

# TEAM PLAYER

**Chris Havemann MBA1999**  
is the new Chair of the  
International Alumni Council  
of London Business School  
and CEO of Rated People,  
the UK's leading online  
marketplace for tradesmen.  
He talks to **MONICA PORTER**



## ■ InTouch/Volunteer spotlight 2

### THE ELECTION OF CHRIS

Havemann as Chair of London Business School's International Alumni Council has brought to the fore not only a great supporter of the School, but a highly successful entrepreneur with bold new ideas for harnessing the powers of the alumni community.

All of which augurs well, of course, for the School at this crucial point in its history, as it embarks on a major fundraising drive, physical expansion and a campaign to raise 100,000 volunteer hours.

A Devon-born ex-grammar school boy with a degree in Maths and Economics from Surrey University, 46-year-old Chris worked in the oil and gas industry and then in telecoms, both in the UK and abroad, before gaining his MBA at the School in 1999. Afterwards he promptly co-founded Research Now, an online market research company which, as CEO, he grew to an annual turnover of £47m and floated on the AIM market of the London Stock Exchange in 2005. The company was bought by e-Rewards of the US for £85m and by the time Chris left in 2011, it was the global leader in its field.

Chris reckoned that might be a good time to take a break, so had a gap year to spend more time with his young children and reflect on future opportunities while at the beach. Ever the entrepreneur, he learnt to sail and acquired a skipper's licence during this time. A year later he took over as CEO of Rated People, the UK's largest online service for connecting homeowners with recommended local tradesmen, which in 2013 had a turnover of £12m.

Now, as skipper of the International Alumni Council, he plans to put his entrepreneurial flair at the service of the School to which he feels he owes a great deal. "Going to the School gave me the courage and confidence to believe I could do a start-up and make a success of it," he says. "Its breadth of vision, its values and high standards in all aspects of business practice became embedded in me. My time there was a fantastically happy period in my life and I left there thinking: why not me?

Why shouldn't I be as successful as other entrepreneurs have been?

"Now I'm keen to give something back to the place and the people that provided me with first-class learning and a lot of enjoyment, as well as career opportunities and valuable professional connections. I'd like to help the School and its future generations of students with their aim of 'changing the way the world does business', a very worthy cause. Business can be an incredibly powerful force for good in society, if it incorporates ethical principles and isn't solely about making more money."

Of course, along with many of his fellow alumni, Chris has already been active within the School – speaking at numerous student and alumni events, mentoring students, supporting their projects and occasionally hiring them. But chairing the IAC gives him the chance to become even more intricately involved.

"Our community of 36,000 alumni around the world is an amazing resource for both faculty and students," he says. "My role is to strengthen the bridge between this community and the School itself, to explore new and effective ways of getting alumni

involved, because staying connected is an extremely rewarding thing for them to do. The modern world is all about networks, and the more people there are in a network, the greater its value.

"My message to alumni is that the best time to invest in a network is when you don't require its help. Don't just get involved when you need a new job. Getting involved is its own reward."

His vision for the IAC includes bringing his collegiate form of leadership to the Council, so that its members can work with the alumni community in order to create new goals together.

One goal is to draw on the insights of the Alumni Survey to develop more targeted activities and communications.

"Not all alumni want to be involved in the same way or have the same motivations for giving to the School," Chris explains. "In today's information age we should explore all means of increasing alumni engagement."

As Chris emphasises, the School has an alumni presence in all of the world's most important companies. A true mark of distinction. And the School's International Alumni Council is a ship he is clearly proud to captain. ■

### HOW ALUMNI CAN VOLUNTEER

Chris Havemann says: "My message to alumni is that the best time to invest in a network is when you don't require its help. Don't just get involved when you need a new job. Getting involved is its own reward."

#### ■ BE A MENTOR

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#### ■ VOLUNTEER FOR AN ALUMNI CLUB

*There are 80 international alumni clubs and more than 15 professional interest clubs. Volunteers organise events and strengthen alumni networks. Email [alumnirelations@london.edu](mailto:alumnirelations@london.edu)*

#### ■ BECOME YOUR CLASS CHAIR

*Class Chairs ensure classmates remain connected to one another and to the School, and encourage them to be active alumni. Email [alumnirelations@london.edu](mailto:alumnirelations@london.edu)*

#### ■ HELP FIND THE BEST TALENT

*Alumni interview candidates for School programmes. It takes 1.5 hours per interview and 30 minutes to write the report. Alumni are also needed to meet and greet prospective applicants on and off campus. Contact [masters@london.edu](mailto:masters@london.edu)*

#### PLEASE CONTACT

[alumnirelations@london.edu](mailto:alumnirelations@london.edu) for more information and other opportunities.