Go Global!

Launching an International Career Here or Abroad

Stacie Nevadomski Berdan

SNB Media LLC
This book is dedicated to my husband, Mike:

Thank you for making my life infinitely richer
by sharing so many global adventures with me.
Acknowledgments

Many thanks to my friends and colleagues who shared their experiences with me and spent time discussing the merits of this book and how best to advise today’s new globetrotters. Thanks to the many professors and students who took the time to give me feedback on the topics most important to you.

Particular thanks to those who contributed their stories and patiently waited for the arrival of this book: Rosary Abot, Marty Abbott, George Birman, Terrence Brake, Christy Brown, Curtis S. Chin, Matt Conway, Beth Cubanski, Constance deNazelle, Ben Farkas, Robert Fried, Allison Frick, Diane Gulyas, Andrew Howe, Caitlin Kappel, Carleen Kerttula, Sharon Knight, Elizabeth Knup, Kelly Loughlin, Elizabeth Marshman, John Miles, Nicholas Musy, Lauren Nelson, Ben Paulker, Ramiro Prudencio, Liesl Riddle, Gus Tate, Kate Triggs, Hailey Weiss, Perry Yeatman and Michael Zhu.

Special thanks to my illustrative friends: my sister, Ellen Nevadomski, and friend, Philip Kleimenhagen, who helped me with charts, graphs and multimedia components; Andy Nebel and Michael Huffer who produced the Go Global! video; and to Jessica Vernick for creating the book cover.

Special thanks to those who read the final manuscript: Morgan Abate, my niece, guest- and ghost-blogger and a budding writer; Beth Cubanski, a contributor and student at the American University pursuing pre-med and Spanish; and Laura Cubanski, friend, excellent editor and fellow parent trying to raise globally-aware children.

Special thanks to three friends and former colleagues: Rebecca Weiner, who authored the chapter on China and whose superb writing skills smoothed the kinks out making the book a better read. Curtis S. Chin, former US Ambassador, whose thoughtful and substantive comments enriched the book and whose wise counsel kept me focused on the end result. Barbara Levy, fellow global traveler, whose creative inspiration enabled me to think beyond the boundaries and whose listening skills got me through the final production of this book.

Finally, thank you to my family for your love, support and understanding. It means so much to me.
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About the Author


I have spent most of my career as a marketing communications strategist. I took a risk and moved to Washington, D.C., after grad school without a job because I loved politics and the buzz of the capital. I landed a great job with Burson-Marsteller, the largest global public relations agency. I rose from an entry-level assistant account executive to global account managing director. After five years working toward and hoping for an international assignment, I was transferred to Hong Kong, one of my favorite cities in the world, where I grew both personally and professionally. I made some of my closest friends there. I attribute a great deal of my fast-track success to my ability to differentiate and distinguish myself upon my return to Washington, D.C., where I tripled my salary and jumped from vice-president to global account managing director – despite taking 6 months maternity leave. After years at B-M, I took a job at Unilever, a global consumer products company. While there I led the communications teams responsible for strategy and execution of the new global brand and an $11 billion integration of multiple business units into one operating unit.

I have served as coach, counselor, strategist and adviser to CEOs, politicians, senior executives and students around the world, and my cross-cultural consulting experience enables me to work with a diverse mixture of professionals across industry, seniority level, nationality and gender. I have traveled to and worked in more than 50 countries, and I have been responsible for global, cross-cultural teams of professionals in 25 markets.

Today I write and speak about current trends in the global workforce, offering advice to students and professionals, career counselors and human resource leaders. You'll find me as an international career expert blogging on the Huffington Post, tweeting about all things global, and providing advice via interviews and articles in news outlets. To check out my recent posts, go to www.stacieberdan.com, and while you’re there, sign up to receive Go Global! updates. My ongoing experience informs this book so that you, too, can be better prepared to GO GLOBAL!
Introduction to Go Global!

Welcome to *Go Global! Launching an International Career Here or Abroad*. I’m happy that you’re here because it means you are serious about your career in this brave new international age. Whether you’re a high school student, undergrad or grad student, or you already have your degree, you’ve come to the right place to arm yourself with the most up-to-date, strategic advice and practical tips on what it means to go global.

The global marketplace is huge. Dynamic. And yes, it can be a bit scary. You deal with different cultures, currencies, languages, history, politics, religions. Global workers must cope with all these and more as they both search for jobs and then work across borders either virtually or physically. I’m here to help you navigate your way through the maze of an international career.

