



Season 7: Navigating a Global Career Amidst Emerging Technologies Episode 1

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Stacie Berdan:

Welcome to the global careers podcast sponsored by GW-CIBER – THE source for inspiring stories from seasoned professionals who have embraced a global role and reaped the benefits. We offer practical advice and insider tips across a broad swath of industries and fields around the world. Whether or not you’ve considered moving abroad or taking on an international role, globalization will impact your career. So join us for a lively discussion as we explore what an international career really means. My name is Stacie Nevadomski Berdan and I'll be your host!

In season seven, we focus on the intersection of technology and globalization across all types of industries and functions. What aspects of tech do we all need to understand to adapt and thrive in the workplace? What types of global tech jobs are out there? And what skills are needed to compete? Join us as we hear from seasoned executives who will help us navigate global careers and emerging technologies around the world. I'm excited to introduce today's guest Andrea Gooz – Vice President of Global Citizen Services for General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT). Andrea has an impressive 20 years of experience working in international affairs and international peace and conflict resolution. In her current role, she provides migration solutions to both the US and foreign governments using business processes and emerging technologies to help facilitate safe and secure cross-border movements. Andrea launched and managed operations in more than 75 countries over the course of her career. Welcome, Andrea, it's great to have you with us today.

Andrea Gooz:

Hi, Stacie, it's great to be here. Thank you for having me.

Stacie Berdan:

So we're gonna get started. One of the objectives of our podcasts is to provide a sense of the careers that are out there. You know, you have outstanding experience combining international affairs, business, emerging tech, and, as I mentioned in the intro, cross-border migration. Can you tell us what that means in terms of an actual job? What do you do every day or on a weekly basis?

Andrea Gooz:

Yeah, so, definitely hard to summarize in a short answer. But, I think, throughout my career, I've really been able to operate at the intersection of private sector, public sector, and international organizations, right? Working with large global companies and local companies all around the world, US and government clients all around the world, and international organizations, like not for profits, NGOs, UN type. So really kind of this intersection of all different sectors, that has been really, really interesting. My role has typically included leading international teams, developing and implementing migration solutions for our government clients. And currently, I have a team of more than 1000 people operating services across more than 50 countries. So that's kind of what it's generally looked like, overall. But really, on a day-to-day, I would say, kind of, my work falls into three main buckets – I'm either working with teams, in meetings to develop solutions, kind of bringing together people from all different backgrounds, all different industry to really look at what is the challenge facing our clients and how can we



brainstorm together to develop a solution that will help them overcome that challenge. I'm also meeting with stakeholders all around the world. These might be from the various industries, public sector clients, corporate leadership, all of the stakeholders that are engaged in some way, shape, or form in the work that we do – either informing it so I'm listening and learning from them or supporting it in some way. And then, finally, I think a lot of my day actually is spent in what most people would kind of see as the lower part of the iceberg, right, the part that doesn't get seen as much above the water, right, it's the behind the scenes work, it's the back-office work. It's really rolling up your sleeves and understanding all of the operational, and financial, and legal, and HR, and tax, and contracts, and compliance elements that go into running a successful international operation. And these are the parts that really, really don't get seen very much, right, they're not as visible, but they're the foundation for everything we do. And if there's any weak spots in any of those, it, can really take down the operation. So a lot of time is really spent on that kind of work and really focusing in on the details so that you really ensure that your operations always have a solid foundation to be supported.

Stacie Berdan:

Wow, so interesting, and so important, and so fraught with potential cracks and problems if, as you said, if you're actually going to cross all the t's and dot the i's, wow... And 1000 team members all over... And your background is in international peace and conflict resolution, but yet you work for a business. You know, I know I'm kind of oversimplifying, but can you talk about the need for professionals with skills such as yours, which many people might put in a diplomatic or an international-relations bucket, to work for global companies on a global scale?

