

My Harvard Experience. By Conor O'Halloran

After hearing so many great things from former participants, I was thrilled to be selected by *CTAM Canada* to attend the Cable Executive Management Program at *Harvard Business School (HBS)*. This year, the program transitioned from the typical 1-week in person course to a 5-week online program. Being the first *CTAM Canada* member to participate in the program virtually, I am excited to share my experience.

After the start of COVID-19, *HBS* was forced to transition quickly to online learning. The large investment made by *HBS* to master the experience was clear throughout the program. Professors are set-up on campus in a dedicated studio designed for online classes. During lectures, life-sized monitors delivering a stream of each student are set-up around the professors. This allowed them to interact with students in a way that really simulated the classroom environment. Although exploring *Harvard's* campus in person would have been a memorable opportunity, the online infrastructure went miles beyond a typical *Zoom* call and made students feel that they were actually in the classroom.

The program's content was mainly oriented around case studies and touched upon some of the most relevant topics in today's media landscape. We took a deep dive into the demise of *Blockbuster*, news media successes internationally, and the economics of *Disney's* tentpole movie strategy. Beyond media, we also had many cases that reinforced more universal business concepts around branding, financial analysis, customer support, and negotiations. We even had a session dedicated to emerging technologies on Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain. For many of these case studies, you are learning from professors who actually wrote the case, researched the issues, and interviewed the protagonists. This background allowed them to add a huge amount of value and deliver practical learnings for the students.

What elevated the benefits of the case studies to another level was the discussions with the other media professionals you go through the program with. The *CTAM* cohort is a diverse group of senior leaders in the media industry. There was a mix of representation from familiar Canadian companies, major U.S. conglomerates, and smaller independent players. Coming from different backgrounds in distribution, content acquisition, legal, technology, finance, and more allowed for unique perspectives to radiate throughout the conversations. Having the opportunity to deconstruct the *MoviePass* business model with a VP of Theatrical Distribution at a major studio is an experience that you will not find anywhere else.

For any *CTAM Canada* member that has ever considered participating in the Cable Executive Management Program, I would highly encourage them to apply. After experiencing it firsthand, I truly believe it is one of the most valuable opportunities offered to *CTAM Canada* members. You will walk away from the program with practical takeaways for your job, an expanded network of media professionals, and a new motivation to continue learning!