First, let’s clarify the term international career upfront. **It does not necessarily mean moving or working abroad.** An international career requires employees to conduct their work across national borders or between at least two cultures within a single country. It does not necessarily mean working and living outside your home country. The “international” in some jobs means that you work with global clients, customers or people; you will be based in your home country and may not even have to travel overseas. Some international jobs require frequent global travel and oversight. Others still offer a mix of assignments at home and abroad. All these jobs require international workers with skills relevant to cross-cultural, cross-border success, and top-notch technical knowledge.

To that most worthy end, this book will help you navigate the steps to launching an international career.
About this Book

You don’t have to read this book from beginning to end, but you might want to – and it’s not too long. Go Global! Launching an International Career Here or Abroad follows a progression that provides answers to the questions you’re facing as you decide how to launch an international career.

I begin with an overview of why you need to think about globalization, provide details on how you can acquire and market relevant international qualifications, and then move into specific strategic planning advice to launch your international career. I conclude with advice on how to make the move, first generally, and then very specifically with an eye on China – one of the hottest job markets in the world and one of the most important for the future – as the target in the final chapter.

Each chapter stands alone and will serve as a go-to resource throughout your ongoing journey. Sprinkled throughout the book are anecdotes, stories and tips – real-life examples from students through to seasoned experts – that make the advice come alive with relevance. Some of these stories are actually multi-media and you’ll need to be able to connect to watch them. Although not many, you won’t want to miss them, so be sure to check them out; they’re highlighted in the text.

The best part about this book? I offer you the opportunity to ask me additional questions, provide feedback, make requests for more content and even offer additional advice to fellow readers, directly via email to me (Stacie@stacieberdan.com). I will then share this additional content and create an ongoing dialogue among like-minded global citizens on my website, to enrich the Go Global! experience.
About the Contributors

Sprinkled throughout the book are anecdotes, stories and tips that enhance the practical advice of *Go Global!* So as not to interrupt the flow of the text with introductions throughout, I’ve listed all contributors here with first-person biographical snapshots.

**Rosary Abot:** I graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a degree in Chemical Engineering and Philosophy. My year abroad at King’s College, Cambridge, allowed me to continue to study both fields and to explore the intersection of science, technology and philosophy. Over the last few years, I have had the privilege of teaching English in Mongolia, conducting soft materials research and working in industry.

**Marty Abbott:** I am Executive Director for the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). Our organization promotes language learning for all students at all grade levels. Our national public awareness campaign, *Discover Languages…Discover the World!,* serves both our membership and the general public to help spread the word! I am a former high school Spanish and Latin teacher, and Coordinator of the Language Programs for the Fairfax County (VA) Public Schools. I love to cook special recipes for my friends and family and travel to new places.

**Jessica Austin:** I’m an American who has been living in the Netherlands since 1999. I held senior management and director-level positions at prestigious corporate and academic organizations for 10 years. I am a certified coach and trainer with 17 years of US and Pan-European HR, recruitment, career education, coaching and training experience, primarily in the areas of intercultural communication skills, leadership development, professional and personal transition, and mobility and assimilation. I love the sun, the sea and rollerblading with my daughter.

**Terence Brake:** I’m a regional president of TMA World, a worldwide company specializing in global talent development for Fortune 500 clients. I’ve worked on – and with – global virtual teams for more than a decade and have written several books, including my most recent title, “Where in the World is My Team?” (Wiley 2008).
Christine Brown: After a long career in language and international education as well as serving as Assistant School Superintendent for the Glastonbury (CT) Public Schools, I am trying out a new career as Deputy Director of the American International School in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. I have been abroad many times as an exchange student, a language educator and an educational consultant, but now I will actually be working overseas. I credit the early language learning experiences I had with the comfort level I feel both in working and living abroad and at home in diverse ethnic communities.

Curtis S. Chin: As the son of a registered nurse and a US military officer stationed to posts around the world, I spent my youth in Bangkok, Seoul, Taipei and the US states of Arizona, Maryland and Virginia. I had a 20+ year career with global communications giant Burson-Marsteller, working from Washington, D.C., Tokyo, Beijing; Hong Kong and New York HQ, as well as stopping to earn an MBA from Yale along the way. Twenty years later, I was appointed by President George W. Bush to serve as the US Ambassador to the Asian Development Bank, and was based in Manila. I currently advise a range of non-profit organizations and emerging ventures on Board development and start-up issues.

Matt Conway: I recently graduated from the University of Connecticut, majoring in Finance. During my college career, I had a number of domestic internships and one in Dublin. Before beginning my full-time position at General Electric’s FMP rotation, I traveled throughout Western Europe and participated in a service trip in Peru.

Beth Cubanski: I'm currently an undergrad studying Spanish and science at American University. My goal is a career with Doctors Without Borders or some similar organization, preferably in Latin America. In an effort to further that objective, I worked as a volunteer medical interpreter at a free clinic for migrant farmworkers from Mexico over the summer. I enjoy trying new things, especially foods, vacations and seeing my sisters when I'm home from college.

