



Season 3, Episode 8 – Life as a Digital Nomad

Stacie Berdan

*International Careers Expert
(Podcast Host)*

Lauren Gumport

*Director of Communications & Brand Strategy,
Faye*

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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 three, we explore the rising trend of ESG and how it is shifting the talent landscape on a global scale. Come with us as we share with you how responsible active engagement is changing the face of the global workforce today. Today I have the pleasure of interviewing Lauren Gumport, Director of Communications and Brand at the travel insurance startup Faye. She's passionate about the mix of travel and tech and how the combination of the two transforms experiences. Lauren has more than ten years in launching high-growth startups to global audiences, and uses a data-driven approach to storytelling that drives exponential growth on an international scale. She's an award winning media relations executive with a love for all things travel and tech, and can oftentimes be found working as a digital nomad defining and shaping the next trends in travel. Welcome, Lauren. It's so great to have you with us today.

Lauren Gumport:

Thanks for having me, Stacie. I'm super excited.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, I want to jump right into the topic of digital nomads. I know that you live in Tel Aviv and, as I mentioned in your bio, you are responsible for coms and brand strategy for Faye – a startup that offers whole-trip travel insurance, yet you manage to travel a couple of months out of the year living the life of a part-time digital nomad, tell us about it.

Lauren Gumport:

Yeah, so I mean, I jump into being a digital nomad sporadically throughout the years, something that really evolved over the last few years and became super important to me as a professional that appreciates flexibility and, of course, travel (I mean, who doesn't). And as many of us know, the lines between living, working, and travel have really blurred throughout the last few years. You know, remote work was widely adopted and still is with employees, proving that we can really support businesses not just working from home, but working from any home. As you mentioned, I'm in Tel Aviv... actually, today is my seventh-year anniversary living here, which seems like this wild mistake almost, because I thought I'd last a year, but I found myself, you know, in this thriving high-tech scene where startups rely on expats to take their brand narratives to lucrative English-speaking markets, specifically the US, which is what Faye serves, in order to boost awareness and drive revenue. So I spent my time doing just that at two startups for three years, each part of Faye, focusing on media relations, copy branding, thought leadership, and more. And frankly, you can do all of those things anywhere in the world, as long as you have a strong Wi-Fi connection. And, as I grew my skill set and provided results, I was able to negotiate this as you know, a perk, so to say of working remotely more than most. So I could also do what I love in addition to my job, which is travel, and explore. And I'll also say that, you know the last startup I worked at, and as well as Spain now, they're both in the travel space. So being able to write about trends that I experienced firsthand only makes me better at my



job, especially when it comes to identifying consumer behavioral habits and being able to predict what's next and travel.

Stacie Berdan:

Absolutely, that sounds great. So I want to go back to the point about being seven years in Tel Aviv. Congratulations, that's wonderful! You grew up in the US, attended US university and started your career in the US, right? How did you end up in Israel?

Lauren Gumport:

Well, so I have gone to Boston University, I absolutely loved Boston and it was always in the plan to move to New York City and to work in PR. And that's then as far as I got, which was I was in New York City, I had landed my dream job at this really big PR agency, working with Fortune 500 brands like MasterCard and Nestle with incredible mentors. And then I kind of thought, well, what's next? I happen to be Jewish meaning I'm able to go on birthright you know, it's that complimentary week long trip that anyone who's Jewish can go on. And if you are of Jewish heritage, you can make Aliyah, so you can become a citizen actually of Israel. And I really on a whim decided to make Aliyah which is what it's called. And I landed a job in high tech. I arrived here with one friend, and that job and nothing else. I didn't have a phone number, a bank account or an apartment. My parents thought I was completely crazy. And seven years later, I'm still here.

Stacie Berdan:

That's a wonderful story. That's great. And so for listeners, Jewish heritage, that's one way, but there are many, I think, there are many countries around Europe. I know Ireland has it, Italy, various places in Europe that if you are a first generation American with parents born in those places, as long as you can prove it, so that's a great way to have a global career is tap into your heritage...

Lauren Gumport:

Yeah... passports in many ways...

Stacie Berdan:

That's wonderful. Great. Tell me about the pros and cons of being a digital nomad.

