

#MBA #MarketReadiness #Employability #BusinessEducation #Leadership

## The MBA is not dead. But it is no longer an automatic ticket to employability.



In December 2025, I wrote about the shifting value of the MBA and the growing gap between reputation and hiring reality. Since then, I looked more closely at what actually happens after graduation – combining survey data with follow-up conversations.

What emerged is not pessimism, but a clear signal: the era of brand-based assurance is fading. Market Readiness is what counts. This piece lays out five concrete problems – and five equally concrete remedies.

Please consult my blog for the full article, and read about related leadership topics for your perusal and insight. I would much appreciate your comment and will keep and protect your personal data.



### The real value of an MBA today – where Market Readiness rules

In my December 2025 article on the shifting value of the MBA, I argued that employers no longer hire for promise but for risk-reduced job fit. That the MBA badge no longer speaks by itself. And that many graduates underestimate – and schools often ignore – how far expectations have shifted in the market out there.

I promised to come back with evidence.

The numbers provided direction. The verbatim comments filled in the reality.

Five patterns stood out clearly. Each points not just to a problem, but to a remedy.



A clarification is important. This is not a claim that all MBA programmes are failing or that “the MBA is dead”. Demand remains strong, and several programmes are powerfully changing their course. This article focuses on the priorities and remedies that increasingly separate programmes that took the curve from those that remain complacent, with the intent of helping future MBAs make the right choice.

## 1. Career support lacks skill and will

Across responses, career support consistently scored below 6 out of 10, trailing even the self-assessment of Market Readiness. This is not a marginal shortfall. It is a structural one.

*“Career development was extremely lacking.”*

Graduates did not expect guarantees. They expected competence and traction in a hiring market that has become more selective, more relational, and more risk-averse.

When graduates quietly seek help after the programme and find it elsewhere – informally and off the record – the issue is not the market. It is the institution’s ability and willingness to engage where it matters most.

### *Remedy 1. Replace bureaucracy with real market credibility*

Career services should be staffed with few, but genuinely relevant counsellors. Career support should feel like a professional advisory function, not a campus service, and partner with reputable placement firms. To avoid “a full parking lot of unsold graduates”, Market Readiness should inform who gets admitted in the first place.

Moving beyond advice alone, successful programmes actively build employer ecosystems that combine internships, mentoring, and drive accountability. Where this happens, employability is part of the DNA and tuition or scholarships become less relevant.

## 2. Market Readiness is mediocre

Respondents rated their own Market Readiness at 5.8 out of 10. Not a failure. But far from convincing, given the time, cost, and expectations attached to a costly MBA.

*“It is not a golden passport anymore. Acceptance of MBAs is not what it used to be”*

Employers are no longer hiring for potential. They are hiring to reduce risk and find HPPs – Hard-Working Persistent Professionals not just to fulfil a job but bring perspectives the organisation does not yet have to the organisation.

*“We were not sufficiently trained for case-based interviews.”*

*“Networking skills were assumed, not trained.”*

### *Remedy 2. Make Market Readiness the organising principle*

Market Readiness should be the goal from admissions to graduation. Elevator pitches and networking must be trained, groomed and tested repeatedly.



### 3. The MBA brand can't compensate for weak fundamentals

Several respondents pointed to gaps in analytical depth and technical rigour.

In a risk-driven hiring environment, polish without substance amplifies doubt.

*"Did not significantly enhance quantitative skills."*

*"Lacked technical rigour, especially in finance."*

#### **Remedy 3. Pen and paper competence before tools**

Fundamentals must be mastered individually, under pressure, with pen and paper. AI is a help, not a panacea. If AI can do the job of an MBA, there is no job.

Where written work is used, it should be complemented – or replaced – by oral defense. Explaining and defending one's reasoning in real time is both AI-resistant and closer to how decisions are made in practice. And yes, MBA staff: this is real work.

### 4. Professional empathy is missing

Professional empathy is the curiosity and disciplined ability to understand an organisation's reality before attempting to improve it.

*"Please don't just teach soft skills."*

*"Dump the niceness. No soft-skills theatre needed."*

#### **Remedy 4. Train judgement in real organisations**

If MBAs are meant to lead in the market, they must be trained in it – not protected from it. Professional presence, decision-making in the heat, storylining for the CEO, meeting the client – these are all crucial skills not learned in the classroom but out there. This is the MBA's job.

Interestingly, this point emerged as a pattern beneath several responses – dissatisfaction with abstractions, frustration with antiquated simulated exercises, and a desire for exposure to real business situations and constraints.

### 5. International risk is ignored

Schools actively recruit globally. Demand is high, particularly from Asia. It can fill classes. The idea sold: *"Your MBA-investment will give you access to a career abroad."*

In practice, many employers cherry-pick local candidates with existing work permits. Visa feasibility silently acts as a discriminator. Realistic programmes are now addressing this by admitting strategically and treating visa reality as a core employability criterion rather than an afterthought to ensure all graduates have access to success.

For those caught on the wrong side of this gap, the consequences are severe.

*"Visa issues were not addressed at all."*

*"Returning home post-MBA meant a significant salary disappointment + a huge loan."*



*Remedy 5. Make the visa deal explicit – early, jointly, without ambiguity*

Market readiness without legal viability is fiction.

If a programme markets employability, it must make the visa deal explicit: Schools select for real market demand; employers who hire commit to legal and visa sponsorship; and the school actively supports the process. Without this, graduates are sold a future the system is structurally unwilling to deliver.

**Closing the loop**

The MBA is not broken. But reputation alone no longer carries the weight it once did.

What employers respond to now is Market Readiness – the ability to integrate quickly, exercise judgement under pressure, and reduce perceived hiring risk from day one.

Several programmes are already turning the corner. Their results are unambiguous: when admissions, curriculum rigour and employer integration are aligned, Market Readiness follows.

If this resonates and you are looking to think it through – as a graduate, an employer, or a school – do reach out. The MBA only works when the system around it does too.

To study your personal MBA and managerial readiness, please feel invited to perform the [Leadership Learning Items questionnaire](#) and receive your confidential interpretative report.