

## ADOI DAILY FRESH NEWS

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### Gavin Hoh, winner of the Astro-4As Scholarship 2010, shares his unique experience at Berlin School.

Every year, only one creative professional manages to thrill the Astro-4As Scholarship judging committee and win the prestigious award. First opened to fulltime employees of 4As member agencies in 2007, the Astro-4As Scholarship enables deserving individuals in the industry to pursue postgraduate studies in a university or institution of their picking.

Year 2010 marked a precedent, however. This time, the scholarship venue was predetermined, presenting winners with the opportunity to study in some of the most vibrant and creative cities in the world. ADOI spoke with the current year's scholar, Gavin Hoh, at his office in McCann Erikson...

#### Gavin Hoh @ a Glance

- Current position: Creative Group Head @ McCann Erikson
- Prize: Executive MBA (EMBA) programme in Creative Leadership, Berlin School
- Creative industry hotspots Gavin visited under the programme: Berlin, Tokyo, Shanghai & coming up: New York
- Brief self-description of career journey: One of "constant change"



About midway through the programme, Gavin is eager to share with us gleanings of his globe-trotting venture, "The executive MBA programme at Berlin School varies from the usual full time MBA. It's divided into five flexible modules, where you will be away from work for only 10 weeks, travelling across four major countries: Germany, Japan, China, and the US. Spaced out, the work-and-study arrangement is much easier to manage."

"So far, I've covered Berlin twice, and the Asia modules in Tokyo and Shanghai. US is up next." Describing his career journey as one of constant change, Gavin Hoh began his climb up the creative ladder as a writer for the Star newspaper, contributing to the AudioFile section. Since then, he has made a few strategic leaps from JWT to DraftFCB and McCann Erikson where he is currently leading a creative team.

For someone who didn't study writing or advertising, Gavin knows his trade well and is clearly passionate about it. This was evident when he talked about the topic for his thesis proposal: how the next generation of Asian brands will rise to dominance. In a competitive industry where the faint of heart tend to drop out due to burnout, Gavin believes that there are no absolutes in life. According to him, one has to stay adaptable; work on other projects instead of obsessing over a particular idea for too long.

Sharing about his biggest take away from the programme, Gavin commented that there wasn't a difference between a creative professional in the US and a local one. "We all talk about the same issues, face the same struggles, subscribe to similar standards of work within the industry."

"The leadership classes were eye-opening," he added. "Some of the experiences are the kind you don't get from reading a book or even figuring things out on your own. They were unique, composed of the diverse characters in your class, their interaction with you, and the instructor leading the class."

Diversity-wise, he cites being in the same class as a music producer, a marketing leader, and a creative director from Google Labs, among others - as well as being taught by a fascinating German accounts lecturer, Japanese investors, and industry greats like Stefan Sagmeister. Beyond classroom exposure, he also conducted field studies at an avant garde industrial park city, big-name agencies like Hakahudo, and the World Trade exhibition in Shanghai.

Asked about the inherent qualities that make him the leader he is today, Gavin was quick to downplay the question, replying self-effacingly, "It's not the qualities I have, but qualities we all need to keep working on to develop. I would work on 'vision'. Other qualities can be managed or developed, but it is rare to see leaders without vision."

The Astro-4As Scholarship 2010/2011 is now open for submissions and will close 15 November 2010. For enquiries, call 03-7660 8535 (Donovan Foong) or email [donfoong@macomm.com.my](mailto:donfoong@macomm.com.my).