**Introduction Episode**

**Ms. Stacie Berdan, International Careers Expert (Podcast Host)**

**Dr. Anna Helm, GW-CIBER Director**

[Music]

**Anna Helm:**

It’s wonderful to be here today to launch out new podcast on global careers. My name is Anna Helm, and I am the Director of GW-CIBER, the Center for International Business Education and Research at the George Washington University. As your host today, my role is to interview the actual host for the podcast – Stacie Nevadomski Berdan.

First, a few words about GW-CIBER. GW-CIBER is funded by the US Department of Education with the broad mandate to increase the competitiveness of US firms abroad. To this effect, we support cutting-edge international business research, provide outreach programming for the business and policy communities, and design and offer innovative educational experiences for students. A cornerstone of our programming revolves around preparing students for careers in international business and related fields in order to help meet US firms’ demands for competent, globally-minded talent. Our new podcast is an example of such initiative.

The purpose of today’s launch episode is to introduce you to the host of the new GW-CIBER’s Global Careers podcast and to give you a sense of what you can expect from future episodes. Stacie Nevadomski Berdan is a seasoned global executive, the author if six books on the intersection of globalization and careers, and an advocate for all things global – studying abroad, learning languages, and pursuing a global career. She spends most of her time speaking at conferences and on campuses and writing about the value of developing a global mindset - no matter your age or stage in life. She has worked with GW-CIBER for almost ten years as we too help students understand the vast array of international business careers out there, prepare job seekers for the ups and downs of working cross-culturally, and share how to maximize the benefits of global experience gained in classes, study abroad, and internships, to land a global assignment.

Stacie, your career has taken you all over the world, yet, like the rest of us, you are being grounded. How are you doing, what are you up to?

**Stacie Berdan:**

Hi Anna, well, thanks for having me today. It’s always a pleasure to work with GW-CIBER. And I’m doing well, and I hope that you, and your family and friends, and everyone listening are staying healthy. Like so many, my business has been affected, I’ve had to adapt to the new normal. It’s a bit tricky, because my schedule, as you mentioned, used to be filled with dozens of talks and facilitated panels on college campuses and global conferences talking about all things global, particularly the need to pick up and go, study abroad, intern abroad, work abroad, travel… So, indeed, my work has been a bit hampered by the pandemic. But, as the academic and business world turned to a mostly online model, I did too. In one respect – it’s much easier! We are able to reach so many more people because of the lack of travel, the ability to record sessions that people can tune in to later… But there is that personal aspect, you know…those connections, sharing a meal, sitting across from a small group of students, talking excitedly about the potential for global careers; sharing a ride to the airport with a fellow speaker… the times when relaxed and often times real conversations happened – and I really miss those.

So, I have increased my virtual networking, catching up, connecting with colleagues, connecting colleagues to each other, helping students think ahead about their careers, scheduling online talks and workshops all the way through 2021, including (fingers crossed) plans to be on campus in the fall next year. And talking with global professionals who are working through the pandemic. That has been a lot of fun. In particular, one of the most exciting things of late has been the podcast that we are working on together.

**Anna Helm**

We are also excited about doing the podcast with you, Stacie. A podcast is something that has been on my list of things to do, because GW-CIBER has so much to share. I’m so glad that we’ve landed on this common space and we are very happy to launch our Global Careers podcast’s first season **Working Globally Through the Pandemic** – the outlook for a global career post-COVID-19.

You’ve started to do some of the interviews gearing up for our launch. How have those interviews been going?

**Stacie Berdan:**

Oh, they’ve been inspiring! The eight global mentors have been so excited to participated and share what they’ve learned so far since the pandemic began and things started shutting down and interrupting life as we knew it back in March of 2020. And they also want to give back. So we have a stellar line-up, including the CEO of a major aerospace company; the president of a large global non-profit with a booming business for women entrepreneurs around the world; a global HR executive who paints a very clear picture on how and why HR has begun to shift amidst the pandemic, and how this new normal is likely here to stay; a senior foreign service officer who shares her take on the importance of diplomacy, cybersecurity, and AI on a global scale in the coming years; and so many more interesting leaders who have taken the time to participate and share their experience for all to hear.

