

## Information management: Quality and quantity

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### Managing the information technology inflow

Busy executives in today's information-oriented world often feel that the information revolution is both a blessing and a curse. While it provides ready access to data needed for decision making, it also threatens to overwhelm its beneficiaries with incessant input, messages and demands. How do business schools help students learn to manage information and make decisions?

"We focus on breaking down problems into their constituent parts and then using information effectively in decision-making," says professor Beatriz Muñoz-Seca, head of production, technology and operations management at IESE in Spain. "It is essential to learn how problems are solved, rather than concentrating on the outcome of previous cases. Companies have invested huge sums in databases, data mining and data retrieval systems, only to find that no one uses them. You need to encourage staff to feed information into these systems by demonstrating that this will benefit them in their work."

### Speed marketing

The full-time MBA program at Copenhagen Business School includes a one-day exercise in which students are presented with case information at 9 a.m. and have to present their marketing recommendations at 5 p.m. Says Thomas Ritter, associate dean of the program: "Consultants, for instance, often have to work under this sort of pressure."

Enrique Dans, professor in information systems technology at the Instituto de Empresa in Madrid, stresses the importance of validating information obtained hastily through the Internet before making decisions.

The HEC MBA program in France includes a three-day seminar in which participants have to analyze information flows under time pressure. Says Valérie Gauthier, program dean: "The seminar deals with specific issues faced by real companies, such as Thomson and Vivendi, and students have to present recommendations to the chief executive officers of the companies concerned."

She adds: "One of the most important lessons is learning to ask the right questions."  
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