

# IEDC Faculty: Learning from the best



*A School with a View*

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Dr. Daniel A. Szpiro,  
Executive MBA Co-Director and Professor of Accounting at the IEDC–Bled School of Management

## “THE IDEAL TIME TO BE A BETTER MANAGER IS WHEN TIMES ARE TOUGH”

Dr. Daniel A. Szpiro grew up in Canada. Before pursuing an academic career, he spent many years in various international activities in the consumer electronics industry. Nowadays, he is an award-winning teacher and expert on financial management, especially in the areas of management accounting, capital budgeting, post-investment review, and the Balanced Scorecard.

His academic career includes almost 20 years of experience in executive education including 15 years in administrative roles such as: Director of the National Executive MBA program at Queen’s School of Business at Queen’s University in Kingston, Canada; Associate Dean of Executive Education at the S.C. Johnson Graduate School of Management at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, and Dean of the Jack Welch Management Institute at Strayer University. These roles, along with extensive executive education teaching experience, have provided Danny the chance to meet and work with thousands of executive education candidates and students over the years.

When talking to Dr. Szpiro one thing is certainly obvious: his background and expertise in management accounting. This assures his clear goal-setting sensibility as his answers are always well structured and information-rich. At the same time, his practical experience in managing executive education programs leads to an openness that is a relatively rare asset for interviewees: readiness to listen.



You have been teaching at IEDC since 1997 and this year you took over another position: Co-Director of the Executive MBA program at IEDC. What are your goals, challenges, and hopes? I've been very proud to be attached to IEDC for 17 years and my new role, as Co-Director of EMBA Program, is definitely something I am very excited about. Since 1997 I've been focused on teaching here at IEDC. But as I have experience in program administration and have worked closely with many candidates and MBA students, I also have some valuable insights into what students want and how business schools can design their programs to meet those expectations. So, my hopes for my new function at IEDC are focused on making a contribution. With respect to curriculum, great MBA programs are always subject to continuous improvement. I am hopeful that my experience in designing programs and in teaching in executive education programs globally will permit me the opportunity to make a contribution to the evolution of the EMBA curriculum at IEDC. Another area where all business schools are focused is in refining the messaging to candidates about how the MBA experience can help them achieve their goals. I have worked extensively on this aspect of program growth with programs in North America and I am very interested to see if those insights can be applied here at IEDC. However, the first step is making sure I have a comprehensive understanding of what is really important for the School and its students. So, at this early stage it's premature for me to describe any specific projects or goals.

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If you compare European MBA students to North American students, what would be the biggest difference? By definition, EMBA programs are designed for established managers

and professionals with, typically, 10-15 years of organizational experience. This is usually the point in one's career where a focus on functional expertise in a specific field (for example: IT, marketing, or finance) has taken you as far as you can go. Many people at this stage of a career feel that they have reached a plateau and are wondering how they can continue to advance their careers. What EMBA programs represent is exactly an answer to this issue: EMBA is the way to take experienced managers with deep, but narrow, skills further. To unlock their potential by broadening their skills. To move from being a functional manager or technical expert to becoming a general manager and leader.

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You have been strongly involved with the design and delivery of executive development offerings. As MBA students are usually a highly motivated group of strong achievers already, how can earning a MBA help them to advance their careers even more?

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EMBA programs require an investment of time and money. How is the global recession changing the approach of business schools, employers, and students in this perspective?

It's always tempting to avoid making investments during an economic downturn. This applies to both investments of time and money. Yet, we all know that is a short-term perspective. We also know that short-term perspectives can be dangerous.

Why? Because organizations must be focused on more than just cost-cutting in a downturn. In fact, the need to be as competitive as possible is never as great than during difficult economic times. By cutting the budget for managerial development and education, employers actually make it more difficult to find a way to succeed in this demanding environment and turn things around. The same observation can be made about the willingness of managers to invest in themselves: the ideal time to be a better manager is when times are tough. Examples of organizations that understand that now is the best time to invest in their managers, and managers who understand that now is the best time to invest in themselves, are examples of forward-thinking and a focus on more than just the short-term.

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**How do you define your success and the success of your students?**

Simple: success is the achievement of the goals that students brought to the program. All of us involved in the design and delivery of an EMBA experience are successful if our graduates are successful.

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**What is your favorite memory from the EMBA program at IEDC?**

I remember the EMBA Generation of 2011 at IEDC very fondly. We established a tradition to run around Bled Lake every morning before class started. We met each day at 7.00 AM and a hardcore group kept coming on these runs until the last day!

## MEET DANIEL PERSONALLY

**Finish the sentence:**

**My friends would describe me:**  
as having a great sense of humor.

**My biggest driver in life is:**

my family. I am married and have two children; my son is 18 years old, and my daughter is 17.

**My favorite sport is**

skiing.

**There's nothing better in life than:**

achieving your goals.

**The most powerful lesson I have learned:**

is not to take things personally.