World**

Executive MBA Program. And thank you listeners for joining Executive MBA Education in the Global World.

**UMUC Podcasting Disclaimer**

University of Maryland University College Podcasts contain recorded lectures, speeches, commentary, interviews, and recordings of events of interest to the university community.

Statements expressed by non-UMUC faculty, staff, students, or alumni do not necessarily reflect the views or official policies of UMUC. Discussion of content, goods, or services provided by outside entities does not imply UMUC endorsement.

**END**