Constance deNazelle: I was born in Holland and lived there for four years before moving to Singapore, where I lived for the next twelve years. I am studying Business and Public Policy at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. But as I am actually French, I
go back to France every summer. Last summer, I worked as an intern at a corporate law firm in Paris. As my academic and professional careers progress, I hope to be able to continue to engage my love of travel and experiencing other cultures around the world.

**Ben Farkas:** After college at Princeton I taught for a year in Jishou, in western Hunan Province, China, writing a blog about my experiences there and learning to like spicy food. I’m now returning to the States and enrolling at Yale Law School. I like to hike, cook and play piano.

**Allison Frick:** I’m currently working as a sports producer for dc.highschoolsports.net, a Gannett website based at CBS affiliate W*USA 9 in Washington, DC. While studying broadcast journalism and Spanish at the University of Maryland, I worked at the university’s cable news station, had a business internship in Costa Rica, and interned at W*USA. My goal is to take the broad foundation of reporting skills I am learning and transfer them into a Spanish-speaking market.

**Robert Fried:** I’m the founding director of the Chinese Language Institute (CLI), an educational services organization based in southern China. While studying in Beijing during my senior year of college, I launched CLI from my dorm room and have since grown the company to include 18 employees and a newly renovated 5-story learning center. To date, we’ve hosted more than 100 students from all over the world, including those from Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Oxford. I’m passionate about learning, creating, designing, documenting and exploring.

**Diane Gulyas:** Going global at an early stage was certainly the key to my successful rise within DuPont. After ten years working for DuPont in the US, I went overseas in 1989 with high-profile stints in Switzerland and Belgium and returned four years later as Assistant to the CEO. I was then named VP and general manager for DuPont’s Advanced Fiber Business. I now serve as President of Performance Polymers, and spend a good deal of my time traveling, especially in Asia and South America.

**Andrew Howe:** After college in the US and France, I taught for a year in a middle school in rural Hunan Province. I am now beginning a Master’s program focusing on rural livelihoods and food sovereignty in Francophone Africa at the University of Oregon.
**Caitlin Kappel:** I'm a second-year MBA student at the NYU Stern School of Business, specializing in Finance and Financial Instruments and Markets. I hold an undergraduate degree in Chemistry, with a minor in Entrepreneurship from Johns Hopkins University. Prior to returning to grad school, I worked at Thomson Reuters in Corporate Advisory Services for four years. This summer I interned in Sales & Trading at Credit Suisse in New York City. When I'm not busy with school, I love to travel and watch any Pittsburgh sports team play.

**Carleen Kerttula:** I currently serve as executive director of the MBA Roundtable, an association of 160+ business schools whose mission is to advance curricular change and innovation in MBA education. My passion for global citizenry and management education comes from a 20-year career with roles as diverse as MBA program and career services director for a leading business school, collegiate instructor of French, international sales and marketing manager for a Fortune 1000 corporation, and public relations intern for a large regional French newspaper.

**Sharon Knight:** Two years ago, I was a Senior Vice President with one of the world's largest videogame developers, which I came by after a fabulous 2-1/2 year stint in London running European product operations for the company. My work in Europe resulted in a promotion and a transfer back to US headquarters to create a global shared service organization and to lead the company’s worldwide outsourcing and offshoring operations. I held this position, traveling the world, for two years before deciding I wanted to run the show at a more entrepreneurial healthcare start-up company. My husband and I live in San Francisco; I work hard to feed our travel bug whenever I can.

**Elizabeth Knup:** I studied Chinese in college, and have been involved with China since the 1980s. Today I live in Beijing, where I am chief China representative for Pearson, the world-leading education company that owns Penguin Books, the Financial Times, and the Pearson educational resources and technology company.

**Kelly Loughlin:** I'm currently an HR & Recruiting Coordinator at StumbleUpon Inc. in San Francisco. American by birth, I grew up in Hong Kong, where I attended an international school and got to travel extensively, especially in Asia and Australia. I earned my B.A. in Asian
Studies from the University of Denver. I enjoy exploring new places, painting and running along the bay in beautiful San Francisco.

**Elizabeth Marshman:** A 2010 graduate of Yale, I now serve as Executive Director of ReEnvision Design, a non-profit, in addition to freelancing as an engineer in the Bay Area. At ReEnvision, I work primarily with major universities, government organizations, corporations and not-for-profit organizations in designing practical solutions for major issues surrounding poverty: e.g., medical devices for clinics without access to power or clean water, water systems that decrease infant mortality rates from 50% to less than 10%, and mobile clinics to provide medical and dental services to populations that have no other access. My vision is for engineering and design to eventually eradicate global poverty.

