

# CEO University

## BUSINESS CLASS

It's back-to-school time  
— about that time for the  
BBJ to look at a few area  
execs and the schools that  
helped shape them

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The area's top CEO-producing  
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### MIT studies laid the foundation for Amidon to act globally

BY ROBERTA HOLLAND  
SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

**D**ebra Amidon describes her philosophy as "where the rubber meets the sky."

She credits much of her outlook to a pivotal year she spent as an Alfred P. Sloan fellow at the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology**.

"Probably the greatest gift (of being a Sloan fellow) was to understand fundamentally the process of innovation, not from the perspective of the flow of technology or the flow of financing but the flow of knowledge," Amidon said.

Her thesis on global innovation for the program laid the groundwork for her own consultancy, **Entovation International Ltd.** Entovation is focused on intellectual capital and collaborations across enterprises and countries. Amidon, CEO of the firm, has lectured all over the world.

"The roots of what I learned at MIT have really been the foundation" for her work, Amidon said. Forming her own consulting firm to build on her research "was the logical next step."

Having the MIT credential has helped open doors for her. In fact, the school was her first customer when she launched her consulting business in 1993. Other clients include **British Petroleum**, **Siemens** and **Columbia University**.

Amidon, 61, began her career in education. With a bachelor's degree from **Boston University** and a master's degree from Columbia, she initially worked as an elementary school teacher. She later took posts as an



Debra Amidon says her schooling at MIT formed the foundation for Entovation International.

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associate dean for Babson College and assistant secretary of higher education under Gov. **Edward King**.

Her desire to blend academia, government and industry led her to **Digital Equipment Corp.** in 1981. She worked at the storied company for 12 years, first as a strategic human resources manager that combined HR with business strategy and later on technology transfer issues in the office of its president, **Ken Olsen**.

Amidon was DEC's nominee for the Sloan fellowship for 1988-1989. She received a Master of Science in management from the one-year program before returning to the company.

"It was a very extraordinary and intense learning environment," said Amidon, who praised the international scope of the faculty as well as the students. "I was taught by some of the finest faculty in the world and learning with some of the finest students in the world."

The instructors were accessible to the students and open to them, she said. "Each faculty member was truly a gem in their field," said Amidon.

She also was impressed by the level of the management experience that resided in the classroom. Her classmates included former Hewlett-Packard CEO **Carly Fiorina** and Adm. **Thad Allen**, now the highest ranking officer in the U.S. Coast Guard.

The program was carefully constructed to combine both theory and practice, she said. "MIT really historically has stood out as an exemplar institution of practice, and at the same time some of the best theory," said Amidon. "It's not just an ivy-covered wall institution."

#### CLASS OFFICER

**Name:** Debra Amidon  
**Position:** CEO, Entovation International Ltd.  
**Alma mater:** Alfred P. Sloan fellow at MIT