Andrea Gooz:

Yeah, so, interestingly, when I went I chose to go into international peace and conflict resolution, or IPCR for short, I really chose it based on liking the course listing, right... I looked at a bunch of different programs, I knew I wanted to continue to learn and to pursue a Master's, but I really didn't know where my career was headed, or what IPCR would gain me in that... I just knew that it was interesting to me. So that's what I did. And what I found really, and kind of have come to see over the years more and more, is that while you may not think of IPCR is something that is relevant to the private sector, right. You think of diplomacy, you think of war crimes, tribunals, and The Hague, and, like, areas like that for IPCR. But what is really foundational in IPCR, and what you spend a lot of time studying and learning, is how to understand cross culturally, how to communicate cross culturally, how to negotiate cross culturally, and really how those elements of culture, of language, religion, etc., can be obstacles to communication so often, and how we need to be looking beyond those in order to be effective in an international setting. So if you look at IPCR more so through that lens of learning how to communicate across borders, I think it becomes a little bit more clear as to why it's so important for an international or global company to have that kind of skill set. As I mentioned, right, a lot of my time is spent in stakeholder meetings with people from around the world, in negotiations on contracts around the world. And those skills of, kind of, understanding the role that culture, language, etc. play in communication have been so important to really bring those stakeholders together, work towards a common goal, and collaborate effectively in the process.

Stacie Berdan:

It's just amazing, of course. So, IPCR, cross cultural..., and the private sector increasingly realizes it needs people with a global mindset, with language skills, with the ability to work cross culturally, as you've said. So thank you. I mean, that's so clear. And it's wonderful for our listeners to hear that you have found a career based on courses you took, I just love that. Because, I mean, you liked it then, you like it now, and I'm sure there are days that are frustrating, just as much as days that are glorious. But that's a beautiful thing. And I'm really glad you shared that, because I think for our listeners it's important to realize that whatever they study, and they like, and they find a passion, perhaps that they can actually go find a career, forge a career path themselves. So that's just amazing. And your career has been terrific. 75 countries around the world, setting up teams, and overseeing teams, and working with people all over the course of more than 20 years. I would love to sit here all day long and talk to you about it, but can you just share with us some highlights, you know, some specifics, maybe some specific lessons you've learned, some things that you do – to really, maybe put a face on the global career that you've had so far?



Andrea Gooz:

Absolutely. So, it's really so hard to pin down, right? Like you said, with so many countries at play, I get asked quite often what was your favorite country, what's your favorite food, what's your favorite experience, right? And I absolutely cannot pick favorites in any of those, right? Because every country, every experience has been so unique and so incredible in its own way, it offers so much just having had the experience that I really have loved at all, frankly. But I think what has really stood out for me, and increasingly over the years as I look back on, what do I remember, what impacts me beyond the visit or beyond a few weeks past the visit, is the ability to get to know people and really understand their perspectives along the way, right? Really be able to get a sense of the lens through which they view the world, what's their personal paradigm, if you will, and in how they look at life, career, family, etc. And over the years as I've traveled for work, I've had the fantastic opportunity so many times to share meals with families, across five continents. And those are the experiences I remember long term. I've been able to kind of sit with a family in a home in Morocco and share a meal or at a restaurant with a family at the Taj Mahal, right. Very different settings, very different locations, but the experience of being with a family in their country and their incredible generosity of spirit and sharing with me and their pride in sharing their culture, their language, their food, their traditions – it's those experiences that really stick with you and kind of influence how you think going forward. And it's that kind of peek behind the curtains of how people around the world view the world, right? And that's been so useful then, as I work with different stakeholders all over the world, being able to kind of come at situations with all of those very perspectives in the back of my mind. And that's really, I think, my takeaway from all of it. You know, in international business, you see, you might go to a particular country, you might see the tourist sites, right, you might eat in the restaurants, stay in the hotels, and those are all wonderful in their own right. But it's those experiences where you really get to understand what it means to be in that culture, in that country, in those traditions that I think influence you long term. And that's the part that I really may not have realized going into it but really came out loving the most in my experiences.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, what a beautiful thing. You know, the world is so interesting. Why? Because of the people. And you know, people like to say it's, yeah, people are more, we're more alike than different, but the differences are also beautiful, right? I mean, that's so neat. I love the way you said, seeing the world through various peoples' eyes. And then, in a way, you've kind of collected it and put it all, it's become part of you and part of the facets of who you are. That's, that's really so interesting. And so, when you're sitting with some of these families or doing your work, language can be an issue, right, it often can be a barrier. One of the questions I'm asked most I think about global careers, do I have to speak another language to have a global career? What do you think?