**John C. Miles:** I am a dual US/UK citizen and former singer in the New York Metro Mass Choir. I was an English major and pre-med student at Duke University, where I also earned my MBA. I spent the eight years prior to business school at Goldman Sachs, working with financial institutions in various business development and relationship management roles, with projects in Bermuda, London and Bangalore.

**Nicholas Musy:** I was born in Switzerland, and have travelled throughout the world. I first came to China in the early 1980s and became interested in business, starting a small sportswear manufacturing operation which grew to a chain of companies that I eventually sold. Today I consult for other start-ups via co-leading China Integrated. In my spare time, I am a distance runner and an environmental activist and have helped create an annual ultra-marathon in Mongolia that helps raise funds for Mongolia’s national parks.

**Lauren Nelson:** I graduated from Boston University in 2009 with majors in International Relations and Political Science. As a student, I lived and studied in Peru and Ecuador, where I volunteered with local NGOs in the fields of youth mentorship and the education of indigenous populations. Since graduation, I’ve resided in southern China, where I first taught secondary and university level English, but now act as the educational director for an American-founded Chinese language and culture institute. I will be moving to India to take part in an NGO fellowship funded by American Jewish World Service.
**Ben Paulker:** I’m an undergrad and an International Marketing Major at The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. I currently work for an international marketing firm called The Noral Group. I have studied languages all of my life and continue to use these skills in order to better my understanding of the world around me. I love sports and movies along with traveling the world.

**Ramiro Prudencio:** I held overseas assignments in Latin America from 1994 – 2006. I moved from Washington D.C. to Santiago, Chile, to open offices for a global public relations firm, and led that operation for nearly five years. In 1998, I moved to Sao Paulo to manage the firm’s operations in Brazil. Nearly 13 years abroad, in two very different countries and cultures, gave a wonderful perspective on life and business in this part of the world. I have three beautiful children and nag them to improve their Portuguese and Spanish (English they get at school) every chance I can.

**Liesl Riddle:** I am the Associate Dean for MBA Programs and Associate Professor of International Business and International Affairs at The George Washington University (GW) in Washington, D.C. My particular area of expertise is diaspora community investment and development, which I have been researching and writing about now for more than 15 years. In addition to teaching undergraduate and graduate courses on the subject, I also serve on the United Nations' advisory panel on diaspora investment and entrepreneurial policies. My educational background is in Middle Eastern Studies, which I supplemented with an MBA in Marketing/International Business and a PhD in Sociology.

**Gus Tate:** I graduated from Princeton in 2008 then taught English for two years at a middle school in Guangdong Province. I’m currently in my second year of a three-year master’s program in Applied Linguistics/Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language at Beijing Normal University.

**Kate Triggs:** I’m British by birth, married to an American, and the mother of five-year-old twins. In my 20+ year career, I have worked in London and New York, but am now Executive Director of the Mubadala Development Company in Abu Dhabi, UAE. My current team is home to ten different nationalities and my greatest source of pride is the string of international protégés developed over my career who are now doing great things all across the globe.
**Rebecca Weiner:** After graduating from Yale in 1985, I began working for the US Department of State as an interpreter’s assistant in Chinese, eventually becoming a senior simultaneous conference interpreter at the UN and for heads of state, film stars and CEOs. In 1995, I opted to join the business world, working for BellSouth and then Burson-Marsteller. I now co-own Strebesana Resources, a consulting firm that brokers medical optics deals between the US and China, and consult for other firms and not-for-profits. I authored the *Go Global* chapter on China.

**Hailey Weiss:** I'm an undergrad at Wharton pursuing an education in marketing and communications. For the last year I have been a research assistant at Wharton’s Future of Advertising Project. I pride myself on my drive, focus and ability to integrate knowledge from my classes, work and personal experience to innovatively solve problems. Outside school and work I enjoy time with family, friends and of course my dogs. Being a Colorado native I enjoy time outdoors, especially on the tennis court. I currently captain the University of Pennsylvania’s Club Tennis Team.

**Perry Yeatman:** I started off my international career in public relations in Singapore and then moved to Moscow and London with Burson-Marsteller. From there, I went “in-house” with Unilever as a Vice President of Corporate Affairs for North America, moving over to Kraft Foods in 2005, where I now serve as Senior Vice President, Corporate Affairs, and President, The Kraft Foods Foundation. I’m lucky I get to work closely with the Chairman and CEO Irene Rosenfeld, as well as pursue my passions in community involvement and global public policy. In 2007, I co-authored *Get Ahead by Going Abroad* with Stacie.