You know, this pandemic has turned our lives upside-down and inside-out roiling our daily life patterns and presumptions. Even the simplest things, like going out for a meal changed drastically, right? Many people are looking at the world, their jobs, and have taken a moment to pause . And that has been the beauty of doing the podcast. People really want to share what they’ve learned, so that more students, young professionals, those affiliated and associated with GW’s program and the CIBER program can actually take to heart, learn what they’ve gone through and apply it to their global careers pursuits in the future.

**Anna Helm:**

That’s exciting to hear, especially given the pandemics’ effect on global travel, the interruption of the global supply chain, closed borders, etc. Globalization has really taken a hit. What do you think?

**Stacie Berdan:**

Well, there is no doubt that the pandemic has exposed some of the wrinkles, right, in a globalized world. Some people are positing, you know, running around, may be, you know – the sky is falling, positing that pandemics will unravel our world and will bring on the demise of globalization. But, you know that’s going to be hard to do. Despite the recent closings of borders, and each country handling its own coronavirus response with very different outcomes, overall, the global economy remains deeply interconnected. As the author Zachary Karabell has written on globalization “it’s easy to hate, convenient to target, yet impossible to stop”. You know, the pandemic has accelerated globalization; it has also highlighted, as I mentioned, some of the problems, one of which is the fragility of the global supply chain. Some solutions are on their way – streamlining cross-border trade, electronic documentations, sourcing from multiple countries to prevent interruptions… But it’s more than that business aspect, right? I think we need to do a lot to learn how to improve global networks.

Well, the first step is recognizing that we are all interconnected, and we need to figure out how to work better using technology for much more than Zoom of course. And another is to acknowledge that the world is very uneven right now, unfair in certain things and that’s what the pandemic has exposed about globalization. We’ve got to work together to even it out, to make things more fair, to provide basic human rights like healthcare, fresh water, healthy food – to help prevent or perhaps better manage pandemics and their devastating effects in the future. So, globalization is here to stay, but we must take this moment to learn and apply those learnings looking forward.

**Anna Helm:**

Yes, there is really no doubt that we have seen the downsides to globalization. But, as you point out, there are so many positives too. What has surprised you about how the pandemic has affected the global workforce?

**Stacie Berdan:**

The role of technology! It cannot be overstated. COVID-19 has accelerated the arrival of the future of work, wiping out the one last obstacle to a digital future – right – human resistance. Telemedicine, zoom yoga, new movie releases streamed online, we are touring art museums from our homes, getting groceries delivered, and so much more that many of us were resistant to but have now been forced to accept. Travel is way down and the vast majority of us are working remotely through telework, having meetings using Zoom, Webex, and BlueJeans. Although this began as what seemed to be a temporary fix, it is fast becoming the new normal. Organizations have now had to invest in technology and management practices necessary to operate a tele-workforce. And I’ve had so many conversations with colleagues here and around the world – the results are in – cost savings and increased productivity are hard to argue with; people don’t want to go back! But the critical role of technology was far beyond than just working remotely. Technology is quickly becoming the axis on which everything else is turning. And it’s important that every worker not only accept it but embrace technology as a means to solving problems. It’s going to be central to almost everything we do, no matter the industry we work in.

You know the other surprise brought on by technology? For me, it’s the way the global talent pool has now become so much more accessible to organizations all over the world. Leaders can source workers pretty much anywhere these days, as the tele-workforce is not restricted by geographic boundaries. That opens up a lot of opportunities for people looking to work globally.

**Anna Helm:**

What impact will this all have on students looking to pursue a global career?

