



Pt 1, Careers and Trends

Matching Preparation with Opportunity—Serendipity Intervenes



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A couple of years ago I was sitting on a flight to Hawaii for a professional conference. Being somewhat a social person, I struck up a conversation with the gentleman sitting next to me and asked him, “Are you going for business or pleasure?”

“Well, kind of both. I’m going to a conference,” he said.

To which I replied, “Oh really, a conference, which conference are you going to? I’m doing the same thing.”

As it turned out, we were both going to the same conference. After our discovery, he asked me to tell him more about myself. I began, “Well, I’m a doctoral student focusing on South Asia, and the Middle East. . . .”

When I mentioned the *Middle East* he interrupted with, “Our company happens to be bidding on some projects in the Middle East right now. We are looking for a Middle Eastern educationalist. Would you be interested?”

“Absolutely, I’d be interested,” I responded.

Although I had moved my family to my wife’s home state—Minnesota—and had been looking for a job there, my search had failed to uncover his small, Minneapolis-based

company, Seward Inc. Over the last year and a half, I have been helping them develop their international division.



Much of my work with Seward has been in the Sultanate of Oman, a country on the east end of the Arabian Peninsula. In 1970, Oman had only seven miles of paved roads, one formal school, and one hospital. In the ensuing years, they have made many improvements, largely with the help of imported labor from other countries, and they are currently in the process of a major human capital development campaign. Part of that campaign is an intensive effort to upgrade the skills of their school leaders and teachers. I have been conducting workshops and presentations on school leadership and parent and community involvement. This includes training policy makers from the Ministry of Education, who then train principals who will serve as master trainers. These master trainers will then be responsible to train people around the country in an effort to build local leadership capacity. In addition to the teacher training, I work with ministry-level officials to teach them everything from strategic planning to program evaluation and how to implement the various educational reforms.

I think it is important to note here that this job was not in my initial plan, but I believe that each of us has a unique place, position, and calling in this world, and we are charged to fulfill our call to action. After my mission in India, I was accepted to BYU in the public policy program with an emphasis in international development. While I was at BYU, I participated in the Arabic intensive program, completed an internship in Jerusalem, and completed the Arabic minor, because, unfortunately, BYU did not offer Middle Eastern studies at that time. I served as president of Students for International Development, and, to gain some work experience, I worked part-time at the Kennedy Center.

No Events