**Michael Zhu:** I grew up in China and studied technology and business at Beijing University of A&A and Carnegie Mellon. I was an expat in Beijing for two years working on integrating 3Com’s China joint venture and managing sales. Today as director of a global team I am based in Boston and travel often to our R&D operation in China to architect innovative technology solutions for HP’s largest customers. I am a guest speaker at MBA classes at Boston’s Bentley University on global alliance and collaborations, and enjoy bringing my MP100 badminton racket along on China trips to challenge the best players.
How this Book is Organized

This book is organized into seven chapters. Although it’s written for the young professional, it includes plenty of information relevant to those still in high school through to seasoned professionals looking to go global. If you’re just beginning to think about an international career, start at the beginning. If you’re at the stage of building and communicating your global brand, go to Chapters 3 and 4. For those even remotely interested in China, don’t miss Chapter 7. Everyone should check out the Go Global! video link in Chapter 1.

Each chapter includes practical tips throughout with Top Tips listed at the end of each chapter. It also includes anecdotes and stories from a variety of global thinkers, with the objective of helping you do the following:

Chapter 1: Recognizing that Global Is Everywhere

- Understand the many impacts of globalization, how it will affect your career, and the rewards available to skilled global workers.
- Appreciate that global opportunities abound both at home and abroad, and that most of us begin our international careers without leaving our home country; and if you do move abroad, it doesn’t necessarily mean forever.

Chapter 2: Appreciating the Importance of a Global Mindset

- Assess whether and how an international career can work for you by understanding the skills you will need and the challenges of working cross-culturally.
- Understand that “going global” at its heart is a mindset, and learn how to think globally in everything you do so that you can recognize all kinds of international opportunities when they arise.
Chapter 3: Building Your International Qualifications

- Make the most of your undergraduate and graduate years to learn skills and gain credentials relevant to global success from your choice of classes to your selection of summer activities, for each one can make a difference.
- Learn what organizations are looking for in global workers.
- Learn about the pros and cons of volunteer vacations, internships and assignments and how your first valuable international experience might be unpaid.
- Recognize that there are risks involved in travelling, studying, volunteering, working and living abroad, and that you must understand the inherent dangers as well as be prepared for the unexpected.

Chapter 4: Creating a Winning Global Job-search Toolkit: Resumes, Cover Letters and Elevator Pitches

- Package your experience appropriately for each market, industry and company you apply to.
- Learn how to incorporate international experience and interests into your job-search toolkit, e.g., resumes, cover letters and interview preparation.
- Understand the importance of personal branding and the valuable role social media plays.

Chapter 5: Pulling It All Together: Ready, Set…Go Global!

- Develop a career-search strategy based on guided research, including gathering intelligence, networking and targeted study and analysis of relevant markets, industries and companies.
- Look beyond corporate positions alone to review options in the not-for-profit and government sectors.
- Understand the range of options in international jobs so that you can manage your expectations and be prepared.
Chapter 6: Launching an International Career

- Evaluate the possibilities of moving to another country without first securing a job.
- Appreciate the legal and practical complexities of working overseas: visas, banking, insurance, taxes and other official requirements.
- Turn your first international job into an international career.

Chapter 7: Navigating the Pathways to China

- Understand China’s current job market, including why its market is bifurcated and challenging.
- Differentiate yourself among the competition looking toward Asia as the new “land of opportunity.”
- Appreciate the variety of pathways to China, including working for MNCs and Chinese organizations; going the corporate, not-for-profit or education route; transferring in or moving on your own; and starting a business in China.
- Know where to turn for additional information and resources to prepare you before you go and help you while you’re on the ground living in China.

Go Global!
Chapter 2

Appreciating the Importance of a Global Mindset

The ability to work successfully across cultures is critical to a successful international career. To hear Perry Yeatman, a senior business leader, describe the importance of a global mindset for today’s workforce, visit: http://youtu.be/Tvw2IPkglUg

Once you know the value of Going Global, as discussed in Chapter 1, the next step is to assess your own readiness – how prepared you are to operate in an international environment. Some of you may have doubts about moving abroad and would prefer to start out in the US. It helps, though, to understand what distinguishes a global thinker.

Ask academics, business professionals or government bureaucrats to describe “global mindset” and most will offer similar definitions: An ability to work successfully across cultures (not necessarily in another country). Experts disagree, however, about what makes one person better prepared than another to do this and whether a global mindset can actually be taught.