Andrea Gooz:

You're absolutely right. A lot of people focus on do I need a language, what language should I learn? And I think my reply is typically, learning a language is incredibly important but it's not necessarily for the reasons you think it may be, right. If you have a particular region or a particular country, a specific area in which you want to work, you want to relocate or operate in, then absolutely, there might be a singular language or multiple languages that are really critical for you to learn and learn to fluency. But, in my experience, and I think in many global careers these days, you're covering so many countries, right? There isn't, at least in my experience, ability to learn all of the languages for the countries in which you're going to operate. And the common language is oftentimes English. So if you speak English as a native language, there isn't necessarily an imperative need to speak the other languages for the sake of communication in the business. But I definitely would stress that that doesn't mean that as a native English speaker, you sit back and say, I don't need to, or rely on others to speak English, or minimize the importance of simply learning another language. I think the value in learning another language is actually in the experience it gives you of what it means to try to speak outside of your native tongue, try to communicate, and just how hard that can be. So that when you then sit in meetings, like I do every day, with people for whom English is not their first language (it may not even be their second or third language), some of those people, it's still perfectly easy for them to speak English, right? They have an amazing skill to switch languages. But for others, it is not coming naturally, right? So, my experience, having learned another language, operated in another language has



helped me, I think, to better understand where they're coming from when they're speaking English, and better communicate beyond the language itself. So that ultimately, at the end of the day, your communication is more effective, even if you're still everyone is operating in English. So it's a way of saying, I definitely advocate that people still learn another language and try to learn it to fluency, study abroad, do something immersive, where you really are operating that language. But maybe worry a little bit less about the language you select. Because it may not be critical that you select exactly the right language by any means, but rather that you just go through that experience of learning and speaking in another language.

Stacie Berdan:

Well said, yes. You never quite know whether you're going to be able to use it. But as you say, being able to stand in the other person's shoes and understand what it's like... Empathy, you know, one of the key skills to succeeding globally. What other skills do you think are important for a global career?

Andrea Gooz:

So, I think that they, you really have to be open to the experiences, I think you want to be prepared as best you can, but really be adaptable, right, in any situation, right... You might go into something expecting a certain language, a certain culture, a certain experience, and you might be very much surprised. And you need to be able to quickly adapt and work within, in the setting you're in, and just kind of roll with it basically, right? So, enjoy each experience – the hard ones and the easy ones, right – something is to be learned from each and every one. So, kind of keeping on moving forward and taking all of that with you, I think it's really important in any global career.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah. And it sounds like you're still learning. So, to that end, I mean, after all of the work that you have done, is there something that still baffles you, something that you still find challenging or you need to grasp?

Andrea Gooz:

Yeah, so I think that what is baffling and interesting, right, is really that the more you learn, the more you experience – the more you realize just how little you know, right? So, the more you know about something, the more you don't know about that. So it can kind of, be a bit overwhelming. There's so many places to go, there's so many fields of work or study that you can pursue, and you only have so much time. So I think for me it's always a challenge of how do we prioritize time, how do I choose what I'm going to spend my time on, and how do I ensure I'm being very intentional about where I'm choosing to spend that time. Because it is limited, there's only so many hours in the day, right? So I want to make the most of it. So I think it's that that sense of there's always something new and different to learn, and how do you pick? And the good news is there isn't a right or wrong answer in that path because you'll always keep learning, and it's always interesting.

Stacie Berdan:

You have a family and global career – so how do you manage, how do you balance, how do you choose what you do that day or what you don't do?