Lauren Gumport:

So let's begin with the pros. Where do we even begin, right? So you get to explore in your off hours, you can check out a funky bakery in the morning, go on a short walk over lunch break, explore the sites after hours, you can fill your weekend with new experiences. And come Monday you're rested, renewed and ready to work. You've gained inspiration. I mean, as I mentioned, I work in the travel space. So being able to travel more than most – it fills me with new ideas and stories to tell and concepts that I can work with. I would say two more things for pros, you can still prioritize wellness and create a routine. So working from anywhere doesn't mean foregoing habits that positively impact your health. You know, getting outside, meditating, practicing yoga on that travel mat that I pack with me everywhere I go, is crucial. And depending on your time zone, you adjust your working hours to align with your team so that you're not there physically or online when they are. The last pro I would say is that you could do it alone or with friends, which is such a perk, because over the last few years, more and more of my friends have accepted these remote working positions. And you know, I've moved abroad so getting to go and travel with my best friends from the States – that's a major pro for me. And in terms of cons, you know, there are not so many for me, I would say that under... this is technically a con but it's something to be aware of... you know, being a digital nomad is a financial investment, right. So, you know, you're you have to pay for your flights, your accommodation, travel insurance, protect your trip, all of that adds up, especially when, you know, you have an apartment, you're renting in the main destination you're living in. So for me, that's Tel Aviv, so you have to plan and budget accordingly. And I would say that you should practice flexible booking habits when you do work remotely – free cancellation, no prepayment accommodation, flexible flight tickets. Obviously, as we know, the most well-planned



moments can go awry, especially over the last few years and in this travel climate. The other con I would say, and my last con, is that you know, even prior to COVID, I found myself in this personal crisis where I wanted to travel frequently working from everywhere rather than the office full time, and I didn't want to apologize for it. And for many companies, that's an unconventional request to be physically out of the office, though digitally consistently present and productive. So I think a con would be dealing with what I would call that old school idea that if you're not present in the office then you're not working, which is just silly, right. We're navigating this new normal, and I've noticed that employers are regressing on their remote work policies, despite remote work having kept these companies afloat as the world faced such challenges. So that's a bit backwards to me. And of course, this is something I'm not experiencing where I work today, you know, Faye offers flexibility, hybrid work schedules, and I have a boss that trusts me to work remotely for a reasonable amount of time throughout the year. Um, yeah, those are the pros and cons.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, that's great. Yeah, it really does depend on the industry and people for sure. Because facetime, people still say, does matter at certain points. So as long as you can make that work at times, then there's no reason for compromise not to work. Yeah. So you mentioned Faye, tell us about it. What is it? So, it's a startup, you are new there, obviously you love working there. Yeah. So tell us about it.

Lauren Gumport:

I love working there, incredible people... I always told myself that I would never join an early stage startup. And it's one of those funny things... why did I make that rule for myself, I don't remember why I made that rule for myself. And so it's a smallest startup I've ever joined, which is so exciting, because you get to create everything from scratch and call your own. So I'm the Director of Communications and Brand at Faye. It's a travel insurance startup that I joined at the start of the year. It was built during COVID and then launched a little over a month ago. And in a nutshell, we're redefining travel insurance with the first 100% digital consumer-centric travel insurance for Americans. Faye, via its app, provides smarter, faster, smoother assistance and claims resolutions, you even get reimbursed for claims via Faye Wallet, our secure digital payments card that works like Apple Pay or Google Pay, which is pretty incredible in the travel insurance space. And I would say that, you know, Faye is looking to turn this space on its head and really be a solution to all the pain points in this ecosystem. It's a space that's undergone little innovation. Travel insurance tends to be chock full of lengthy, jargon filled policies that leave travelers confused rather than well informed. The claims process is slow and bureaucratic, requiring excessive paperwork and lengthy wait times when there's really no brand working to build strong connections with consumers, and sometimes it makes it feel like travel insurance is this distant service that's hard to connect to. So, we created Faye as a solution to those pain points, our product is clear and holistic. You know what coverage your purchasing and how you're protected pre trip and in trip, and Faye is digital and quick – from getting covered, like I said, to receiving assistance, 24/7, real humans, to filing claims, and there's no paperwork. So if you're interested in learning more you can go to withfaye.com, and if you want to get your adventures covered, you can do that too. And I like to say it's a whole trip travel coverage – so it covers your health, your trip, and your stuff. And it even you know, covers your pet if you want to bring your furry friend along, which is exciting, because so many people are traveling with their dogs nowadays.

Stacie Berdan:

That's great. Well, that's wonderful. Yes, certainly, as you described it, travel insurances always seem to be this thing that you've got, just because in case, and you really actually hoped you never used it, because it was going to be a pain to tap into.