What Is a Global Mindset?
Having a global mindset requires not only possessing the technical skills necessary for operating successfully in an international environment, but also the personal skills necessary for applying these effectively. From Wikipedia: “In its broadest sense, an expatriate is any person living in a country other than the one where he or she is a citizen. In common usage, the term often describes professionals sent
abroad by their companies, as opposed to locally-hired staff, who can also be foreigners. The differentiation found in common usage usually comes down to socio-economic factors, so skilled professionals working in another country are described as expatriates, whereas a manual laborer who has moved to another country to earn more money tends to be labeled an ‘immigrant’.

Much new research on “global mindset” is being led by Thunderbird School of Global Management. Its rigorous, scientific study of the drivers of expat success has shown that a global mindset crosses professions and countries. In its report, Conceptualizing and Measuring Global Mindset®: Development of the Global Mindset Inventory¹, The Thunderbird Global Mindset Institute’s team provides extensive detail on the topic. I had the pleasure of meeting and interviewing Dr. Mansour Javidan for an article that I wrote for Today’s Campus on Global Mindset; the article includes the following breakdown of the global mindset:

- **Intellectual capital**: Defined as knowledge of global industry and competitors and is measured by knowledge of global business savvy, cognitive complexity, cosmopolitan outlook.
- **Social capital**: Involves building trusting relationships and is measured by intercultural empathy, interpersonal impact, and diplomacy.
- **Psychological capital** reflects and is measured by one’s passion for diversity, quest for adventure, and self-assurance.

At the most basic level, global mindset is about skills that are proven to work cross-culturally. In 2006, I conducted a survey with more than 200 professionals who had successfully worked overseas to

inform my first book, *Get Ahead By Going Abroad*. Respondents identified five traits deemed critical in cross-cultural situations:

- **Adaptability/Flexibility**: Style-flexing is key. Internationalists must appreciate cultural differences and tolerate ambiguity. In foreign environments you must be fluid, able to work around and find “other ways” to accomplish tasks. Problem-solving abilities are crucial. In global jobs, you must be able to solve complex problems in many different ways, adapting the way you analyze and resolve issues to the situation you are working in.

- **Excellent Communication**: How you speak, listen, and intuit can make or break a global experience. Your ability to understand and make yourself understood is critical when differences in language, culture, politics and religion increase odds of miscommunications. Non-verbal cues, such as culture, body language, reading between the lines, and interpreting the environment, are all important.

- **Building teams and relationships**: Internationalists look beyond stereotypes and get to know people as individuals, and appreciate the rewards of bringing together different individuals. This requires the solid organizational, time and people-management skills that are key at home, but also the ability to reach across cultures and draw people from different backgrounds together. Good global teamwork enhances your success – and your team’s.

- **Patience and persistence**: Successful global workers maintain grace under pressure, going with the flow when nothing works as they expect. “Local time” and “local custom” mean different things in every market. Savvy internationalists know that waiting and watching often outperforms rushing in demanding immediate answers or changes. Long-term results count most.

- **Intellectual curiosity**: Good global workers are interested in and open to dealing with whatever comes their way, and enjoy new environments. This curiosity drives internationalists to learn about the world – history, geography, literature, economics. Knowledge, in turn, leads to a better understanding of how to work across
cultures. Global workers are curious about what makes business tick, and that leads to strong and growing business acumen.

Although these traits may be inherent in some, you can learn them. If you’re serious about going global, start practicing these skills in personal and professional situations today. You’ll find that while these skills are critical to success abroad, they will also help you succeed here at home. In the global marketplace, technical skills are necessary but not sufficient. Global workers also need cultural sensitivity, the ability to interpret situations, information and facts while being empathetic and diplomatic team players, and a passionate curiosity that lets them enjoy the cultural diversity they thrive in every day.

The global worker fulfills an organization’s needs. Companies, not-for-profits and government agencies expect cross-cultural abilities in their new hires as much as they expect basic professional skills.

Is Going Global Right for You?
So if this is what makes successful international workers, how do you know if you can be one of them? Living and working globally is not for everyone.

95% of the 200 professionals I surveyed prior to writing “Get Ahead By Going Abroad” agreed that not everyone can successfully live and work abroad. Be honest with yourself; take a few self-evaluations, and talk to people who know you and understand global careers. – Stacie Berdan

Only you can tell whether or not you have the curiosity, openness and interest in the world to succeed in a global career. You may enjoy international experiences, but never have been tested in a global work environment. You may have travelled, but not had to cope with deadlines or real work pressure overseas. Maybe your study abroad experience was terrific – but also cocooned you against the toughest challenges of your host culture. No matter where you rate your own global mindset or how many of the five traits of successful
globetrotters you have, before considering an international job search, ask yourself: Is a global assignment right for me?

To help you begin to answer that question, here is a thought exercise based on my research on successful internationalists.