**Stacie Berdan:**

Globalization right now presents tremendous opportunities. It's become pretty clear that geography and work locations, as I just said, they don't matter as much anymore. With telework options, organizations can hire employees beyond their own geographies, and this will continue to change the face of the global workforce. For those positions that need to be on location, companies and organizations are transferring fewer people overseas and hiring more diverse talent that is locally based, or local plus maybe somebody who maybe didn't grow up there but has moved there and is willing to actually live and work on a local package. This opens up a world of possibilities to live and work globally. So today's workers must be able to learn new skills quickly, pivot to a new role, adapt to a new environment and be able to reinvent yourselves. In fact, 94% of global business leaders reported that they expect employees to pick up new skills on the job. This is a sharp increase from just 65% two years ago, as reported by the World Economic Forum. So, use this time now to broaden your skills and your network by attending webinars or panel discussions like this one. Do research in your field, find conferences around the world that intrigue you. Follow up with panelists on LinkedIn, reach out to industry leaders, perhaps even asking to meet for a virtual coffee. Again, this does not have to be US based. Do it around the world! Many people, in all kinds of organizations and across all levels, report to having more time due to the significant reduction in travel. That's a real desire - to connect with others too.

One final point - learn a language. Whether you are starting anew, picking up where you left off a few years ago in high school, middle school, use this time to try to learn another language, or two if you have time. Duolingo is popular, as is the Concordia language villages, which took its immersion learning in 14 languages online in 2020. And they plan to continue year-round, offering not just for the 7- to 18-year-olds in a summer camp, which was the setting, but actually for teachers, adults, students – anyone who wants to learn a language and in a more accessible way online, a couple of days a week. So, do all of these things while you're waiting to actually go back to campus, consider what your options are and do as much as possible to learn and read about the world around you.

**Anna Helm:**

Do these changes give you hope, Stacie?

**Stacie Berdan:**

Yes, they do. Even though we're not together and in person a lot, I believe that many aspects of the business world, the professional world have brought people together. It sounds a little strange, doesn't it? We're all we're all separated and connected virtually, which is not as integrated.

But we have this unifying theme, you know. There's the pandemic. The vast majority of people that I've spoken with – beyond the podcast, but my network globally –stressed the importance of having a positive impact. It's a really beautiful thing. The challenge for global thinkers is to take advantage of this moment and work toward doing good, solving problems, to lifting people out of poverty, improving health and food safety around the world. Companies recognize that they must embrace diversity. They seem eager to transform the workforce approaches.

The pandemic has accelerated ESG, environmental, social, and governance investing, as well as diversity and inclusion practices. These efforts go far beyond traditional corporate social responsibility of the past 10, 20 years, the statements and vision statements hanging in someone's office toward measurable differences. There's more muscle and money behind the efforts to have a positive impact. And I'm really heartened by this, Anna.

**Anna Helm:**

Yeah, I know – absolutely. Amidst all this change though, what, if anything, remains the same?

**Stacie Berdan:**

At least two things come to mind. One, customer is king, data is king – they are the focus always for us, in our various business, right.

COVID-19 will have a lasting impact on the state of the customer. Customers have lost loved ones, jobs, businesses… many haven’t seen or hugged family and friends for months. Companies must do more that just try to stand out. They’ve got to pivot, innovate, and transform to deliver a touchless digital customer experience. So, customer is still the focus, but – a new focus: how are we going to adapt and deliver to this new customer that’s actually coming out, emerging from the pandemic, if you will. Empathetic customer experiences are necessary – recognizing and adapting to the fact that different communities and geographies around the world have experienced varying degrees of instability, bordering on chaos. Traumatized societies, consumer trust, consumer spending, employee expectations – all of these things need to be considered for the consumer.

And using data! Data is our friend, there is a lot of data out there, there’s a lot of data that is now beginning to come in and actually showing and pointing which directions, which trends are going to be the way of the future through this pandemic. There is an interesting research that Ernst & Young did – their Future Consumer Index – a couple of points I’ll share with you: 60% of global consumers will be more focused on value for money on the future. 60%! 53% said that they’d make their personal information available if it will help to monitor and to track an infection cluster. And I think we are not just talking about the current pandemic and COVID-19 but moving forward as well. 48% of consumers in China, arguably the largest market, now strongly agree that the way they live will significantly change as a result of COVID-19. So, that is one big thing that is actually the same, with a little bit of a twist, as I mentioned.