Lauren Gumport:

Exactly... and what actually... like, what am I covered for... And it's a kind of an add-on and an afterthought to make yourself feel better that you're protected. But for anyone who has had to file a claim or come across an



emergency medical situation abroad, unfortunately, more often than not, it hasn't been enjoyed a deal with the insurance company. So Faye is really bettering that process and setting a newer standard.

Stacie Berdan:

That's exciting! Well, I'm really glad to hear about that because I'll... and we'll watch the space, right, see how it goes, since it's so new. That's interesting. Um, so this podcast this season is all about ESG and sustainability, travel and sustainability sometimes go hand in hand and sometimes do not. Does Faye have sustainability goals?

Lauren Gumport:

Yeah, absolutely. You know, today, it's more important than ever, when building a company to make sure it's tied to environmental and social good. That's what we believe in. Conscious consumerism is something that cannot be ignored and should not be ignored. You know, Faye has just gotten started. And sustainable tourism and travel are top-of-mind areas that we plan to tackle, once we've matured a bit, whether it be working with the right organizations to promote such causes, or launching our own initiatives, you know, we know that what we do must be impactful and authentic. One area that I see us focusing on in terms of sustainability, and specifically sustainable travel, is impact tourism, which marries travel and giving back. And, you know, Faye has an opportunity to become a leader in sustainable tourism and how travelers can travel and do good. We also have an opportunity and a responsibility to make that information of how to get started and try impact tourism more easily accessible, because I think people think it's quite difficult to get started with impact tourism, and it's really not. You can start small, you can choose to go local, or you can go far, but still achieve sustainable travel by volunteering in environmental and social projects helping to rebuild devastated communities, especially in national disaster-affected communities, for example. So more to come. But it's top of mind. And I want to mention, you know, that the green trend in Israel is strong, but comparatively to the US isn't as strong as it is in the States. But it's growing. And I think we're seeing more and more companies investing in ESG here, and I'm sure that will continue.

Stacie Berdan:

That's good to know, great, good, good stuff. So, when it comes to travel part of your bio, you say that you like to kind of define and shape the next trends in travel, which ones do you see now? What's going what's going on? What do you... what are you working to shape?

Lauren Gumport:

Yeah, always trying to be a trendsetter, you know... Well, so, you know, obviously, we spoke about remote work. So maybe that's a bit, you know, obvious, but I would say that, you know, this is the year, and maybe even a bit of last year, a year of revenge travel, meaning consumers are looking to travel further for longer periods of time, and are willing to spend more, especially after a couple of years of navigating these lock downs and restrictions on movement. I actually, I looked at phase data yesterday prior to our chat, and found that the top five international destinations that Americans are looking to travel to this summer, based on their search history for the UK, Italy, Spain, Mexico, and France. And those are the international ones, the majority of individuals who are searching for travel insurance, they're actually the number one country they're booking for summer trips is the USA. So it shows that domestic travels is still very much in, and obviously domestic travel has been such a big trend in the last couple of years, you know, with national parks getting a lot more love and you know, the great outdoors being, you know, a main focal point and it looks like that's still going to continue. The last one I would say you know, remote work, I think goes hand in hand with what I like to call live shopping, which is living on Airbnb, booking two weeks to a month in a new city or a new destination and, and trying out what it would be like to live there. Because now that remote work is widely adopted by such incredible companies, you know, we have this opportunity to veer away from those really crowded metropolitan cities that were the source of those really great job opportunities and really diversify where we're going to live.



Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, that's cool. That is exactly where I am now – is a life... so now I know the term – life shopping. That is where I am going to start live shopping very soon. Yes, yes. And yes. So it's probably more than two to four weeks, probably more like two to three months at a time. Yep. Trying to figure out the first step. But absolutely, yeah, my husband and I were at that point where kids are graduating, and it's time to knowing when to start calling it life shopping.

Lauren Gumport:

And I think everybody can life shop too, you know. It's such... um, wow... I think it's probably the biggest perk or result of what happened over the last few years, we can start thinking about living in different places that we never even thought about.

Stacie Berdan:

Absolutely. Especially whether it's remote work, or whether... yes, even just taking a look at things like rent and buying a house and things for some people, specifically here in the US. Very expensive. So what are the alternatives? So this is a good one, it's great. And it's good for people starting out in their careers, if they have the ability to do remote work. Like you've just got, yeah. So I want to turn a little bit to, there's so many ways to live a global life, clearly you are living one and having a global career and international career, so to speak. What tips do you have for listeners, kind of broader, some that you've already shared, but also broader... kind of taking a step back and looking at what advice you might give to students today?

