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Professional Interview Project

For my project I had the pleasure of interviewing Justinian Habner. It was such a great time chatting with him about his experience in a multicultural work environment. Mr. Habner was a perfect interviewee for me because he has work experience in areas that I am considering like international trade and public policy. In addition to our common interest, he also has a lot of experience working in among different cultures. He began working in Australia, then moved to the United Kingdom, and now works in Singapore. Mr. Habner offered a lot of insight and advice on how to be successful in a multicultural workplace.

I asked Mr. Habner why he decided to move from Australia to the United Kingdom and his first answer was simply his partner got a scholarship at Oxford. But then he began talking about growing up in Tasmania and how he wanted to see more. “I always thought I’d like to see what’s out there in the world.” He continued working in public policy in the United Kingdom for a while, but today he works for the British Embassy in Singapore. Singapore is a very diverse country and Mr. Habner works among many different cultures. Singapore has three major ethnic groups Chinese, Malay, and Indian. When asking him what kind of value he got from his international experiences he said, “it about meeting different people and different cultures and understanding things.”

Going into the interview one thing that interested me was what working in these different countries taught him in life. Mr. Habner did not let down and offered me good business advice and personal advice. From a work point of view he told me that when working with different cultures you need to understand what motivates people. For him, it was about finding a way to motivate the Singaporeans working at the British Embassy to do a good job. He found that “people turn up to work not to be bad, they turn up to do what they think is a good job.” I think that is a fair assessment that fundamentally we all want to do good work. When giving some more personal advice on how to thrive in a multicultural environment he stressed the importance of having an open mind. He said, “be open to the differences and then when you for those differences try and find what are the commonalities” and that a great point. We are all different, but we also all have things in common. The last piece of advice he gave me was about how to prepare for and adapt to being among new cultures. He said, “it’s a combination of reading about things and what’s going on and also about, I find, making friends with local people, and when you do that, and you can talk to them on that more personal level you can start to ask these questions about is this right or is this not right.” As a person who loves talking to strangers and meeting new friends, I am excited to take this advice one day.

I’m going to be honest. Before the interview I had some intertest in working internationally, but it was not a major goal of mine. After talking to Mr. Habner and learning about his experiences I have to say that I am a lot more interested. I am grateful I had the opportunity to talk to him because I learned a lot about what to expect and how to handle it. If I do decide to work internationally, I will apply his advice on keeping an open mind and looking for common interest. I have a passion for talking to people and learning about them, and that is part of what has me more interested in working internationally.

I don’t want to sound like I am just planning on copying Mr. Habner, but I would not mind working in Singapore one day. I have spent time looking at some of the buildings and architecture in Singapore and it is amazing. There is a really cool observatory with lights all over it and a lot of the buildings there have some trees or grass incorporated into them. I could work in finance, economics, or public policy there and have the opportunity to learn from three diverse ethnic groups. I have also given thought to countries like Ireland, Iceland, and The Netherlands because they all are places that I want to travel. If I do decide to work internationally, I think I would want to approach it one of two ways. The first is I could do research and find a country that interest my career goals and apply to businesses within the country. The other approach I could take is start working for a company in the United States that does business internationally and try to work my way towards working in a new country. In the second situation I have less control over where I go, which I don’t think I like. I still have a lot to consider, but I think I would enjoy working in a multicultural or international workplace.

When I first saw we were going to be doing an interview project for class I was a little bit skeptical and nervous. I have to say this has been one of my favorite projects that I have done in college. Not many projects are this unique and provide us with opportunities like these. There is a strong chance that if it were not for this class that I never would have talked to someone with a similar career to me in Singapore. This project gave me a chance to talk to and learn from a person very similar to me about their experiences in a multicultural workplace. I really enjoyed chatting with Mr. Habner and even sent him an invitation to connect with me on LinkedIn. He offered excellent business and personal advice on how to thrive in multicultural environments. This project also ignited a desire to learn more about other cultures and maybe one day work among other cultures. I don’t know what the future holds, but right now I wouldn’t mind it involving international work.