



Season 7: Navigating a Global Career Amidst Emerging Technologies Episode 3

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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. Today, I have the pleasure of speaking with Greer Meisels, Inaugural Director of External Affairs at Intel Corporation. She works on thought-leadership initiatives and stakeholder engagement around the world. Greer has extensive international affairs experience prior to Intel, including working on G7, G20, and US-China relations, and most recently, national security as it relates to foreign investment in biotech and emerging technologies in the US. She has lived in China and Taiwan and speaks fluent Mandarin Chinese, rusty French, and is learning Japanese. Welcome, Greer, it is great to have you with us today.

Greer Meisels:

Thank you so much. It's a pleasure to be here.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah. So, you know, one of the questions we get and the objective of this podcast is to provide a sense of careers that are out there – more than just titles. So tell us what you do now, you know, perhaps maybe on a day-to-day basis, give us a sense...

Greer Meisels:

As I think about my current role, I'm kind of divided into four sort of buckets, if you will. So there's kind of the external representational role. And what I mean by that is, sort of, you know, how I help represent Intel to outside parties – that can be to other business associations, trade associations, and think tanks, with other government officials... Just sort of how we present and how I present what it is that Intel is doing, what our objectives are, what we're focused on to the outside world. Then, there's sort of what I consider the internal, my internal representational role, which is sort of a combination of cat herding and consensus building. So, you know, thinking about... Intel, as I'm sure many of your listeners know, is a huge multinational company. We have offices around the world, we have, you know, over 140,000 employees. So, you know, there are a lot of different divisions, business units, groups, people that my unit, the Global Government Affairs team, need to interface with on a day-to-day basis. So figuring out who are those people that I need to work with in different groups to get whatever my current



assignment is done; Who do I need to make sure is an important stakeholder who's providing input if I need to make a decision... And that is sometimes almost harder than the external representational role, because there's a lot of, you know, internal consensus building, making sure people are on the same page, making sure people are aware of, you know, what is important, what some of our objectives are. So, that's kind of the second bucket, if you will. The third bucket is what I consider some of the strategic thinking. You know, I think many people's roles are very tactical, including mine, you know, there's a fire that needs to be put out, there's an issue that suddenly comes up that you need to address. But what's great about my job, and something that I really like about it, is that there's also sometimes (maybe not as much time as I'd like) but some time to think more kind of strategically, and think about, all right, you know, when you're thinking of how to present Intel to an external audience, or if I'm trying to think about what are some of our company objectives and how I can actually relate that to the outside world. What are some of the things that I would need to do? What are some of the strategies that have been used in the past that maybe haven't been as effective as we'd like? What are some of the things that we haven't thought about yet that we really should be doing? And so, sort of taking some of that time to think strategically about the problems that my group is facing and that the business as a whole is facing? And then, the last bucket, which is something that I enjoy doing, though there's sometimes moments of frustration because it takes me away from sort of the day-to-day, is what I would consider like the pinch hitting role - you know, for those out there who sort of are baseball fans, the pinch hitter. So, you know, I think with that, it's being a resource to everybody. You know, I think that in many roles, in many jobs, if you are competent, if people know you're a team player, if people know that you can just get things done, a lot of people will come to you if they have an immediate problem, if they don't really know who to put on a particular team, if something's come up and they don't really know who to lead it, if they need help suddenly with a presentation that they hadn't thought about - you know, I get a lot of those, a lot of that incoming on a pretty regular basis. And it's a good way, you know, to sort of expand your skill set and to work with other people, and to kind of get my profile out there as somebody who really can get things done. Even if it's not sort of on your typical, you know, job description, or something that you were, you know, quote unquote, supposed to do as part of your day job. So I think those are, you know, kind of how I think about, if I had to sort of map it out the four kind of main buckets of work that I do.

Stacie Berdan:

That's interesting. You've described a lot of skills, which are great. I mean, clearly, you're a good communicator, and I imagine you're a great writer and a great thinker, but also the disciplined approach, the problem solving, the almost even empathy for your colleagues, maybe, when they need help to jump in. That's, um, that's really interesting that a lot of that came forward to me, because I think that's important. You have to embrace the role that you're in and be able to actually deliver what's needed at the time. So that's cool. And you're working for a tech company. Tech is everywhere, right, central to most jobs, the axis on which, you know, the whole world seems to turn. How is it affecting your field?