Lauren Gumport:

Well, I mean, I have the advice that I wish I had given myself when I was younger. So you know, early on in my career, I was such a people pleaser, to the point where I wouldn't share my honest opinions. And that helps no one, it definitely didn't help me, right. So I would say speak up and have a voice. Even if someone on your team doesn't agree with your outlook, at least you had a point of view. I'd also say start patting yourself on the back more for your successes and beat yourself up less for your mistakes. Acknowledge when you made a mistake, be honest about it. If you're in the right workplace, you will not get in trouble. Everyone makes mistakes. It's not the end of the world. I'm in PR, so we like to say it's PR not ER. So, lastly, I would also say you know, choose a great place to work, but also choose a great manager, it makes a really big difference.

Stacie Berdan:

That's really good advice. Thank you for that. So you've traveled a lot of places. And I know it's a very difficult question to ask favorites, but share some of the experiences, maybe with our listeners, to kind of spice it up and give them a sense of adventure.

Lauren Gumport:

Okay, so I'll start with international, which is... I actually recently went to Norway in like the dead of winter. And I really wanted to see the northern lights. And you know, everybody said it would be so hard to catch, you know, there's no certainty with seeing them. And I landed, I landed there, I want to say took two flights to get to a small island, and then rented a car and then got on a ferry. And I saw the Northern Lights two nights in a row. And it was one of the most magical, incredible experiences ever. And I worked remotely from this incredible cabin on the water. And when it got dark, they came out at night and it was just sensational. I would also say and this will maybe be a surprise... Well, of course, Israel, by the way, an incredible place, but I live here so we'll put that aside for a second. Stateside, I would say Tennessee, hands down, is the most incredible place I've ever been. You have the music, the food, incredible people, you have the Great Smoky Mountains, which are right there if you'd like to hike and get outdoors. So you know, Tennessee is probably, you know, top three on my list of most favorite places I've been.



Stacie Berdan:

Wow, that's great. And how about outdoor adventuring? I've seen some of your wonderful social posts always outside hiking in national parks. Do you have a favorite or one that you like?

Lauren Gumport:

Oh, Glacier National Park, for sure. I mean, just the most... Montana, I think, you know, I don't even know if I can rank Montana above or behind Tennessee. But I think Montana, the beauty... I remember stepping out on one of those trails and I was just so shocked by how beautiful it was that I started crying. Montana should be on top of everybody's list if you like national parks.

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah. And another place, it's a little, a little tricky to get to. But you have to plan ahead...

Lauren Gumport:

Especially from Israel!

Stacie Berdan:

Yeah, absolutely. So tell us about what is it like to live in Israel?

Lauren Gumport:

Wow. You know, I mean, it's completely different from America, although you have this incredible expat community, which is really lovely. I would say it's less politically correct and more social and that your work friends become your close friends outside of the office. And, you know, Israel, as a startup nation, it's scrappy, it's passionate, it's fast-paced. You have so many success stories and successful companies coming out of this country. And it speaks to the work ethic here. So I would say it's very fiery, and it's not in the box at all. And I'm not sure I could ever return to corporate America.

Stacie Berdan:

Hm, interesting and beautiful places to see to... I think it has got such a depth of places to travel and see as well, right?

Lauren Gumport:

It has every type of terrain. It has every type of sight, you know, for so many different people. If you're interested in history, religion, incredible food, hiking, the water, and it's also so close to other countries. I always tell everyone when they travel here, I'm like, whatever you're doing – extend, go to Jordan, go to Greece. Yeah, it's really incredible. It's like, an incredible location, you're so close to so many other places. So I've definitely capitalized on that.

Stacie Berdan:

It's wonderful, that's great. Well, our time is coming to a close. But before we wrap up, it's been a great conversation, very exciting, and I can feel your excitement and passion about the job and travel, which is terrific. Is there anything else you'd like to add to share with our listeners?

Lauren Gumport:

I would say that, you know, working remotely and moving abroad isn't for everyone. And I did it because I didn't want to look back years from now feeling that I never took a risk. And I'm so glad I did, and it was worth it. So take a risk.



Stacie Berdan:

Take a risk. That's great, great advice. Thank you so much, Lauren. It's been a real pleasure talking with you.

Lauren Gumport:

Thanks 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!