

Spring 2016

# DAN Management Alumni Connection



## Profile

### Alumnus encourages connecting and community

When Dipesh Parmar, BACS'03, came to London, Ont., to attend Western, he never envisioned he would land his dream job, obtain his Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) designation and make London his permanent home. Now, a Senior Manager at PwC – where he's worked since graduating – he says there is no place he would rather be.

"My wife and I both grew up outside of Toronto and moved to London to come to Western. Seventeen years later we're still here, raising our son and daughter. The quality of life we have here, thanks to our community involvement, the work-life balance and the cost of living, makes it a great place to raise a family," he says.

In his role as Senior Manager, Assurance, at PwC, Parmar works with private, public and not-for-profit organizations providing assurance services for his clients. Thanks to encouragement he received in his second year from a professor, he decided to obtain his CPA and he's never looked back.

"One of the best things about my job is the variety of the work and the opportunity to engage with clients across a number of industries. It's also a young, fast-paced and energetic environment where continuous learning and development is at the forefront, which keeps me engaged and excited about my future with PwC. The impact that my work can have on a client's organization is very motivating," he explains.

In addition to his responsibilities at PwC, Parmar is involved in a number of projects

in the community and on campus, including serving as Board Member and Treasurer of the Finance and Audit Committee for the Pillar Nonprofit Network, and as Chair of The Children's Golf Classic, which raises more than \$230,000 annually for the Children's Health Foundation.

**"This connection between students and alumni is key to developing the softer business skills and increasing the DAN Management brand, while providing the students with insight into what they can do with their degree."**

**-Dipesh Parmar, BACS'03**

"It's very busy," he says. "But I get a lot of support, autonomy and flexibility to decide where and when I work. That makes it possible for me to properly balance career, family, and my extracurricular activities, which includes plenty of time on the golf course in the summer."

He also remains connected to the Western community, recruiting Western

students to PwC each year in addition to engaging with the DAN Management and Organizational Studies program. It is designed to help and mentor students and guide them through the challenges and opportunities that come with transitioning from university to the work force.

He is encouraged by how much the DAN program has grown, not only in numbers, but also in alumni connectivity. "This connection between students and alumni is key to developing the softer business skills and increasing the DAN Management brand, while providing the students with insight into what they can do with their degree," he says. "Historically, the big focus was on the grades. Now, I encourage students to layer in developing communication and teamwork skills, and at the same time to give back to the community," he explains.

Moving forward, Parmar sees continued opportunities for himself in his career at PwC, his community outreach and his involvement with DAN students and graduates. "As a student, I really didn't get as much exposure as I might have to what was possible after graduation. I love giving back and being a part of the networking events the DAN Management Student Association runs. It's great to see so many first- and second-year students in attendance, gaining insight into career opportunities, witnessing first-hand what alumni are doing, and building those connections that will help them land that dream job."

# A message from the Chair

## Continuing to build pride



**Ann Bigelow, Acting Chair**  
*DAN Management and Organizational Studies  
 Faculty of Social Science*

There is so much to say about the DAN Management program, it is hard to know where to begin.

All of us in the DAN program have a deep sense of pride in what we've built, in our students, and in our ever-growing alumni. I hope that you, our alumni, are excited to see what has been happening in the program where you spent your undergraduate years. We offer our students a unique perspective on management education and a great learning experience. There are regular developments that enhance our ability to give the best we can to our students, and several of them are highlighted in this newsletter.

The DAN Management Alumni Connect event is a terrific event in which about 20 alumni come back to campus and share insights into their current positions and openly reflect on their experiences after graduation. Our students are faced with increasingly competitive job markets, and the alumni in attendance share their insights into post-graduate studies, interview questions, recruitment cycles and general career advice.

I'd also like to share some information about our new Graduate Diploma in Accounting which has been accredited by CPA Ontario. The faculty in the program will ensure our students get the best possible launch into their accounting careers. Students who complete the Graduate Diploma will enter the CPA Professional Education Program at the Capstone 1 level. It has been very rewarding to work with the faculty in the development of this exciting new program.

Finally, I'm sure that many of you will have had the pleasure of being in an Operations Management class with Professor Rick Burjaw. Unfortunately for students who will graduate after 2016, Rick is retiring on June 30 after 12 years of entertaining and teaching our students. We wish him all the best, and hope that he will have an active and healthy retirement.



