

Chicago GSB Alumni Reception - Spring 2004: Keynote Address

By
K. Rizwan Kadir, '97

Thanks David. That was an overly generous introduction, which simply proves that people will say anything about you – if you pay them enough !

Good evening. What a crowd! Great friends, great organizations.

My mandate tonight is to be the cheerleader for the GSB. Now, there are many things I've wanted to do in life – cheerleading wasn't one of them. Nonetheless, when this opportunity presented itself, I grabbed it by the horns, err, pompoms !

Jokes aside, I strongly believe that being affiliated with the GSB as an alum or a student is one of the best things that can happen in one's professional life. There's something special about this place, folks, and our goal tonight is to strengthen that feeling, especially in beyond the school years.

High level view:

The influence of the GSB goes beyond our professional lives. Here are a couple of examples:

Two of my best courses at the GSB were by Merton Miller and Marvin Zonis. While Mert, as we affectionately called him, talked about how regulation influences policy making, Marvin Zonis's class provided an intellectual framework for understanding political economy. Both of those aspects have helped me grow as a professional. Moreover, I do not have any qualms about saying that both of those courses also changed me – for the better – as a person.

Speaking of Merton Miller, we have a proud legacy at the GSB in particular, and at the University of Chicago in general. Mert was hired by George Stigler, who was hired by Milton Friedman. All Nobel laureates, all giants of economic thinking.

The legacy of applied thinking and professional excellence continues at the GSB. Being involved in the financial and investment management field myself, I can tell you that there are not many other schools which offer classes such as Pietro Veronesi's Fixed Income or Financial Risk Management or Luigi Zingales's Financial Theory or John Cochrane's Advanced Investments.

Having said that, most of the rest of the world doesn't know that. In my observation, a typical trait of GSB'ers is that they are highly confident of who they are, but are not the type to blow their own trumpets. We – the alumni and the students - are the biggest promoters of this school, and therefore, we need to take a pro-active stance here to change such misconceptions.

Developing Greater Bonds Among the Alumni:

I'm a Chicagoan, so I'll concentrate on how the Chicago GSB helps to cultivate and develop bonds among its alumni in this city. There are over half a dozen Roundtables events every month at the GSB. These are among the best professional networks you'll ever find. Besides networking and socializing, there is a lot of learning that goes on at these events.

I hope everyone here tonight has signed up for at least one roundtable.

Allow me to share with you how these roundtables can be a boon to one's career.

Dennis Aust - class of 1980 - has been running the Consulting Roundtable for quite some time. About 2 years ago, he asked me to be on panel titled "Tales from the Dot com". Sitting next to me at the panel was Neil Kane - class of '91. A year later, when Neil started a venture capital firm, I was able to hook up with him. A month later, I was asked to be their CFO. A year later, when I needed a reference for my present job, Neil came through for me once again.

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As I said before, people will say anything if you pay. . .

Speaking of references, I have found the GSB Face Book (now called the Community Directory) to be a great reference check. It is my understanding that all of our work history information in the Face Book is verified by the GSB, and as such, it serves as a very useful resource. I have also found it to be a useful tool for initial conversations with students and alumni.

Going back to the Roundtables, not too long ago, the GSB decided to archive the Roundtable presentations. Again, here is a great resource for professionals. Inevitably some of these are outdated but most will retain their currency, and in some cases, classic status. As an example, recently when I was looking to educate myself on the subject of CRM (Customer Relationship Management), I found 3 excellent presentations on the GSB Marketing Roundtable's web page.

From a personal example, a couple of years ago, I conducted a Chess Camp at my son's elementary school. I had never taught chess before, and in conducting the background research, I came across the GSB Chess Club, which has a number of meaningful resources, all of which helped me develop a training manual for a highly successful Chess Camp.

And just this morning, I had a conversation with a venture capitalist. While googling for information on him before our conversation, one of the first sites which came up was the GSB High Tech Group's where he had participated on a panel last year. The bit of information gleaned from that website was very useful in my conversation this afternoon.

In our professional lives, we are often re-located or we move for career advancement. Whenever you move to another city, simply look up any alums in that neck of the woods. If there isn't an alumni club there, consider starting one up yourself. It can even be a virtual (online) club in the beginning.

In preparing for tonight's event, I asked some GSB alumni for any nuggets of wisdom. Here are a few:

- As you go through your career keep track of the people you work with - co-workers, clients, vendors, etc. - in your own database - not just your company's - and keep touch with them periodically. This will help you maintain relationships as your career progresses.
- Live life fully. Don't forget to learn the lessons from your failures and/or mistakes.
- Keep good friends and family who are not afraid to give you wise counsel; respect others' opinions and give them time and help to understand your perspective.
- Sometimes, lucrative and interesting work that utilizes your education often may come in unexpected arenas. And, in the larger picture, maybe you were meant to play a part in a greater puzzle than you ever anticipated. With patience, intelligent work, and a good lifestyle, good results can be found - ultimately.

Lastly, remember these as my parting words and food for thought:

- Since leaving the GSB, every job that I've had, every interview, every consulting project, every professional contact - had Chicago GSB written all over it !

Thanks for coming. Hope this was a meaningful experience for you.