

Case Study | Qualifications

David Fowler

Head of Business Intelligence at FIFA

When I left school, I attempted a career in football but when that didn't work out I decided to go back to education and try a university entry degree. Back in the mid-90s, marketing felt like an exciting and fast-growing discipline so I decided to study that and was lucky enough to graduate with a first class honours degree.

I found myself gravitating towards the sports side of marketing and eventually managed to get a role in sports sponsorship, while doing an International Masters in Humanities Management and Law of Sports to help me to help expand my skill set.

I've been working for my current employer, the world governing body of football (FIFA), for about 12 years now, all the while living in Zurich. But while I've loved working in sports, a few years back I felt I wasn't going in quite the direction I wanted, so I decided to do the CIM postgraduate diploma in marketing. It had been more or less 20 years since I'd done my degree and I had a hunch that marketing was moving on faster than I was keeping up with it. After researching different providers, I settled on CIM because I wanted the credibility of a marketing organisation with global recognition.

The course wound up being quite stop-start for me due to work commitments and so while you can do it in one year, I took about two years. Another reason it took longer was that I underestimated the commitment involved and I had to re-sit two of the four modules.

Nevertheless, this is ultimately part of the reason why I would recommend the course to others. It is not a walk in the park, especially for anyone holding down a fairly demanding day job. I felt a real sense of satisfaction at having got over a few bumps and I managed in the end to achieve two top student awards.

I found it highly valuable to be able to base three of the four modules - emerging themes; managing corporate reputation; marketing leadership and planning - on my employer. I was able to sit down with various departments at work to debrief them on my experiences and recommendations. The fourth module, analysis and decision making, was purely an examination - no assignment.

In particular, the emerging themes module stands out as it gave me freedom to explore and educate myself on a 'live' topic - the impact of social media on the sports sponsorship sector. Only a few short years since exploring this theme, it has gripped the sports sponsorship world and forced everyone to rip up the established rulebook.



I went in to the course aiming to get myself up-to-date on the latest marketing theory and to strengthen my own career prospects. In the end, I came out with this and more, including an ability to better structure my thoughts on strategic marketing issues and to identify quickly what areas I need to focus on.



Since doing the course I was asked to establish a business intelligence function within the commercial division of FIFA, which I believe was a vote of confidence in my analytical and strategic capabilities - both of which were sharpened during my time studying the CIM postgraduate diploma.

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Claire Bates

Postgraduate diploma, 30

Online Marketing Manager at Danilo

Having really enjoyed my business studies A level, I had no hesitation in applying for a business management degree at University. And it was during my placement year – when I worked for a luxury tour operator as their marketing assistant – that I really fell in love with a career in marketing. I particularly loved that it enabled me to be both creative and strategic.

My first graduate job was campaign co-ordinator for Clinton Cards. I immediately took to the diversity of the role and the challenges it presented me with, but I found I was still keen to learn and build on my degree. When I asked around, all my marketing contacts recommended CIM, saying the courses were professional, well-designed and widely recognised. I also liked the fact that there were so many locations to choose from – with one very close to me in Liverpool Street. I opted for the postgraduate diploma due it being the highest level of qualification that CIM offered plus the modules appeared to be highly relevant and useful for a marketer wanting to progress to senior management level

Theoretically, you can gain the qualification within a year, covering each of the four modules in three-month periods. That's what I did for the first two and I was immediately impressed with how applicable the content was to my daily job. My role was quite PR and event focused and the managing corporate reputation module really opened my eyes to how wide the opportunities were, while the emerging themes module really got me thinking about the future of my particular industry, especially the trend towards personalisation of cards.

I attended a fantastic study centre for three hours every Tuesday evening with around 20 other students from a wide variety of industries from banking to retail. I found that time would fly by because we'd have such interesting debates, all bringing our own examples from work to discuss. The course also required us to complete tasks in our own time, which I generally completed at the weekends.

Unfortunately, half way through my course, Clinton Cards went into administration and I was made redundant, so I had to put everything on hold. CIM was both understanding and flexible and let me pick it up again when I got my current job as marketing manager at calendar and greeting card publishers Danilo. As with many SMEs, I'm the sole marketer here, so the next two modules on my course – analysis and decision and marketing leadership and planning, I found to be highly appropriate and useful for my role. I even ended up winning the Top Student award from CIM for the latter module, which involved me creating a comprehensive marketing strategy for my company.



Eighteen months on, I couldn't be more pleased I completed the course. My skill set is much more varied and I'm able to merge theory and practice together in a more sophisticated way that ultimately benefits the company and gives me greater job satisfaction.



It's also made me a lot more forward thinking and less risk averse. It's all too easy in marketing, especially in SMEs, to find yourself in a fire-fighting position and fail to put marketing strategies in place to help move the company forward – but I now do that without hesitation.

Perhaps the most surprising outcome for me has been the fantastic networking opportunities CIM has provided. I still keep in touch with some of the people I did the course with and my marketing contacts continue to grow. Having completed the course, I would definitely recommend the Postgraduate Diploma for any marketer looking to further their skills, their network and their career.