



Coffee With Professor Fraser Johnson

Is there an Ivey prof, current or retired, who you'd like to have coffee with? Send your suggestions to intouch@ivey.uwo.ca

“One of the things that keeps Ivey great is that we’re prepared to change. We know that to lead we have to take bold steps and always be looking for opportunities to improve.”

A Chatham, Ontario native who did all three of his degrees at Ivey, Fraser Johnson, HBA '82, MBA '92, PhD '95, spent 12 years in auto parts manufacturing before returning to academia. After his PhD, he taught for two years at the University of British Columbia, and then joined Ivey again in 1998. Working closely with Professor Mike Leenders, Fraser developed an international reputation for supply chain management research, producing dozens of papers and a popular textbook, and working as part of the Ivey Purchasing Managers Index team. He serves as faculty director of the MBA program and holds the Leenders Purchasing Management Association of Canada Chair.

Why did you want to return to Ivey? One of the differentiators is the quality of the students at Ivey. In both the HBA and the MBA programs we attract students who are second to none. Our great students are one of the school's key success factors. As a university professor it's great to have bright and talented students in your class.

What is your approach to teaching? We engage students in a learning-by-doing approach that marries theory and practice. We all do it—Ivey professors have a shared approach to the way we manage the classroom experience. It's one of the distinguishing features of the Ivey brand.

But don't other schools do case studies too? Yes, but not like us. If you come to Ivey, the one thing you learn is how to make a decision. When our students discuss a case in class, we ask them what they want to do, why and how they plan to make it happen. After hundreds of cases, our grads are ready to hit the ground running.



PHOTOGRAPHER: NATION WONG

Why did you want to take on the leadership of the MBA program? The MBA program is immensely important to the School—it's our flagship program. We are the oldest MBA program in Canada, and the best. My goal is simple—to maintain Ivey's position as the preeminent business school in Canada and one of the leading MBA programs in the world.

So what sets the Ivey MBA apart? It's not what we did 50 or 60 years ago: it's the fact that we continue to innovate and update the program, making it relevant to what business leaders need today. There are several key elements that make our program a unique value proposition—the intensive 12-month format, the focus on preparing leaders for the real world, the case study method of teaching, the great students and faculty. And soon we're going to have a showpiece building to house it.

Will the program change under your leadership? I'm an operations guy, so I'm a strong believer in continuous improvement. We take a look at the program every year and identify opportunities to make improvements and add value. That's not going to change. One change that is definitely coming—we'll be moving to a single intake point in April 2010, to be in line with the global recruiting cycle for MBA grads.

Why do you like to compare Ivey to the New York Yankees? Even people who don't know baseball know who the Yankees are. They're the premier brand in professional baseball. They've won more championships than any other club, and they're a contender every year. Love them or hate them, they are the gold standard for the rest of the league. That's true of Ivey too. The culture of Ivey is that we expect to be the best business school in Canada and we do whatever it takes to maintain this position.

www.ivey.uwo.ca/Faculty/Fraser_Johnson.html