



# Tim Hoffman

Bucknell, 2000, '02



Having earned his Bachelor of Science and a Masters degree in mechanical engineering at Bucknell, Tim Hoffman felt certain that engineering would be his career. He had found his first professional position, a job with a small U.S. Department of Defense contractor, while completing his studies in graduate school.

That first employer — a Connecticut-based company specializing in the research and design of unmanned vehicle propulsion and power generation — needed someone who could not only apply engineering fundamentals, but also write project proposals and appraise the profit and loss potential of contracts. The firm tested Hoffman and quickly recognized that he had the gift. So Hoffman, the mechanical engineer, soon found himself conducting more analyses of dollars and cents than of pounds and inches. To his surprise, he found that he enjoyed this challenge. He liked the responsibility and mental gymnastics inherent in reconciling research and development costs with budgets, and enjoyed building business relationships with customers at the Department of Defense. But within two years, he would learn of a wildcard: in the defense industry, business can ebb and flow dramatically as projects are awarded or cancelled for what are sometimes unpredictable reasons. When his own company lost a sizable contract extension, he saw signs that the firm's fortunes might decline significantly, and he began looking at other opportunities.

One of those opportunities — the most prominent — was MBI. On the day he found MBI's help-wanted ad, Hoffman says, he was resolutely committed to pursuing positions that entailed substantial project management responsibility. As far as he was concerned, mechanical engineering need not be in the equation. He had also recently married, and was seeking job stability. MBI seemed to offer

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these prerequisites, so he interviewed for a position.

The interview process went very well and soon Hoffman had an attractive offer from MBI. He was especially impressed that MBI didn't take issue with the fact that he had no prior marketing experience. He admired the way the company focused more on hiring smart and hard-working individuals than on weighing the relevance of a particular college major. Hoffman took some time to ponder the decision; his many responsibilities for his defense-contracting employer were great, yet the promise of growth had already begun to disappear. Finally, after weighing the options, he took the risk of redirecting his career path and joined MBI as an assistant product manager.

Looking back, Hoffman now says that at the end of his first full week at MBI, he knew he had made the right decision. The fast pace of decision-making and

execution at MBI stood in marked contrast to the long development cycles he had weathered in defense contracting, and he liked the faster pace. He realized that the shorter concept-to-market cycles for MBI's products meant he could review sales results sooner, and if they were good, begin work on plans to expand the product line.

Hoffman was promoted to associate product manager after one year, and was given responsibility for MBI's sports jewelry product lines. These include watches and charm bracelets celebrating nearly 100 different sports teams, including many famous franchises.

Optimization is one of Hoffman's favorite core concepts at MBI. "We think ahead of ourselves," he intones. "There are always more things to learn — new ways to do things with time and cost efficiencies that maximize returns." Still another MBI touchstone, he remarks, is ambition; it's a trait that is native in all the company's managers, yet the working environment is congenial and does not overstress competition. Moreover, he appreciates the accountability that goes with having ownership of his projects and juggling several large marketing programs at once.

Outside the office, Hoffman is very active in his church; among other roles, he serves as a junior high school youth group leader. He also enjoys basketball, outdoor adventure sports, and camping with his wife and friends. Each year, he and his wife devote much of their vacation time to escorting a group of volunteers to Cape Town, South Africa, where they minister to children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS.