

Science alumni in the world

Science and sales – that’s the business!



Brett Cole

Course graduated from: BSc (Honours) majoring in Biological Sciences

Year of Graduation: 1998

Job: Managing director, Biosafety Pty Ltd

Career: Monash Water Studies Centre (Research Assistant); Gallay Medical and Scientific (Technical Sales Rep); National Sales Manager LAF Technologies Pty Ltd; Sterihealth (State Manager); EO Laboratory Systems Group

Reflection: “Science is the discovery of new ideas and new things. It opens up your mind to a new way of thinking.”

“If you enjoy mixing with people and enjoy science, a job on the commercial side lets you bring these two worlds together.”

Brett Cole spends his workdays in other people’s laboratories, helping them to decontaminate their premises using US-manufactured chlorine dioxide technology.

One week he might be working with Perspex-helmeted, space-suited lab technicians at the top bio security PC4 lab at the CSIRO’s Geelong-based Australian Animal Health Laboratory, where research is done on such deadly animal-borne viruses as Hendra or Nipah.

Then he’ll be at a medical centre, a food manufacturing centre or a pharmaceutical lab.

Unexpected career path

At 40, he is the Managing Director/Owner of Biosafety Pty Ltd, a Hygiene based company providing decontamination products and services to Life Science, Biosecurity, Food/Beverage, Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Industries.

But this successful business science career is one he “fell into”. As a biology major, he thought he was heading straight for a PhD and then a job as a research scientist.

Studies provide ‘amazing’ experiences

“I loved studying science,” he recalls. “There were so many amazing experiences, such as going to Perth on a summer scholarship and working in conservation and land management, or getting to snorkel and scuba dive on a coral reef. People do it as ecotourism but I did as part of my undergraduate degree.”

Cole also loved his honours project, a study of phytoplankton levels in Albert Park Lake – work sponsored by Parks Victoria which used the information to monitor the lake’s water quality.

His direction changed after he took his supervisor’s advice to work before embarking on a PhD. His first job, at Monash University’s Water Studies Centre was interesting. But Cole, by then married and a father of young children, needed something more secure than contract work, and decided to try a job in sales for a scientific company.

He never looked back, but emphasises that he continues to find his science degree essential in his day-to-day work. “I have seen people (in sales) struggle if they don’t have a scientific background.”

Since completing his undergraduate studies, Brett has completed several post-graduate courses including a Graduate Diploma in Business and a Masters in Occupational Hygiene and Toxicology.

Business side of science no “sell-out”

Undergraduates should never regard a career on the business side of science as a “sell out”, says Cole, who regularly attends international conferences where companies and scientists showcase their inventions.

“Not only is this work better paid (than research science) but it’s taken me around the world. I’ve had the opportunity to work with companies in the US, in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. If you enjoy mixing with people and you enjoy science, a job on the commercial side lets you bring those two worlds together.”

Tell us your story and get involved

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