Greer Meisels:

Really, in so many different fields tech is ever present. You know, for one thing, you and I are not in the same room right now talking, we're obviously doing this over, you know, Teams and Zoom. But you know, I think that when you when you're thinking about working in tech, obviously, I work for Intel which is a tech company, but you know, I have friends who are working on AI policy for the Federal Reserve. I have friends who are working on thinking about standard setting when it comes to 5G and 6G at a think tank. So, you know, I think that some of it is an idea of interesting policy issues that are coming up around technology that don't necessarily require you to be a technologist. It requires you to be somebody interested in formulating policy, or researching sort of what's being done in other geographies around the world. You know, how is the European Union, for instance, thinking about their AI regulation versus how the US is thinking about our AI regulation, and how is that, you know, different or the same from what China's thinking about in their AI regulation. So I think, you know, the one thing I would say is that, you know, a tech job is everywhere. Everyone is doing it to a certain extent. You know, I'm representing Intel in the external relations field, but, you know, I'm representing it in a way where I'm talking about, you know, say,



US-China relations or US-Taiwan relations, but how it relates to supply chain resilience, how we're thinking about, how different agencies are thinking about some of their tech policy, and how that might inform how we in the US think about our tech policy. So, I think, you know, if you're interested at all in technology, or any aspect of technology, you can almost find it in any job that you might have. As you noted, immediately before my role at Intel, I was at a financial services trade association. And you might think, okay, financial services trade association, you're thinking about banks, and insurance companies, and hedge funds, and sovereign wealth funds... You know, there's no technology there that you're thinking about. But you know, that can't be further from the truth. We were thinking about issues around blockchain. We were thinking about digital currencies. We were thinking about how you know, things like anti money laundering can be done more effectively (not the money laundering itself, but kind of fighting the money laundering) by using technology and a federated learning system where you're sending data across borders, but really thinking about the algorithms and not actually the data crossing borders. So, all of these things, basically to say that, you know, any job you have right now can have a tech component to it, if that's something you're interested in, because you can really find it in any job across the board.

Stacie Berdan:

And to add on to that, tech is probably going to be part of every job whether you are seeking it or not. And so understanding it is...yeah... I want to go back to a little bit of your previous career – working with think tanks, you know, with the US government – and your education East Asian Studies that a lot with China and Taiwan... you speak Mandarin Chinese... How have you applied your education to your job, expanded on it? And do you see it as a path that actually helped you get to where you are?

Greer Meisels:

Absolutely. 100%. I think, you know, when sometimes... if you were to look at my resume, which I know you don't have in front of you, but if you were to look at it, sometimes it's hard to understand it, right? It's not a linear career, it doesn't make a lot of sense necessarily how I went from a think tank to the Treasury Department, and then to financial services trading, and now to a tech company... but the one constant has been the East Asia studies portion of it. You know, when I started out in think tanks, it was thinking about East Asian security policy, you know, how is the United States working, you know, with our allies in Northeast Asia, how are we developing and deepening the US-China relationship... and that was kind of the bread and butter things that I've studied and worked on in college. But then, you know, a less traditional thing was when I went to the Treasury Department. Now, you know, a little fun fact, I don't know if, when I'm thinking about it, sort of looking back, it wasn't the smartest, but I never took an econ class in college, I've still never taken an econ class. I took some accounting, I took some statistics, but never took a macro econ class. And so when I was thinking of going to the Treasury Department, you know, all my friends were saying, what are you going to do there? You're not an economist, what is your role going to be? And you know what it is, they brought me in because of my China experience, that I lived in China, that I could speak Chinese, that I had, you know, worked with different aspects of the Chinese government. The other things that I may be needed to know from, like an econ standpoint (now, I'm never going to be a hardcore, you know, economist, of course) but the other things they could teach me, but that sort of love of learning and the knowledge of China, and the kind of the deep relationship I'd had with the country over many years, was something that they couldn't find in just any economist. So that's kind of what got me in and got me in the door. And then, that led to a very kind of rich and fulfilling experience within Treasury, where I learned a lot of different things about a lot of different types of topics. But again, it was the East Asia bit that brought me in and kind of got me in the door. And then, you know, I think that from there, obviously, moving to the trade association that I mentioned earlier, the Financial Services trade association, we had members around the world, we had about 400 members across 70 different countries, and that included in China, in Japan, in Singapore, in Vietnam, in Korea, you know, you name it, there's obviously major financial institutions. So again, sort of learning now about those types of institutions in East Asia, from a totally different standpoint, you know, how we do you know, banking regulation, how do we work with them as we think about, you know, the future of digital finance, those sorts of issues... Again, sort of building on the foundation of the fact that I really enjoy Asia, you know, broader



