

MIT OCW CASE STUDY

MIT ALUMNUS AND SELF-LEARNER IN PENNSYLVANIA, USA

A cross-fertilization of ideas

Mark Horowitz, MIT alumnus and learner

A 1972 MIT graduate with degrees in Applied Math and Electrical Engineering, Mark Horowitz went on to complete a Master's degree at the University of Chicago in Information Sciences in 1973 before pursuing a career as an actuary. For the past 12 years, Horowitz has worked as a consultant for Towers Perrin in Philadelphia, PA, designing and implementing software that supports benefits valuation tasks.



Horowitz, who is an active supporter of the Institute and has followed the development of OpenCourseWare with great interest, uses the site both to pursue academic interests and to help him solve problems on the job. "One area that I've gotten interested in over the last couple of years," Horowitz explains, "is behavioral economics. So when I discovered [Course 14.127 – Behavioral Economics and Finance](#) on OCW, I downloaded a bunch of the readings to look at."

Horowitz said he tends to browse the site to find areas of interest, though he says his interaction with the materials is rarely comprehensive. "In general," he continues, "I tend to do some reading from the courses, as opposed to imposing the discipline on myself to take each course. But it's been so helpful to be able to find information on OCW that's organized in a way that allows you to really learn the material."

OCW also comes in handy when Horowitz encounters challenges in the course of his work. In general, Horowitz tries to keep abreast of advancements in MIT's Course 6 (Electrical Engineering and Computer Science), to see if there are any new developments that can help him on the job. His investigations are not limited to this area, however. "At one point," he elaborates, "we were looking into doing some work in options pricing. In order to try to get some background for that, I looked around at about three or four different sites, one of which was OCW. In [Course 15.433 – Investments](#), I was able to find some lectures on option theory. I did some reading on the subject, and learned something about pricing of options, primarily lattice models. It was a useful place where I could go to get background for this very specific need."

On a more philosophical level, Horowitz also credits OCW with helping him achieve success in his life and work. "In some respects," Horowitz muses, "to the extent that I've had success in my life, it's been because I'm curious about a lot of things. I find that when I allow myself to read lots of different things, it has an effect of a cross-fertilization of ideas for the work that I do. So whereas I can't always justify the time for something in the moment, a lot of what I learn finds its way back into what I'm doing."