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As Executive Director, you were responsible for a lot with the LEADER Project. What were some significant changes in your year?

This marked a year of significant change: we launched 3 new sites outside of our historical core of Eastern European locations by building partnerships in Haiti, India, and Tanzania. This expansionary year helped change the direction of the LEADER Project through a renewed focus on working with entrepreneurs.

To reinforce our entrepreneurial focus, after much debate the Executive Directors and Advisory Board made the tough decision to drop our legacy site in Yekaterinburg, Russia. The teaching team conveyed our tough message in person during the final days of the Project's delivery.

What is something you wish you could go back and tell yourself before you went away with LEADER?

I think many people will give an answer about how they wished they were more prepared, whether it be for the culture, climate, food, for teaching or for coaching. However, my advice to all future LEADER Project participants is that there is only so much you can prepare for; one of the best parts of the experience is being overwhelmed with such a different environment, being thrown curve balls every day, and learning to adapt and adjust! Sometimes you just have to go along for the ride!

What would you say is the single most important thing you learned with the Project?

Many people will come out of an intense MBA or HBA program with a new sense of confidence, even some swagger. However, coming out of the LEADER Project brought a whole new level of confidence, one which I don't think I would have achieved without that experience. You are really and truly thrown into an uncomfortable environment with little knowledge about the students you will be teaching, their backgrounds, and their education.

You will likely begin to stress days before departing upon the realization that you've only really delivered a handful of cases or lectures - and now you're travelling to a foreign land to deliver 3 weeks' worth. The students will have high expectations of you and will expect to walk away from your program with some significant learning and coaching. You arrive at the site and are constantly challenged to perform by the students, the faculty, and by your own high standards. As the program goes on, your confidence and that of the team grows as you get to know the class and become comfortable being the centre of attention every day.

You travel back to Canada afterwards and reflect, and at some point, will almost surely have that "I did that" moment. Without having a job locked up after school, the LEADER experience gave me the confidence to talk to anyone at any company, always with the foundational confidence that "I did that".

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Mark Gilbert was a graduate from the Ivey Business School's MBA program and currently works with the Bank of Montreal (BMO) as a Commercial Account Manager. In 2012, Mark served as Executive Director of the LEADER Project along with three others. He was responsible for the Project's expansion into Haiti, India, and Tanzania. Mark was featured as a Future Leader in Ivey's Intouch magazine for his efforts. Mark participated in the LEADER program in 2012 and travelled to Bangalore, India.