than Northeast Asia, but kind of the Asia Pacific region. So I was happy to travel there for work, I was happy to meet with our members to talk about some of their challenges and how our association could help ameliorate some of those. So again, kind of building on that, that basic foundation, but taking it in a whole new way. And then, you know, finally now to Intel. Well, you know, one of the most, kind of, important geopolitical issues right now is around, kind of, the future of semiconductors – where are they manufactured, where is the R&D housed, who is, you know, more advanced, and who do we not want to advance any further. And you know, how do we think about our work with our, kind of... sometimes, you know... our work is Intel in a country like China, where sometimes at a governmental level there are tensions, but at a company level, you know, we have thousands of employees in China. We do a lot of business in China. We also do a lot of business in Japan and other countries in East Asia. So thinking about how the private sector interacts with the government sector in issues around, kind of, business and technology is also a really interesting, sort of, new set of issues to confront and to deal with and to think through. And again, a lot of that is based on, you know, the foundation that I developed, you know, over decades now, around, you know, kind of engagement with East Asia. You know, I think it's fair to say that my experiences, and my career has broadened from just, kind of, US-China, which earlier in my career it was very, sort of, laser focused on the relationship with China. But you know, this East Asia piece has been part of me and will probably be part of my career, for the rest of my career, which is terrific, because I find it endlessly fascinating. And I spent a lot of time, you know, trying to develop expertise so that I could, you know, do, I could work internationally and work in East Asia and understand, you know, those different kinds of cultures and geographies. So, that's kind of a long response to your question. But hopefully that sort of explains that the nonlinear career.

Stacie Berdan:

Fabulous, fabulous. No, it's great. It's really a great explanation, because you're a true subject expert, which we don't always find these days. And I think that's really, really interesting. Can you just expand a little bit... advice on those working internationally? What we really do need to understand about China, and I, and I apologize for this question in advance. I know it is a very big question, but just kind of synthesize it, what do we need to know about China these days?

Greer Meisels:

You're right, that is a very broad question. And it's a very hard question to answer. So I'll do my best. You know, I think that China is currently dealing with a lot of internal challenges. And I think that is something that sometimes the outside world does not realize or take into account. They are tackling very serious demographic challenges right now that stem from the one child policy that they had for decades. They are dealing with a slowing economy, which many countries around the world are, but the growth, the tremendous growth that they've experienced over so many decades, you know, the six plus percentage growth (and much more than that) for years, is slowing. And that means that then there is an issue with labor shortages. There are a lot of students that are coming out of university and who aren't able to find a job. There's issues around things like social safety nets, and making sure that people as they get older are going to have, you know, the ability to continue to live in a decent way, to be able to have health care... And putting together a social safety net system for a country of, you know, 1. (how many billion is it now?) 1.5 billion, 1.6 billion, something like that, is a tremendous task. I mean, in the United States, we don't even have 400,000, I mean, you know, 400 million people. So it's, it's a huge issue. So that's kind of a backdrop to say that, that I think a lot of times people just think of the externally projected China face, right, China and how they're dealing with the US; China and how they're thinking about their neighbors in the Asia Pacific region; China and what they're doing with their Belt and Road Initiative; and, you know, kind of going out and doing a lot of diplomacy and work in presenting a face of strength on the African continent and in Latin America. But I think people often lose sight of the fact that internally, they're dealing with very serious issues and that a lot of their external actions are stemmed from sort of some of their internal challenges. Many people have heard about, you know, the great Chinese firewall, right. So you know, not everybody in China is able to access certain sites that we take for granted. You can't, you know, just kind of Google certain things and have all of the answers come up. If you Google Tiananmen Square, for instance, you're not going to get a lot of hits for what that is, or what that might