Andrea Gooz:

So it's always kind of interesting for me to think about kind of the question of how to manage a global career and a family... The answer of how to do it really depends so much on the phase that you're in, both personally and professionally, right. Are you in a situation where you have young kids or older kids? Are you in a situation where you don't have children? Right? And what phase of career are you in, right. Because the demands of both personal and professional vary so much in each stage. But I think in general, it's no doubt – a global career is very demanding. And it pushes the boundaries of personal and professional relationships. But at the same time, many careers do that, right. In a global career, you might have extensive travel, you might have time zone challenges. And those things definitely impact your ability to be present, or in contact with family and friends regularly. But in many ways, there's other professions that are not global, but that do that as well, right, they might require nighttime



work or weekend work, or very long hours, right, that take you away from family and friends. So I think that in a global career, managing it with your family, really it's important to think in advance of what the impacts will be all around, and try the best you can to set up a support system, make sure you have a support system for when you will be out of pocket, whether personally or professionally. And just as importantly, I think being cognizant of how much you are out of pocket, right, and the impact that that has for the longer term, whether that be on your career or on your family. So it kind of comes back to that bit about time again, right, really being intentional about where you spend it. But also in the process of making those tradeoffs, being aware of what you're asking of others, whether it's your family, what you're asking them to do to support you or at work, what you're putting on others. Because there's really... there isn't one way to make it work. Every family, every career is unique. And so it's really about finding and communicating with those around you, finding what works best, right, what works for you and your family and your career and run with it. It's not going to be easy, but it's so doable, and it's definitely worthwhile and an incredible experience. But it takes focused intention.

Stacie Berdan:

So true. I want to ask you a question about being a woman internationally. I mean, 75 countries, that's a lot to actually... And there are gender differences, different cultures do not treat everyone the same. Do you have some stories or examples of how being a woman... was that a pro or con or, you know, just share with us what it's like to be a woman. You can pick a particular example or in a particular country or culture if you'd like to.

Andrea Gooz:

I think it's an interesting question. And I think that, overall, as I look back over the years, whether being a woman I can't say has been net positive, or net negative, right. I think gender, as you mentioned, right, gender does play a significant role in many cultures, and I frame culture as not just a regional or country or religion, right. But it can also be a workplace culture, it can be the culture of a particular industry. In my experience, gender has played a role that is very situational, right? Like I said, I can't say it's a net positive or net negative by any means. It really depends on how people as individuals choose to show up and choose to treat others. And I think that when it comes to working globally, it's really important to do your research, understand what you're getting into, understand the culture that you're stepping into, and the role that gender may play in that culture. At the same time, be prepared to be surprised, right? Because just because there might be a generalization in a given culture, it definitely doesn't mean that everyone is going to show up in that way. So I think it's about kind of understanding what you're getting into but at the same time, being ready to really see the situation for what it is and adapt accordingly and be prepared with your own personal boundaries on what you're willing to accept and what you're not willing to accept as you step into any situation.

Stacie Berdan:

So it's good advice. So, recognize that there may be bias, there may be stereotypes, but you have to set your own boundaries and also be open. Right? Don't go in with your own biases. Yeah. Great advice.

Andrea Gooz:

Absolutely.

Stacie Berdan:

What do you see on the horizon, Andrea, that those entering the workforce in the next year or two need to be aware of, to be prepared for?

Andrea Gooz:

So, definitely, in my role I cannot ignore the role of technology, right, whether we're talking about the impacts of social media writ large, right, or the latest in tech offerings, like AI, or cloud, or cyber, or 5G, or quantum or any of those offerings or whatever comes next in technology, right. Technology is going to be there in every career. And it's absolutely imperative that you understand the role that it plays in your career. But at the same time, I don't want



anyone to feel intimidated by that. You don't need to be a techie in order to have a career in... have a global career, right. I definitely am not a technologist. But it's not about being able to build that technology. It's about understanding how it impacts the work you do, right. So just being aware of it, understanding how it influences the work you do, how it might be used to enable the work you do is super important. And then building teams around you so that you can leverage those technologies in a very positive way to impact the work that you do. It will be there and you will have to address it, but you don't have to be a technologist yourself.

Stacie Berdan:

Good advice. So, super important to understand how it affects your job and how it affects your customers, your clients, and the industry you're in? Yeah... What about study abroad? I know you studied abroad, do you think it helps?

