

# Active association keeps alumni in touch

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in most major industries.

The reputation of any business school depends on good results, strong faculty and a diverse student mix, but alumni associations also play an important role in keeping graduates in touch and helping them form rewarding social and professional relationships.

Having organised more than 400 events over the last decade, the Manchester Business School (MBS) Alumni Association (China) Limited is a good example, providing a balance of instructive industry-themed seminars, career development sessions and social get-togethers.

"The range of events and activities is increasing all the time," says association chairman Christopher Carlin, adding that the aim is to appeal to a membership of executives who work

Although alumni inevitably have to juggle hectic schedules, they still find time to take part in charity events and CSR (corporate social responsibility) initiatives. "The willingness of members to commit their time and efforts to attend and support events says a lot about the way they want to give back to society," Carlin says.

Indeed, in the coming year, there are plans to step up involvement in Corporate Social Responsibility events.

In October, celebrating its 10th anniversary with a monopoly-themed annual dinner, the association welcomed more than 140 members and guests, including numerous guests of honour at Manchester Business School from UK, namely Professor Elaine Ferneley, MBA Director; Nigel Banister, Chief Executive Officer; and Chris Garnett, Head of Postgraduate Careers & Employability. The event's message of "aspire to achieve" was chosen to reinforce a commitment to seeking new perspectives in the world of business and to continuously upgrading skills. "Increasingly, in every area of business, people must be able to take a global perspective to succeed," says Carlin, who notes that the flexibility of the part-time Manchester MBA helps busy professionals develop the skills to take them to the next career level.

"The programme has been offered in Hong Kong for more than 20 years and is highly respected by employers," says Carlin, a graduate in 2012.

Pauline Lai, the association's founding chairlady, notes that it has grown into a strong international organisation over the last decade. "We have reached out to MBS alumni in Beijing, Shanghai, Singapore and Japan to organise and take part in events," she says.

Overall, there are now more than 50,000 MBS alumni spread across 169 countries. In an event to mark the school's 20th anniversary in Asia, the association co-organised a large-scale "Business Summit 2012" with the MBS East Asia Centre. This featured prominent academics and speakers, and profits were donated to the school as a show of appreciation for the support graduates received while studying for their MBA.

The association will continue to act as a bridge between students and graduates in Asia and "headquarters" in Manchester. It will also be a source of practical advice for those just starting the programme and, more generally, in sharing learning and business experiences.

However, Lai stresses that sharing knowledge is a two-way street, with senior alumni also expecting to learn from newer members and students. "Those of us who gained our MBAs a number of years ago realise the importance of continually upgrading our knowledge," she says, noting that Facebook was still unheard of when she completed her MBA.

With MBS approaching its 50th anniversary next year and with more professionals in Asia enrolling in the MBA programme, the alumni association will remain busy organising a wide range of events over the next 12 months, while also encouraging prospective students to pursue a cutting-edge business education.