Interview with Ramya Ramaswamy, Market Research Project Manager at Blueocean Market Intelligence

By Shreevaishnavi Venugopalan

After graduating with a degree in Electronics and Communication Engineering from a prestigious institution in India, Ramya worked as a senior market research analyst with Beroe Consulting in Chennai, India. With two years of work experience in market research, she decided to pursue a Master in Engineering Management at Duke. After an enriching experience at Duke, Ramya joined Blueocean Market Intelligence as a market research project manager. Currently, she manages market tracking studies for the server and tools business at Microsoft.

After a long day of work and a long meeting in the evening, Ramya is ready for the informational interview.

"Hi, Ramya. How are you today? And is this a good time to talk?"

"I just got home after a long day at work and a meeting that ran late, but I'm good to go," says Ramya.

"Thanks a lot for taking out time after a long day at work to share your experience with current students. What does your typical day at work look like?"

"I would not call my day at work hectic, but it is definitely unpredictable. My work involves coordinating with multiple research managers and bringing together different moving parts in a project. This calls for several meetings beginning as early as 7 AM in the morning. Sometimes such meetings can run late into the night till 8 PM, just like today. 60% of my work involves project management and the remaining 40% involves market research."

> *60% of my work involves project management and the remaining 40% involves market research.*

"That sounds like it involves a good amount of interpersonal skills. What do you think are the most valuable traits in your area of work?"

"Three traits that I consider most valuable are interpersonal skills, agility, and attention to detail. In today's world, these traits are very important irrespective of the field of work. Effective communication and the ability to find opportunities to lead/innovate is the key to being a successful project manager."

"What in your opinion is the biggest challenge for an MEM student entering the industry at this role?"

"In my understanding, MEM students have an average of 1.5-2 years of work experience. This experience is often not sufficient to enter into this field. One should not only have strong business skills, but also possess the necessary technical skills to manage a team. Usually, project managers have an average work experience of 5-6 years and/or an MBA degree.

CAPM has proved to be a great value addition to my career. It is recommended for professionals with less than a year of project management experience."

"That sounds overwhelming. Do you see that MEM is viewed different from a MBA?"

"At work, MEM is not viewed too different from an MBA. MEM offers great elective choices. A student can wisely choose electives to tailor the program to fit their career goals. Practicums and team-based projects in MEM are similar to an MBA experience. However, the difference often comes in the work experience that a candidate possesses as MBA candidates tend to have more experience than MEMers."

"That is very encouraging. What are some of the courses that the students should consider taking up if they are considering a career in market research/project management?"

"Project Management is a great course which facilitates the team based learning experience. New Product Development and Supply Chain Management helped me develop analytical thinking and understand how businesses function. The marketing simulation experience from the marketing class gave a taste of decision making in the real world."

CAPM has proved to be a great value addition to my career. It is recommended for professionals with less than a year of project management experience.

"I am sure this will be very helpful for the students considering a career in market research. To help them gain a perspective of the industry, could you tell me about the work culture at Blueocean?"

"Blueocean has its research base in India where about 600 analysts work. Onsite resources in the US is limited – about 20 employees. Blueocean follows a startup-like work culture. It is dynamic and fast paced. Individual career goals are always kept in mind while allocating projects."

"Since you work onsite for Microsoft, would you be able to throw some light on the work culture of Microsoft?"

"It is a great company to work with Microsoft. The organization is very process-oriented. They have a standard organizational structure which leads to a structured decision-making approach. I also get to meet experienced professionals who are thoughtful leaders."

"I guess your role has a fair mix of working with both organizations and helps you get the best of both worlds. Where do you see yourself 5 to 10 years from now, professionally?"

"Currently, I am getting to learn project management in the technology domain. In the long run, I would also like to explore product management and explore other industries beyond the technology industry. Eventually, my dream is to have my own business."

"I hope you make it big. Thanks a lot for spending time telling MEMers more about your job profile and what they would need to be doing if they are interested in this field."

"Glad I could help. Hope I provided some useful insight which will help current MEMers. GO DUKE!!" ∎