## Where is your Network?

Who are your fellow DAN alumni and where are they now? With ACS and BMOS graduates working in a variety of fields, including finance, accounting, marketing, human resources and aviation management, the DAN alumni network is strong and spans the globe.



**6,569**  
 ACS alumni in  
**51** countries

**5,174**  
 BMOS alumni in  
**34** countries



**35.5**  
 Average age overall

**46** Average age for ACS  
**28** Average age for BMOS



**3,286**  
 ACS

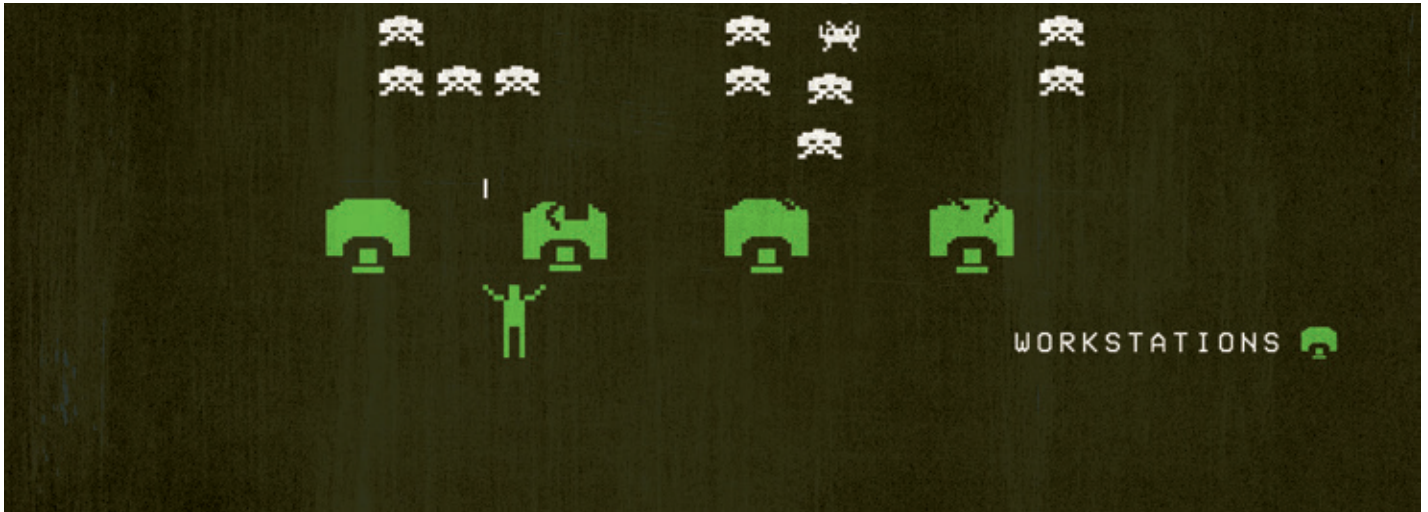
**2,517**  
 BMOS



**3,283**  
 ACS

**2,657**  
 BMOS

# Research shines light into darker side of gaming industry



In its early days, the video game industry was perceived as a fun, high-tech business where young creative types were 'paid to play games all day.' Then in 2004, in an open letter to Electronic Arts (EA) executives, a disgruntled partner of an EA employee brought the darker side of the industry to light in an anonymous blog post. Her exposé told of seven-day, 80-hour work weeks and a mantra of 'put-up, shut-up or leave.'

"The post was quite damning," recalls Johanna Weststar, a DAN Management and Organizational Studies professor. "A wholesale criticism around the work practices of EA – and the entire industry – bled into health and relationship concerns."

Weststar, who was working on her PhD in Industrial Relations and Human Resources at the time, was intrigued, and intent to learn more about videogame developers, an understudied group of workers. Five years later, she got her chance.

The 'EA Spouse,' Erin Hoffman, is credited for initiating a quality-of-life movement in the gaming industry. Her tell-all prompted 5,000 responses from developers sharing similar experiences, and the first industry quality-of-life survey in 2004.