Begin by thinking about a time in your life – preferably recently – when you felt stretched or challenged. It could be an athletic competition, the first day on the job or campus, the presentation of your thesis or your first client meeting. Remember the stresses and disappointments of that experience as well as its triumphs and rewards. Now imagine that event further complicated by language, cultural differences, exotic food or anything else that makes you nervous about international exchange. Take time to fully imagine yourself in that situation. How well would you have been able to deal with it? Be honest here; you’re fooling no one but yourself if you aren’t.

Now it’s time to rate yourself as honestly as you can, on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high) on how much you agree with each of the following:

- I thrive on challenges – the more the better.
- I enjoy meeting and getting to know new people.
- I love new places, new foods, and new cultures.
- I can get along with many different personalities, including people others find difficult.
- I thrive on change, and am happy to be surrounded by it 24/7.
- I enjoy taking calculated risks.
- I don’t get bothered by things that seem different or strange.
- I don’t mind being alone.
- I go the extra mile – time and again – without being asked.
- I thrive when asked to go outside my comfort zone.
- I am curious about what makes the world go round.
- I am adaptable.
- I am a good listener and communicator.
- I like working in teams.
- I can handle failure and learn from it.
Add up your score. Give yourself five points for having bought this book! That by itself shows a curiosity that can be built on. If your total “score” was 120 or above, you may have a bright global future ahead of you – just remember, the best cross-cultural workers never stop honing their global thinking skills. If you scored 90-119, you have the makings of a good internationalist, and a guide to areas where you need to brush up. If you scored 51-89, think seriously before you apply for international jobs, and consider how much you can evolve. If you scored 50 or below, you probably aren’t well suited for an international career at this time. If so, it’s better to know that BEFORE you invest too much time and effort in trying to build one. But keep in mind that people’s scores on assessments tend to change over time, especially as your pathway through life becomes molded by real-life experience.

Understanding – and Preparing for – Culture Shock
One of the most widely discussed and often misunderstood aspects of international work is culture shock. Culture shock is the confusion, disorientation and emotional upheaval that comes from immersion in a new culture. Culture shock often follows a three-phased cycle starting with a honeymoon period where everything feels grand. Fabulous turns to frustration, depression and confusion, often triggered by an event involving minor cultural differences. All usually ends well as the recovery phase smooths the crinkles enabling a wiser you to move on. International newbies are often either overly optimistic (“I won’t have any trouble adjusting”) or overly pessimistic (“everyone takes 6 months to get used to the basics before they can do anything productive”).

In fact, almost everyone who works internationally experiences some degree of culture shock with every major cultural transition – whether moving to a new culture, or dealing with a new cultural group or sub-culture at home. You can experience a type of culture shock if you are immersed in virtual team work, working global hours on global
projects. Whatever your encounters are, everyone who works internationally needs to develop coping mechanisms.

Experienced internationalists learn to recognize their own patterns of adjustment to new experiences. They come to appreciate the coping mechanisms that work best for them. By giving themselves the space, time and other support they need to adjust, they smooth their own transitions and develop their own culture shock absorbers, so they can continue working productively.

I find that some of the most effective principles to deal with culture shock include:

- Assume differences until similarity is proven.
- Relate to individuals, not a “culture.”
- Work with a culture rather than against it.
- Ask “What do I need to understand?” not what should I do
- Listen and observe, think and then talk.
- Focus on the benefits of differences rather than simply trying to avoid mistakes.
- Never try to “go native.” — Terry Brake

Savvy global workers also remember that the toughest bouts of culture shock often happen when transitioning “home.” This reverse culture shock or re-entry shock also requires coping – and preparation.

I’ll never forget the first time I came back to the US after 3 years in China. Everything seemed so huge! The cars, the houses, the food packages, the people – it felt overwhelming, and seemed so insanely wasteful I had to work not to judge my fellow Americans as hopelessly corrupt. — Rebecca Weiner

If you find culture shock a constant, awful strain that gets worse rather than better with each transition, take it as a warning sign. Like subsequent ripples from a stone being thrown in a pond, the height and frequency of culture shock waves should diminish with time.

Being a Woman
My first book focused on the benefits of women working abroad, and so it’s only natural that I should include some tips to get a better handle on what it’s like being a woman working abroad. If you’re
interested in reading the whole story, you should pick up a copy of *Get Ahead By Going Abroad.* The vast majority of women I interviewed for that book (and hundreds more since) agree that, as a woman:

- If you’re good at what you do, you will be accepted in international business circles as a professional first.
- There are many professional advantages to being a female. Most describe themselves as highly visible and so they leveraged it.
- Some countries, of course, do not treat women as equals. Each must be assessed individually. For example, in some Muslim countries, women do not have the same legal rights as men, nor the same business responsibilities. They have different customs for dating. Do not judge, condemn or compare your own culture in a more favorable light in public. Take care of how you dress so as not to offend or draw unnecessary attention to you.
- There are benefits to being married or single, having children or not. Women have done it before, and *Get Ahead By Going Abroad* can be an excellent resource for you.
- Safety must be considered first. Women overseas must be cautious, attentive and not take chances when it comes to personal safety. Other cultures will have impressions of “what American women are like.” Whether they’re accurate or not, you need to know those perceptions and anticipate them.

