



ISB ALUMNI PROFILE



Name: Tony Tsai

Hometown: Brussels (born in Cincinnati, OH)

Graduation Year (from ISB): 2004

Year(s) at ISB: 2001-2004

Last degree received and from which university:

Bachelor of Science in Finance & Marketing, Boston University

Currently living in: New York City

Ethnically I am half South Korean (mother), a quarter Chinese and a quarter British (father). Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, I lived there from 1986-1996. I lived in Brussels (attending St. Johns 1996-2000), moved to Geneva (attended La Grande Boissiere 2000-2001) and then attended ISB from 2001-2004. My family moved due to my father's job, Global IT with Proctor & Gamble, and they currently reside in Beijing, China - where my younger sister (16) and brother (8) attend the International School of Beijing (ISB).

When I initially got to Brussels, there was a huge level of culture shock. I had never left the United States, let alone the Midwest (a couple trips to Los Angeles to visit my family but not a whole lot else). My first memory of Belgium was driving in the pouring rain in October to the Grand Hotel Waterloo. Fortunately, everyone else at school was in the same boat, multicultural kids who just wanted to fit in and get along. It was a breath of fresh air for me, coming from a smaller, more isolated environment with not a lot of cultural or social diversity.

The culture, opportunity and friends I had from previously living in Brussels brought me to ISB. I attended St. John before but decided to attend ISB when my family was relocated back to Brussels in 2001; this choice offered a wealth of new experiences for our family. Personally, I was very involved with sports programs and knew ISB was a great place for me to have opportunities to play for ISST championships. On top of that, Model United Nations and a larger student body also drew me to the school.

ISB was a unique place to grow up and develop into your own person. The experiences I had there transcended "textbook" educations. What I and the people around me were able to learn collectively from our different walks of life was invaluable. I was involved with many different parts of the school; student council, model UN, sports teams and president of the Korean club. The extracurricular opportunities were most impactful for post-academic life.

Several teachers taught me many things spanning many topics. The teacher who I felt really got the best out of me in my time at was *Mr. David Hayward*. He was a great mentor in class and through MUN and I took a lot away from him as a teacher.

There were many great memories at ISB, but hitting *Woody Heffern* with a cream pie at Homecoming 2004 on the upper field is one that comes to mind. On a more serious note, graduating with the class of 2004 was the most memorable! It was a pleasure to spend time with a close knit class and I hope they are all well wherever they are reading this.

I am currently the Head Buyer for Perishables at DEAN & DELUCA. My responsibilities are product selection for all of our business units: retail, internet and catalogue divisions. On a day-to-day basis, I build our retail categories, sample new and innovative products, decide how to best represent and retail products and oversee in-store execution corporate wide. I also work closely with key vendors putting together nationwide programs such as exclusives and product development.

I really didn't have a clue what I wanted to do in school. I started my college career in industrial engineering, switched to Economics & International Relations before deciding to pursue a Marketing & Finance double major. Doing some additional homework and talking to mentors and peers about their experiences, either in the investment banking world or international branding helped me decide what I wanted to pursue. I was always fascinated by retail, why people buy one thing over another and the power of the brand. My dad has been working in retail since I was born. Through sitting in on car phone conference call after call while being picked up from school, I developed an interest in retail and branding. Through an internship with the world renowned luxury brand FAUCHON Paris in Beijing, I sought out similar opportunities and DEAN & DELUCA was a chance to work in luxurious branding, get to New York and work in the United States for the first time in my life.

The most rewarding part of the job is that my efforts and work immediately impact what happens on the sales floor that day. The core of our business is in the products we select and being able to see how decision making impacts the immediate success of the brand is exciting. The position to be a leader and affect the success of my company to this degree at this point in my career is satisfying. The tough part has to be the product selection process. We see a lot of products, good and bad. People's creativity continues to amaze me in the world of food and home wares. It's never fun to tell a vendor that their product isn't a fit or good enough, but it's unfortunately the nature of the business.

Flexibility and the ability to roll with the punches are the skills you need for the job I do. Retail is a fast paced, customer focused business that is unrelenting and unpredictable. ISB and an international background played a tremendous part in honing these skills; meeting people, moving places, being in foreign/unexplored situations while being able to communicate effectively are some of the skills I attribute to ISB. On a more broad sense, the chance to live in Europe for 10+ years exposed me to many of the finer points of lifestyle, food and culture. That is probably the most invaluable skill that has made me successful thus far in my professional life.

Brussels is my hometown, so certainly I miss the culture, the people and the nuances of daily life in Overijse. The thing I probably miss most is a fresh Pita Mais – andalouse, it brings back a lot of good memories.

It's a pleasure and honor to give back to the community that enabled me to accomplish so much. ISB was the most integral part of my upbringing outside of my family and I continue to appreciate the learning I have taken away from both the school and people along the way. Cheers!