Andrea Gooz:

Absolutely. Yes. So I studied abroad during college in France and it definitely was incredibly impactful, both personally and professionally down the road as well. I think what study abroad offered for me is learning what it means to be completely out of your element, just struggled to communicate the most basic of points, to feel constantly misunderstood, because you're operating in a non-native language, to be viewed as the outsider, the stranger, the one who seems not so bright, because she doesn't know how to speak what she wants to say. And I think, maybe most importantly, the experience of embarrassing myself on a daily, if not hourly, basis, and being okay with that. All of that, I think, being out of my element really helped me learn how to not take myself too seriously, how to stay humble. And I think, most importantly, just keep on moving forward. Right? No experience, good or bad, is really as good or bad as we make it out to be in our head, right. So I think it's important to just always keep moving forward. And studying abroad just really opened my eyes to just how different things can appear on the surface, right, whether it's language, culture, food, etc., things can look really different. But when you get beneath that surface level, you said it before, people are actually incredibly similar, their ultimate interests in life are very similar. And so, when we can get beneath that surface, or kind of those differences that are on the outside, it really helps us understand the commonalities we have. And that has been incredible perspective to have as I go into the global workplace.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, what you've just described is being open, having a global mindset, right, thinking globally, being open to the way other people think that isn't necessarily like us. But everyone, particularly in the United States, does not value having a global mindset. What do you tell listeners who think, globalization, internationalization, it doesn't affect me, it doesn't affect our careers, everything is fine right here, thank you very much?

Andrea Gooz:

So it's kind of like my technology comments earlier. You may not be interested in studying global affairs, you might not particularly care to learn about it. But you need to be aware it's there. And it is impacting your life, both personally and professionally. You don't have to look very far back in our history at all. Currently, the impacts of the pandemic, the impacts of conflict in different parts of the world, how that is felt in our supply chains in our prices of consumer goods locally, right, what's going on out there in the world does come home to you. So the world is so interconnected, and whether you want to necessarily focus on studying that or choose a global career doesn't matter, in the sense that you will be impacted by that globalization. And so having just that awareness, and it can be a top-level awareness, but having that awareness is like with technology – it's going to impact you personally and professionally. So it's important just to be aware of it.

Stacie Berdan:

We all learned so much during COVID and the whole pandemic as to how interconnected we truly were. So maybe that will continue to carry on. You're so thoughtful Andrea, and it sounds to me as though you have a very



important and thought-provoking serious job, too. But maybe you weren't always at this position, right? So, is there a piece of advice you'd like to go back and give your younger self?

Andrea Gooz:

So, I think probably really helpful to remember, especially when you're younger, is that everyone's path will look different. And that's completely okay. It is okay. Like I said, with choosing IPCR, I went with what was interesting to me, I had no idea where it would take me. And at the time, I just went with it. And I think that that has actually served well, in my career, that following what I found interesting, what I like to do, what I thought matched the skill sets that I could bring to the table. So I think it's really important for people to kind of be okay with the path looking different than other paths they might see around them, and to really just follow their interests. And remember, you can change your mind, right, you can pivot in your career, you don't have to lock yourself in based on prior choices. So I think kind of seeing all that, I really would remind folks to just enjoy the journey. Try not to worry so much about where it's taking you. But really just enjoy everything you're learning along the way. And I think if you follow that mindset, you'll end up somewhere that is really interesting and really amazing for you, that works for you.

Stacie Berdan:

Great advice, good advice. It's been wonderful, wonderful chatting with you, Andrea. Before we wrap up, this has been a very fulfilling, full, comprehensive interview, but is there anything else you want to add to share with our listeners?

Andrea Gooz:

I definitely just want students and those interested in global affairs to be okay with pursuing what they're interested and be okay if they don't know where they're headed, and if it doesn't look like what others have done before them. Because I think that now more than ever, you can forge your own pathway and a career based on following your interests. Right? And go with it, see what works out. And like I said before, enjoy the journey along the way.

Stacie Berdan:

Thank you. Thank you so much, Andrea, for your advice today. It's been terrific speaking with you and I really appreciate the time you took to be with us today.

Andrea Gooz:

Absolutely. Thank you so much for having me.

[Music]

Stacie Berdan:

You have been listening to the GW-CIBER Global Careers podcast. Join us again next time, and in the meantime – go global!