

Abhishek Damani, Pricing Manager At Cummins Inc. Talks About His Career



MEMP Alumnus

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After receiving his undergraduate degree in Chemical Engineering from India,

Abhishek Damani began his career as an Energy Engineer with Anama Energetech Solutions Pvt. Ltd. While pursuing his bachelor's degree, and during his first job, he felt the need to supplement his education and experience with a Master's degree. He faced the typical dilemma of choosing between a career path focusing on the technical aspects of engineering or a route that would expose him more towards the business fundamentals that go along with engineering. While working as an Energy Engineer, Abhishek did not restrict himself to his

engineering role, but also explored the space of Sales and Marketing by working on strategy and by cold calling potential clients. His experiences in the realm of brand and marketing management proved to be transformational as he opted to pursue a career in marketing. Abhishek decided to pursue the Master of Engineering Management (MEM) program at Duke, a degree program that helped him leverage his technical expertise and at the same time, allow him to build business skills. He joined Cummins Inc. as a Marketing and Product Management Intern over the summer of 2010, and was later offered a full time role as a Market Research Analyst at Cummins. He has assumed various roles such as a Market Research Manager and is currently working as a Pricing Manager in the company.

“Hello Abhishek, How have you been? Thank you so much for offering to talk to me about how MEM has helped shaped your career.”

“Hi Vaishnavi, I am good. It is my pleasure to be talking to you today about my experiences with Cummins. I believe this is a great initiative by CDAR and I am happy to be contributing to this effort. How are you liking it at Duke so far?”

“The experience at Duke has been fabulous so far. The program is a treat. It has taught me a lot over the past couple of months. How did Duke help you shape your career?”

“Duke was a great experience for me and I made the most out of it by maximizing the courses I took. I took several electives from the business school and also audited courses in addition to this. These courses helped me hone my analytical skills that continue to be very valuable in my field of work. I chose to complete the course over three semesters and this gave me an opportunity to make the most of my Duke experience and also obtain an internship opportunity at Cummins.”

“It is great to hear that Duke has added such great value. It would be great if you could share details pertaining to your role at Cummins.”

“I first joined Cummins as a Marketing and Product Management Intern in 2010 and obtained a full time offer to join the organization as a Market Research Analyst in 2011. Having worked with Cummins over the summer as an intern, I was convinced about taking up a full time offer with the organization. The analyst role required exceptional analytical skills. It

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helped me grow within the organization and assume the role of a Market Research Manager. Currently, I am the Pricing Manager, leading pricing for the Emissions business at Cummins. The role requires a combination of strategy and execution, of which I predominantly work on the strategy piece of the puzzle while my team works on the execution aspect”

“Having described your career transformation at Cummins, could you briefly tell me about a typical day at work? “

“Like I mentioned, the role of a Pricing Manager involves both strategy and execution. I work on the strategy bit and my team works on execution. The system being in place is crucial for pricing. I spend time every morning on ensuring this is in place by performing a system readiness check, which checks if the prices are flowing right within the system. I work closely with my team on problems they face with the execution. I spend a huge chunk of my day on projects and meetings associated with delivering the same.”

As an analyst, the skills that are crucial to one’s success are advanced analytical skills, organizational skills, modeling, extensive use of Monte Carlo simulations and being able to depict the analysis in terms of effective charts and graphs.

“What in your view are the most important skill sets required for a student to be successful in this career?”

“The skill set required varies with different levels. As an analyst, the skills that are crucial to one’s success are advanced analytical skills, organizational skills, modeling, extensive use of Monte Carlo simulations and being able to depict the analysis in terms of effective charts and graphs. The role requires that one be good at number crunching and also present it efficaciously. However, the skills that become crucial at the managerial stage are leadership, communication and collaboration. It is important to be able to suggest recommendations that are creative, clear, practical and feasible.”

“Having spoken about the skill set required, what do you see are the challenges that a student desiring to enter this field might face?”

“A student desiring to make a career in this field would face challenges if they do not possess good quantitative skills. It is also important to understand how things work in the real world. Another challenge that students face is the lack of effective leadership skills. This is very important while working in a team and also when an individual eventually climbs up the corporate ladder. However, these challenges can be overcome by applying oneself through courses that hone analytical and leadership ability and through

extracurricular participation.”

“What were some of the courses you took, which helped you at your role?”

“Courses that focused on analytical methods helped me greatly. The course in Forecasting from the Fuqua School of Business is particularly useful for any function as every business is interested in being able to predict the future and develop strategic plans around their predictions. A course that I would highly recommend although I did not take it up would be, a course on Consumer Research offered by the Fuqua School of Business which would help acquire skills necessary to succeed in the space of Market research and Marketing. My internship with Cummins helped me understand the B2B element and provided me with exposure to the real world. I worked with a start up on their marketing strategy and this was a valuable experience that showed me how the different aspects of business came together. The course on Marketing in High Tech Industries exposed me to the practices followed when building a start-up from scratch and selling the same at a later date. The course gave me a perspective about positioning of a start-up given the existing competition in the high tech space. ”

“That is great! Could you tell about other roles that involve work of a similar kind?”

“Strategy development. My role requires me to come up with pricing strategies that can be implemented. Roles such as Market Analyst Manager, Market Intelligence Manager, Marketing Manager, Pricing Manager and Strategy Manager involve similar kind of work and would require developing strategies for the business.”

“I am sure students reading the interview have obtained deep insights about your career and the importance of analytical skills in the real world. Could you tell me about the work culture at Cummins?”

“Cummins is an organization where every individual is respected and where diversity is valued. There are people from all over the world. Understanding another person’s point of view and being open to their ideas and wanting to collaborate is the key. Exceeding expectations is a part of the culture. In any project, we look at delivering more than what we have committed to, but always keeping in mind that integrity is non-negotiable. Cummins is a company where one would not have to trade their ethics and values for anything. Personally, it has been a pleasure working with Cummins.”

“It was indeed delightful learning about the culture at Cummins. What was your most valuable experience at Duke that you can recall?”

“The course on Management and Leadership by Prof. Ted Ryan was my most memorable and valuable experience at Duke. Businesses are nothing but people. The course helped me understand the nuances of people management and helped me transition seamlessly into my managerial role at Cummins. Another valuable experience was collaborating with startups while I was leading the MEMP Consulting Club. I was able to transcend the knowledge I got from the class room into the real world and also visualize their benefits.”

“Abhishek, thanks a lot for sharing a lot about your career in detail. Where do you see yourself professionally in the next 5 years, as this would prove to be a source of inspiration for the current students?”

“I see myself in a leadership role at Cummins in the next five years and I look forward to lead a business at Cummins in the next ten years.”

“Thanks a lot for your time Abhishek. It was a pleasure talking to you about MEM, Cummins and understanding about the skills that are valuable in the industry. I am sure the students of MEM will gain immense knowledge about the Industry’s expectations and what they should focus on to excel in their careers. Hope you have a great week ahead.”

“It was my pleasure talking to you about my career and how MEM has helped me shape my career in a certain way. I wish all the students the best in their future endeavors.”

“I really appreciate it. Thank you and have a great day!” ■

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