Abiding by Safe Travel Tips is critical:

- Find out which countries/cities are considered dangerous for women.
- Understand that in some countries, women do not have the same rights as men.
- Know and follow the local laws.
- Be conscious of what you wear, both clothes and jewelry.
- Don’t walk alone at night; stay in groups.
- Keep cash stashed on your person.
• Don’t be caught by surprise; be aware of your surroundings.
• Err on the side of caution with strangers.
• Don’t arrive late at night to a place you don’t know or fear might be dangerous.
• Keep your cell phone charged at all times.
• Sexual misinterpretation happens to most women who spend time in other cultures. There are many reasons; be prepared for it to happen – and to respond properly.

We have preconceived notions of people of other cultures. Be patient and work carefully to show your culture, and learn about others.

**Safety Issues Abroad**

There are inherent risks involved in traveling, studying, working and living abroad, and you have to be prepared to face them. Natural disasters can hit anywhere – and can be aggravated by inferior infrastructures typically found in poorer countries. Some disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions, may be more common abroad than at home. Political unrest and uprisings can happen as we have seen in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Syria. Americans overseas can be cut off from easy contact with friends and families back home, despite the best laid plans. Are you ready for that? Much can go wrong overseas, from unwanted sexual advances to financial disasters (including budget-busting stupidity).

If you find yourself obsessed with fear of such issues, working overseas is probably not right for you. But even if you feel comfortable with risk, you still must think about safety. Whether you are moving abroad or taking a quick business trip – even personal travel – make sure you understand the inherent dangers. Plan ahead, and know where to turn for help if you need it:

• The US Department of State issues travel advisory site cautions and up-to-date information underscoring the importance of remaining vigilant and security conscious in specific countries.
• The US Department of State offers safe travel tips, a comprehensive list of action steps to take both before you depart and while traveling.

• The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) web site provides detailed information on healthy traveling, from disease outbreaks and required immunizations to food and water safety. Always get a physical before heading overseas – even if only for a few months – and bring a full supply of prescriptions with doctor’s note of explanation. Confirm health insurance coverage outside the US, including that your insurance covers medical evacuation services (Medevac).

• Travel and living abroad books and websites offer valuable health and safety information about specific locations.

Also, pay attention to common-sense safety:

• **Be Aware of Potential Anti-American sentiments:** Keep a low-profile. Register with the US Embassy or Consulate, use the buddy system, and keep your family/friends appraised of your whereabouts, especially while traveling.

• **Valuables:** Bring little and carry a copy of your passport photo page – not your passport unless the situation requires it. Email yourself a copy of your passport and any other important information, such as credit card numbers and bank accounts so that if any are lost or stolen, you can go online and get a copy. Use a money belt and stick small bills in pockets for quick purchases.

• **Financials:** Manage your money, know what things cost, do not wave your money around and stick to your budget (running out of cash is risky business).

• **Smart determination:** Living in foreign environments challenges and tires even the most determined. Be prepared to stick with it, but know when to call it quits if negatives outweigh positives.
Be aware that our definitions of right and wrong or “how things work” are culturally determined. Your ideas about acceptable laws, gender roles and other aspects of daily life may differ from local rules. You don’t have to participate in or approve behaviors you disagree with, but be prepared that your only choice may be to walk away.

Thinking Globally – Strengthening YOUR Global Mindset
To recap, you must think globally, whether you want to work in Warsaw or if you aspire to manage a global, virtual team from Miami. You must pay attention to international business trends, world events and global politics, and you have to strengthen your international business acumen. Practice working in cross-cultural situations and strengthen your social skills. I wrap up this chapter with a short list of practical tips to enhance your global thinking and skills. Via these channels, you will build your “global resume” as well as your global skill set, and be ready to seek a career-launching international job.
## Top Tips for Enhancing Your Global Persona

- Hone your cross-cultural skills.
- Pay attention to world events.
- Monitor business trends.
- Practice foreign languages.
- Monitor apps and blogs.
- Join local and virtual international clubs.
- Pay attention to hot regions and issues you care about.
- Find a support group.
- Travel abroad.
- Study abroad.
- Seek a short-term job abroad.