

Ryan R. Bird is managing a project that will move the production of Nike shoe boxes from Seattle to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. "I am working with two organizations, New Toyo of Singapore and Alliance Packaging of Seattle," said Bird. This challenging job involves becoming a bridge of interest between Chinese, Vietnamese, and American cultures.

Bird's first Vietnamese encounter came through serving a Vietnamese-speaking mission in Philadelphia. A love for the culture drove him to employment as an IT professional in Hanoi, Vietnam. In the spring of 1996, after spending over a year there, Bird felt it was time to meet his personal goals and pursue a professional degree. His confidence was enhanced by a visit from the Young Ambassadors to Hanoi. He spoke with Ray Hillam, former Kennedy Center director, who assured Bird that his decision to attend BYU would be ideal for Bird's interests. His decision was confirmed shortly thereafter. "A few months later, as I was preparing to return to the States, President Hinckley visited Hanoi. His advice to me after hearing where I was from: 'Go home and marry a Utah Valley girl!' A year later I fulfilled the prophet's words."

Never a typical BYU student, Bird took advantage of all types of classes offered through the center. "I took classes any time they were available, including Internet classes, study abroad, and independent study all within the span of a year and a half," he declared. "I graduated in Asian studies, a selection I have not regretted."

Bird and his wife, Theresa, spent two years in California before he was accepted at Thunderbird's Executive MBA program in 2001. He graduated from the Garvin School of International Management in 2003.

Last year Bird, his wife, and their four children boarded an airplane to Vietnam. "We sold everything we could, brought all our belongings with us on the airplane and said goodbye. I had no job, just a lot of ambition and a strong faith that the Lord would take care of us," Bird offered. The skills and knowledge he had acquired were quickly put to use in his management position. One lesson he has learned: "You must control your own destiny."

No Events