A call for a follow-up survey in 2009 brought Weststar into the fold. Along with fellow researcher Marie-Josée Legault of TÉLUQ University, Weststar partnered with the International Game Developers Association (IGDA) to author the 2009 survey and analyze the data, as she did for the

subsequent Developer Satisfaction Surveys of 2014 and 2015.

"The survey data allows us to track the working conditions of the videogame industry, which helps inform our academic work on work/life balance, equity,



Johanna Weststar, a DAN Management and Organizational Studies professor

compensation, representation and unionization. The conversations we have with the developers help the industry be better informed, with industry leaders and developers consciously using that data to set their agendas," Weststar explains.

One of the most controversial issues revealed in the EA Spouse post was the issue of 'crunch' – a sustained period of long working hours without compensation.

"We think the use of the word, 'crunch' is deliberate. Management doesn't want to say, 'overtime' because that word has very direct implications that we all understand, like pay for extra hours. Whereas, 'crunch' has become an acceptable industry term that

describes what happens when you 'just have to meet a milestone.'

California law – similar to that in Ontario – exempts businesses from having to pay overtime to certain 'specialty' employees, including software programmers, leaving developers without a lot of recourse. In the case of EA, a lawsuit seeking overtime resulted in a payout and a reclassification allowing employees to be entitled to compensation, but that didn't mean crunch became a forgotten trend.

In fact, as Weststar and Legault reported to industry representatives at an IGDA leadership summit this past fall, there are still studios practicing intense crunch, with 60 per cent of developers still not compensated for crunch hours in 2014.

"There is still an ethos of 'this is how you make games' and many developers have internalized that view, and are willing to sacrifice everything – including their mental and physical health, and their relationships for 'the love of the game.'

"This is not an industry that ages well," continues Weststar, noting that when employees decide to start families, or are ready for a healthier work/life balance, they feel their only option is to leave the business entirely.

"If the gaming industry really wants to mature, they need to face the issues around working conditions – and not just 'crunch' but other important issues such as sexism."

# Looking for that ‘network’ effect



Every January, DAN Management and Organizational Studies students are invited to kick off the New Year by coming together with alumni for an evening of networking at the DAN Management Students' Association (DMSA) Connect event.

This year's event – the 8th annual – took place on Jan. 13 and was sold out, drawing more than 100 students looking to engage with 20 alumni and receive tips on how to transition from university to the professional business world.

“It's an opportunity for students to invest in their careers,” says Chanelle Muir, BMOS'16, DMSA President. “It's a daunting task to make that move from academics to the workforce. We're really fortunate to have such engaged alumni take part. They've been where students today are now and they're so willing to share their expertise and to give back.”

The event format consists of two segments: the first, a “speed dating” rotation, introduces students to five different graduates from their chosen stream (Consumer Behaviour, Human Resources, Accounting or Finance). Following that, there is an open-floor networking hour where students can approach alumni more informally.

“These events are critical so students can learn how to network, how to compete and how to market themselves,” Muir explains, adding that there have been people who have been hired as a result of contacts they've made during CONNECT. “With any networking event, you don't just network with that one alumnus or alumna,

but with that person's entire network as well. It's a chain effect.”

Joelle Elfassy, BMOS'12, who sits on the DAN Management Alumni Advisory Council, has been participating as an alumni volunteer at the event for the past three years and says it's not just students who benefit from these opportunities.

“It's also a time for self-reflection for alumni. We put ourselves in the students' shoes and remember our own journey. A lot of students are lost and unsure and many of us were there once. We all had a journey and it's about helping them on theirs. There are so many possibilities open to them and we can help them succeed and provide them with the tools they need,” she says. “When young professionals get involved, students feel like they can talk to us and ask us questions. If they have access to us and we're accessible to them, we can help prepare them for when they're employees.”

Katelyn Cox, BMOS'16, a fourth-year student and first-time CONNECT attendee, agrees the event was successful, not only in giving students the opportunity to learn how to behave in a professional way, but also to make connections that can last long after the event.

“A number of people I know have begun a dialogue online with alumni they met. It's so valuable to have that chance to talk to young grads about any challenges they faced or any tips they may have,” she says. “It really is true what they say: these days your network is your net worth.”

## Advance. Earn. Work.

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### Giving to DAN

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