

# Stress in the MBA Program

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This case may be used by current adopters of:

S. L. McShane *Canadian Organizational Behaviour*, 5th ed. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 2004); S. L. McShane & M. A. von Glinow, *Organizational Behavior*, 3rd ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2005); S. L. McShane & T. Travaglione, *Organisational Behaviour on the Pacific Rim*, 1st ed. (Sydney: McGraw-Hill Australia, 2003)

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# Stress in the MBA Program

By Jack Duffy, Dalhousie University

The following is a day in the stressful life of first year MBA student, Iggy Potzereebi.

Iggy arrived at the School of Business Administration Building at 8:35 for his 8:30 class (parking problems again). As usual, he felt a little shaky from his two cups of coffee on an empty stomach, so he had stopped at Tim Horton's for a couple of doughnuts and a coffee with double cream, to go. He'd eaten the doughnuts in his car, but the coffee was too hot to sip, so he carried it to class. He knew this would be a bad day when he subsequently spilled the coffee on his homework assignment that was due at the end of class. He pondered asking the professor if he could have an extension so he could print out a clean copy (assuming he hadn't deleted the file and could find it on his hard drive) or simply hand it in with the coffee stains. He decided to wait until the break to make up his mind.

During the lecture, Iggy kept daydreaming about the female student seated two rows in back of him. Probably because he frequently turned around to look at her, the instructor asked Iggy to explain the niceties of multiple regression forecasting for financial planning. This subject was, of course, quite a shift from Iggy's immediate train of thought and he did not answer the question admirably.

When the class break came, the professor immediately headed for the bathroom. Not able to follow her in there and not wanting to loiter outside the Women's Room, Iggy decided to chance finding the file, reprint his paper, and hand it in tomorrow. And if he couldn't find it, it should only take a few hours to re-input.

After class Iggy was going to explain his decision to the professor, but the female student two rows back appeared at his side and asked him to be her partner for the marketing case that was due the next week. Cogitating for well over a nanosecond, Iggy said sure. They decided to go for lunch and discuss their approach.

While waiting to be seated at the Bistro, Iggy debated if he should have a glass of white wine with lunch. Since he was famished at this point, he feared an alcoholic drink would quickly go to his head. When his date ordered a crantini, Iggy ordered a Bloody Mary figuring he could chase his drink with coffee and thus balance his metabolism. When his date ordered dessert, he changed his coffee to Irish Coffee.

Back at class that afternoon, Iggy was surprised to hear that a midterm exam was set for next week. Iggy had heard that there rarely were midterms in the MBA program, only finals. He had paced all his reading on that assumption. He suddenly realized that within the next week, five professors wanted him to read 10 chapters each, he had to reprint a paper with coffee stains, he had three case assignments due, and he had to find time for

an evening with Sissy Sassy (the woman two rows back who was now sitting next to him – much to his regret since she was snoring rather loudly).

Depressed at his workload he decided to cut class for the afternoon and go to the library to study. He found a padded seat next to a heat register and had a pleasant two-hour nap. When he awoke, he found a note from Sissy taped to his forehead. The note curtly told him that she had decided against getting an MBA degree. She was going to use her family inheritance to open a red tape factory. She believed she could sell enough red tape to the Canadian government to double her investment in the first year. She could foresee her company growing to international status, especially in the developing countries, which are experiencing an almost completely inelastic demand for red tape among their bureaucrats. She concluded that this enterprise beat the hell out of studying. As a postscript she asked Iggy if he wanted to be her second-in-command in this new venture. Unfortunately she left no forwarding address, but she did sprinkle perfume on the note.

Since it was only 4:30pm, Iggy reasoned that he could go to the registrar's office and get Sissy's home address before the office closed. He was pretty sure he didn't want to leave the MBA program, but it never hurt to have a lot of options, particularly with midterms approaching. He decided that he'd get her address and then sleep on his decision. As he headed for the parking lot, he noticed that his car had a flat tire.