mean. There's a lot of technology that's doing surveillance, some people are calling China now, sort of a surveillance state, that there's a lot of social control. So, you know, I think that they're undergoing a lot of change. And some of it may be, you know, not always for the better. That being said, there has been tremendous, you know, middle class growth, there are many people who are getting, you know, much richer, and that means that they're able to travel more, they're able to buy more, they're able to be educated abroad and go abroad. So, you know, at the same time, there's almost sort of this tension of, you know, more control, maybe a little bit more repression in some ways, but then also the opportunity to expand their universe by being able to travel more and being able to learn more about other countries, and, you know, some of the things that are going on in the US and in Europe and things like that. So, so there's a bit of a dichotomy. But, you know, I think it's challenging to really understand China, there's a lot that most people outside of China will never understand.

Stacie Berdan:

This is very helpful to us. So thanks. I want to turn to actually being a woman working internationally. You know, do you think it's helped? Were there obstacles? Share? What do you think?

Greer Meisels:

To be honest, at least my personal experiences, say, you know, working in China, I never actually felt like I was discriminated against or treated as less than when I was in China. The one thing that I was kind of treated as was more junior, because often I was more junior to some of the people I was traveling with, or to the principals. But I never felt that I was sort of looked down upon or treated differently because I was a woman. Now, where I sometimes find that is here in the United States. And I think that that's sometimes a little bit incongruous for people to think, you know, because in the US, you know, we're very free and open, we've been trying to, you know, create more equality for a long time now... But I do sometimes feel as if my gender comes more into play here in the US than it does internationally. Now, that's not true in sort of all countries. I think that certain countries in Asia, there were certainly the sense of, you know, maybe I'm there to be the note taker, maybe I'm there because I'm, you know, a secretary to one of the more senior men who are in the room. So you get that feeling, you know, from time to time. But I think I've been fortunate, and maybe it's just my experiences, and it's certainly not necessarily indicative of everybody, but you know, I don't feel like my gender has played too much of a role in my international career. And I also think, and, you know, this is something to point out, but I have never felt safer as a woman sort of on her own than when I'm in China, or when I'm in Japan. I feel very safe, you know, being on my own or going into a restaurant or walking on the street, or you know, riding the subway. And don't feel sometimes that discomfort or, you know, the hair on the back of your neck that stands up, like I do sometimes here in places in the US when I'm, you know, walking down the street alone, or if it's, you know, later at night, or I'm waiting on a subway platform by myself, you know, I sometimes feel a little bit more uncomfortable. So, I actually think that my experiences abroad have been good, and that I haven't felt some of those issues that come with being a woman. Which is, like I said, sometimes counterintuitive.

Stacie Berdan:

Yes. It's not actually, it's really... I'm really glad that you actually pointed that out. Because so many times we have these inherent biases that are not true. And the world is a very big place with a lot of differences and diversity and different perspectives on people. And we often do need to go reflect back on the US. So thanks for sharing that, I really appreciate that. What do you see on the horizon for those entering the workforce in the next year or two? What do they need to be aware of?

Greer Meisels:

My advice would be, you know, to really expect the unexpected and do the best you can. Going back to the tech question too – if we've seen anything over the past year, you know, with the advent of things like ChatGPT, like, technology is changing every single day and it's impacting our lives, and our work, and our personal lives, in ways



that we could have never imagined. And you know, that's not stopping, you know, we didn't reach the zenith of what's happening with AI, we're just kind of scratching the surface. So, I think that there's a lot of things that are going to be coming down the pipe that we can't even imagine today. And some of those things will be exciting, and some of those things will be scary. But they'll continue to be really affecting how we live and work. So, you know, I'm very curious as to what some of those changes will be over the next year or two. But you know, rest assured, they will be here, they will come.

