

The perfect experience

David Parker has furthered his career as an IT consultant by earning his MBA at Aspen University – he talks about his experience and how the affordability and flexibility of Aspen’s programs were major considerations in his choice of a university.

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David Parker graduated from Aspen University with an MBA with a specialization in Project Management. During our interview, David talked about his experience as an Aspen student, how it fit his needs and helped him in his career.

What was your course of study?

I completed the MBA with IT Project Management (MBA-ITPM). The program was exactly what I was looking for to help me in my career.

What courses did you take and what did you think of them?

I completed the MBA-ITPM program in 2010. It was an excellent curriculum that was geared to me. The classes helped me in my current job as project manager by giving me tools I could put to use immediately. There were a lot of courses to choose from and one of the best things, for me, were the guidelines that helped me choose the classes and for moving forward towards the degree program.

The coursework and the program were geared specifically for someone working in my field. The program has helped me to better understand a number of aspects of the job that I did not have a full grasp of prior to completing this curriculum.

Why did you choose Aspen?

Its flexibility – I could fit my studies in with my busy work schedule and home life. Plus, for the quality of the education, the price was the best I could find anywhere and they had a program that was tailored towards my goals.

What did you choose this field of study?

Today, companies have a big need for project management and they want people with degrees in project management. Since I’m already an IT consultant, I needed to broaden my knowledge in project management so I could move up in my career.

What application do your Aspen MBA studies have to your current job?

As an IT consultant to small- and medium-sized businesses, both nationally and internationally, I need to be really good at project management so I can keep the work for my companies organized and going in the right direction. I put what I learned in my classes to use every day in my job.

How easy was it to fit your education into your home/work life?

It’s never easy to fit education in when you have a full-time job. But, I made it my priority and knew things would get better once I got my degree. One of the things I really liked about Aspen made it as flexible as I needed it to be. I don’t think any other institution would have worked with me the way Aspen did to help me balance my education with my already-busy life.

Describe what it's like to study online.

Online study requires discipline and self-motivation – maybe even more than when you go to a campus. You have to set your deadlines and priorities and stick with them. Other than that, it's much easier than having to go somewhere to take a class. Plus, you can use the time you would have driving to study.

Describe the virtual classroom.

It was really interactive – much more than I thought it would be. There were always other students and professors online and ready to talk with me. I learned a lot from them; it's a kind of forum for everyone to learn from the perspectives of others and participate at a level that they felt comfortable – just like a physical classroom, some talked a lot and others just listened in.

What do you think are the benefits of online learning?

For me, and other people, who wouldn't normally speak out in class, you feel more comfortable in interacting with others. It seemed to really encourage participation from those who may be shy or uncomfortable speaking in public. Plus, I had a lot of flexibility in terms of when projects were due and how I went about studying. Also, no gas used driving to a classroom helped financially and environmentally.

What attributes should you have to be a successful online student?

You have to be a self-motivated person; you have to really want to achieve your goal. You make it a commitment – just like you commit to going to your job every day.

You'll succeed if you have the ability to set aside the time and abide by it. Don't wait to finish a project. Be proactive and, especially, avoid procrastination. Do the projects as soon as they are assigned; it makes it a lot easier to get it done and not have to rush to get it turned in at the last minute.

Would you recommend online learning as a study mode?

I love this mode of study and would recommend it to anyone. It is the direction all education is heading and, I believe, will someday be the predominant mode of learning.

What kinds of relationships did you form with the professors and the other students?

I wouldn't say I formed any long-term relationships, but they are always there when I needed something. It was a critical support structure for me and I think anyone taking online courses should cultivate it, take full advantage of having someone to talk to just about 24 hours a day.

How many hours a day did you spend on your education?

I didn't need to spend time daily on the program. I would get online for a few hours a couple of times a week, complete my coursework, ask questions if I had them and turn in my projects. It was probably four hours a week, sometimes a few more when I had a really complex project but four was about average.

What is your overall impression of your Aspen experience?

I think Aspen University is an excellent educational institution. The professors helped me through and accommodated me in every way. I had the perfect experience.

About Aspen University's MBA with specialization in project management

The MBA with specialization in project management provides students with the skills essential to operating effectively in corporations and start-ups organized around project-driven teams, as most are today. Because of Aspen's demonstrated commitment to project management and recognized solid professional development infrastructure for the project management profession, we are approved as a Project Management Institute (PMI®) Charter Registered Education Provider. Our MBA with specialization in project management covers all of the knowledge areas in PMI's Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge. Find out more about this, and our other offerings, at www.aspen.edu.

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Suggested questions for future interviews

How are you using your degree in the corporate world?

Why did you choose Aspen University?

How did you discover Aspen University? (For our information, not necessarily for interview; it would be nice to know how students find out about the university)

Are you currently employed? If yes, what is your job?

Does your degree give you the practical skills needed for your job? What are those skills?

What was your favorite class?

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