Number two, well it’s been fascinating for me to see because I’ve spent almost 15 years studying and research what makes a successful global career, how is one person more successful than another. There are certain skills, we call them soft skills, that are required, that are trending toward a successful career. They are: excellent communication skills, listening, patience, adaptability, curiosity, the ability to build relationships. But what I find most fascinating, Anna, is that those are the ones that seem to be helping people get through the pandemic as well. That’s what all of the executives, the global mentors that I’ve interviewed for the podcast so far have actually identified, which to me is interesting, because that means more of us will be better prepared to actually adapt and work through the global changes too. And that’s I really great thing, because I think these are some of the skills that all of us will benefit from, whether working internationally or not, and they really make the experience, the person-to-person experience, the ability to manage and lead teams cross-culturally - not only cross-culturally around the world but, perhaps, cross-culturally within once’s country or different markets or between different generations. So, I’m really, really excited about that.

**Anna Helm:**

Wonderful. So, as we now approach the end of the launch podcast, I just want to make sure that the listeners really come away with what they can expect from the podcast. Can you give me just a few words about that?

**Stacie Berdan:**

Yes. Without giving away anything, anything particular – insightful information, practical advice, tips, real-life examples, stories, anecdotes of how to pursue a global career and through the pandemic. So, it’s kind of both, right, it’s working through the pandemic globally – absolutely, yes – but, as we just discussed, some of these things are pretty much the same whether we are in a pandemic or not. So, those kinds of tips and advice, specifically in industries like aerospace, oil & gas, diplomacy, finance, procurement, all types. And, also, the skills necessary, the growth industries, the real-life stories, right, by professionals working globally now their own experiences as well as ones they are going to bring to the conversation about their teams, their colleagues, all seen within their industry.

**Anna Helm:**

This is all very exciting, Stacie. I heard that, in addition to the professional advice, you also ask interviewees about a favorite global experience. Would you share your own favorite global experience with us?

**Stacie Berdan:**

Ah yes, of course, I have so many. But one experience comes to mind. It was from the time I was working in Hong Kong. The vast majority of the staff in the office were local Hong Kong people, plus a few Brits and an American or two, but as it was my practice with teams back in the US, I liked to have everyone over at my apartment – cook some special dishes and have a more relaxed gathering, rather than just in a restaurant. When I told a British colleague my plans, he said I was making a big mistake and that the staff would resent me because I lived in an expensive high-rise as an expat, and it would not go well. But since I had already told my team that we’d be having an American-style barbeque at my pool-side complex where we’ll grill outside and they could swim, I didn’t think I could cancel it. So, I decided to go ahead. And I was a little nervous.

The day came, we had a great time, everyone loved the barbeque ribs, chicken, and the typical American salads. So much so, that I hadn’t noticed the time! The pool-side center was closing, and we had to quickly clean up, wrap everything up, so everybody helped gather the dishes. We were about 20, 22, 23, 24 of us. Everyone had to gather the dishes and help bring them back up to my apartment. Oh-oh, I thought. I began to get a little nervous wondering what they’d think of the actual apartment I lived in. Well, too late. Everyone was already following me up and excited about it, and you know what, Anna – it turned out OK! Better than OK actually... Yes, everyone ooed and aahd over the place, but my team, actually, after this event we got stronger, not weaker because of it. And I learned more from a few of my senior team members that everyone knew expats lived in these types of places, but no one had ever invited them over. They were curious to see how we lived. And yes, some of these palaces (they looked like) they were part of the expat package. In fact, we made a lot of progress as a team. More bonds were created because of this shared experience.

You know, Anna, it taught me so much. But the one big takeaway, was that taking a risk based on my gut, even if it was in a different culture, was the absolute right thing to do.

**Anna Helm:**

Wow, you really make me miss those days of travel and enjoying the company of people from other cultures and, you know, finding solutions that are created across cultures, across different disciplines, and different ways of thinking about the world… Hopefully we’ll be back to that soon, but, in the meantime, there’s just so much to learn from the GW-CIBER pandemic careers podcast, if you will. We are going to morph the focus of the podcast as the world changes, but right now the pandemic is at the forefront and that’s what we’re going to focus on. And we are going to really, I’m sure, all enjoy the conversations that you will have with all these global professionals.

[Music]

We are looking forward to that and thank you so much Stacie for giving us this wonderful preview, and, again, we are looking forward to launching into the actual podcast very soon.