Stacie Berdan:

And it's a great advice. It's, it's honest, too. And as you said, we've seen it, we've all lived through it... and flexibility, adaptability, rolling with it and enjoying the ride, too. Because what else you're going to do if there's nothing you can do about it, but accept it. So yeah. Greer, can you tell me, what is, sort of, the greatest challenges you've faced in your career so far?

Greer Meisels:

Yeah, I've faced a lot of challenges, as I think many people have. You know, I think, one that I guess I'll start with, because it happened most recently is, you know, I joined Intel about 16 months ago now. And I joined at a time when the company wasn't doing as well as it had in the past. We went into a very tight austerity mode, which meant that we weren't able to do some of the things that we've done in the past. I, personally, was not going to be able to do some of the things that I talked about with my managers and that I had been hired to do, given some of this austerity. And then, you know, we announced shortly thereafter that there were going to be some reductions, some staffing reductions. And coming from a world of the Government, think tanks, trade associations, where there's almost never any layoffs... you know, it's very... it happens very sporadically, you know, it doesn't happen in huge numbers, you know, maybe somebody's let go from a certain department, but it's not sort of this wider situation that a company, you know, might face... I've never faced that in my life. And I was petrified, I really was, I was new to the company, I've been there for a month and a half or so. And then I was told that they were going to be potentially significant layoffs. And I thought, well, that's me, you know, I'm, you know, last in - first out, I'm in this newly created role that didn't exist before, you know... Oh, my gosh, I'm going to be one of those people who gets, you know, who is reduced. It's like, oh... and so, really, for the next several month-and-a half or so, I was pretty much a wreck. I was, it was hard for me to focus. I was trying to work as hard as I could in a job that I didn't fully understand yet, in a company that I didn't fully understand yet, with people who didn't know who I was yet, and I didn't really know who they were yet. And it was extremely stressful. And it was the first time I had experienced that level of stress. And I thought, oh, my gosh, I can't believe this, you know, I'm going to be laid off, and I've never been laid off, and what am I going to do? So it was a real challenge to kind of... to deal with some of those emotions that I hadn't felt before. Now, you know, I'm still here, knock on wood. Hopefully, I'll still be here for a while. So we got through it. But it really was a major sort of challenge. Going back further, and maybe this is also another sort of personal story similar to my anxiousness and anxiety about potentially being laid off, but earlier in my career, I moved to China for a fellowship in 2007-2008, and I was married at the time and I had to leave my spouse here in the US while I went to live in China. And that was not an easy decision. It required a lot of, you know, lots of conversations, lots of discussions, you know, lots of trying to see, you know, is this actually going to be the right thing for my career. Is this going to be the experience that you know, sets me apart down the road and so it's really worth doing... or, you know, is this kind of a bridge too far, you know, leaving a spouse, leaving a loved one, leaving a family, whoever it may be, for that amount of time, without having the opportunity to really see anybody all that much, was a really big decision to make. And it was very difficult, you know, I'm not going to sugarcoat it, it was very difficult on the relationship, it was difficult not seeing friends and family. And, you know, it's something I think, to this day, I'm very glad that I did. And I do think it was really important for my career. But it was a challenging time. And then, kind of, reintegrating back into, you know, my life was also a challenge, because, you know, people had gone on with their lives, just like I had been living my life. And so sort of reconnecting and reengaging was also challenging. So, you know, I think that that was another sort of challenge. And, you know, one other, but I sort of mentioned it before, is going into something, a place like the Treasury



Department, and not really understanding economics was really challenging. I sort of had to fake it till I made it for quite a while. But you know, I think that comes down to also asking good questions and being willing to put in the research and the time outside of work to learn those things that you needed to learn about. But yeah, those are my three major challenges at different points in my life.

Stacie Berdan:

Thank you for sharing. It's wonderful to hear the candid stories. And, for the Treasury, they invited you to be in the room, I mean, so...that's always a good thing, right. We are actually coming to the close, but I wanted to ask, is there a piece of advice, kind of quickly, that you'd like to go back and give your younger self?

Greer Meisels:

Yes, and it's something that I think about a lot, because I always tell people, you know, tell students, tell people who are younger this piece of advice, which is, you don't have to be perfect. I think that there's a sense, at least when I was younger, that I needed to know how to do absolutely everything in a job or to apply for it. I needed to think about what I was going to say in a meeting before I said it and being sure I had exactly every word and phrase perfect in my head, because what would happen if I asked a question or made a statement and I, sort of, goofed up the word or I didn't get my point across quite as well... You know, all that would be such a tragedy, and you always need to be perfect and absolutely spot on. And, you know, that's just not true! First of all, as hopefully everybody who's listening knows, nobody is perfect. There's no such thing as being perfect. And nobody expects perfection. But, you know, what you do need to do is to try things, and not be afraid of sometimes not succeeding. You know, maybe you make a point in a meeting and people say "What are you talking about? That doesn't make any sense!" You know, at the moment I'm maybe mortified but they don't remember it the next hour. And I, you know, kind of learned from the experience. So I think just... being... not being afraid to take chances, not being afraid to not be absolutely perfect all the time. Not being afraid to maybe try things that on the surface you maybe don't seem like the best fit for but you think you have the capacity and the capability to do, and putting yourself out there... And I think, you know, when I was younger, I didn't fully realize that or recognize that. And you, know I probably passed on some opportunities that would've been great because of, you know, my fear of not being absolutely perfect at whatever I did. And, you know, I think that that's something that, you know, sometimes... and especially women a lot of times feel like they need to be absolutely perfect in order to, you know, do something or strive for something or apply for something. And it's true, there's probably a much, sort of, larger barrier to entry, unfortunately, greater barrier to entry, unfortunately, for women than men. But, you know, I think that in general there's also sometimes that not stepping up because, you know, of fear of, you know, not totally succeeding. And I think that that's something that I had come to the realization about earlier.

Stacie Berdan:

This has been a wonderful conversation. I really could speak to you all day, Greer, it's been so great. But I can't! We're coming to the end of it, we're actually at the end... But I wanted to ask if there's anything else you want to add, maybe you didn't touch on, that you want our listeners to hear?

Greer Meisels:

Yes. There's probably a lot... Similar to you, I really enjoyed this conversation. But, you know, I think it's important to identify your priorities and to learn to set boundaries. If you want to, if you need to. I think that, you know, I suffer from something that probably lots of people out there suffer from is, you know, kind of being a people pleaser and saying yes. So that often means someone asks you to do something, you say yes. And if that means that, you know, the day off you were going to take doesn't turn into a day off because you have extra work to do, or, you know, the dinner you were planning to, you know, to go out with your friends you now have to cancel because, you know, you took on another project... or whatever the case may be. I think, you know, learning what's a priority in your life, and setting boundaries, and making time for what's important for you... it doesn't have to be family. You know, it can be an outside activity that you really enjoy, it can be travel, it can be, you know,



volunteering somewhere... But, you know, making sure that you understand your priorities as a person and that you set enough boundaries so that, you know, you are able to try to enjoy everything that you want to do in life so that you feel fulfilled. And that you don't look back years from now and say, oh my gosh, I spent all my time doing X and there were a lot of things I would've liked to do and, you know, I just didn't have the time to do because I never set those boundaries. So, I think that would be my one thing that I would add for people out there. And also to know, I'm not great at it. So this isn't me saying, oh, I've learned the secret sauce and I have the answers to how to set, you know, meaningful boundaries between your work and your life, your personal life. I haven't achieved it yet, but it's something to continue to strive for.

Stacie Berdan:

That's great, that's wonderful advice. I mean, it's hard, it's probably the number one question so many of us have asked all the time, and you just got to work at it the best as you can. So, thank you so much for that answer and all of your answers, your insight... It's been terrific speaking with you, Greer, and I really appreciate it. Thanks so much.

Greer Meisels:

Thank you, this has been wonderful.

[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!