

Lucking out with passion and skills acquired at SEAS



Gregory Sutch graduated from SEAS in 1993 and is now the CEO of Intralink, a company that works with companies to develop and implement strategies in Japanese and Chinese markets (www.intralink.biz).

Many of us fall into our careers without really knowing what we want to do, and I guess I was one of those. After completing a 4-year degree in Japanese and Geography at Sheffield University, I spent two fabulous years as a Coordinator for International Relations on the JET Programme in Toyama prefecture, Japan. I drifted back to the UK, dabbled in a few things, and then had the good fortune to meet with the founder of a small company called Intralink – then just a one-man outfit – providing market access and business development services to British companies targeting Japan. I grabbed the opportunity with both hands and headed back to Japan where I set up a small office.

That was in 1996. Fast forward to 2009 and the company now has 30 staff in offices in the UK, Tokyo, Shanghai, Taipei and the US (Silicon Valley), and a portfolio of leading-edge technology clients for whom we develop and implement strategies in Japan, China and Taiwan. The company's core service, which we call the Surrogate Sales Program™, provides a facility for companies to generate revenues to the point where there is an economic and practical case for investing in a local company or committing to a strategic

partnership. Although the focus is technology – in mobile/wireless and fixed-line telecoms, networking and enterprise solutions, and consumer electronics – we also work with clients in the healthcare and automotive sectors, intellectual property licensing, chemicals, industrial and engineering products, retail and travel. We also provide Purchasing Office and Investment Coordination services for clients wishing to benefit from low-cost, offshore production in China, as well as a range of Pre-market and Post-entry services to support companies at every stage of their business development in China and Japan.

But like all organisations, we are only as good as our people, many of whom herald from SEAS. The company currently employs six SEAS graduates, and others have passed through our ranks. Some have joined us after 2-3 years of work experience, others as 'fresh' graduates, but all have come with a set of skills and a passion for their chosen country, which we couldn't teach and which we regard as more important than knowledge of any specific industry, which we can teach. Among these essential skills are fluency in, or at least a very thorough knowledge of,

Japanese or Mandarin Chinese; a solid grounding in and sensitivity towards things Japanese and Chinese, upon which each can build his or her understanding and expertise through hands-on experience in the field; and an ability to apply disciplines and manage the pressures which come with project work and deadlines. These are skills which our SEAS graduates, often without knowing it, have developed and honed during their time at Sheffield, and which are essential in 'life after university' and to Intralink as a business.

But most important of all is a passion for Japan or China! To this day I remember the first lecture of Professor Glenn Hook's course *Contemporary Japanese Society*. The year was 1989, the Nikkei 225 was hurtling towards a record 40,000 points (it didn't quite make it), and Japan's bubble was just months away from bursting. Most of the 'Year Nought' students in the class were reading Japanese with Business Studies – it seemed like the obvious way to make your millions – but I was there because, having spent seven years living in Japan as a child, I had already caught the bug! Those that could hack the intensive language classes were the ones who realised that learning Japanese or Chinese was not just about catching the economic wind or making a cool squillion. For many, it was a passion for their subject, acquired through self-study, the inspiration of their tutors and the experience of spending time there, which carried them through the course and is the lasting legacy of their time at Sheffield. It is for this reason more than any that Intralink has employed so many SEAS graduates and that they have gone to thrive as members of our team.

Taught Postgraduate Degrees

The programmes on offer at SEAS – the MA in Chinese Studies, MA in Japanese Studies, MA in Advanced Japanese (Research Methods), MA in Modern Korean Studies and MSc in East Asian Business – are very flexible. In the Chinese, Japanese and Korean programmes, a range of levels of language study are available for beginners, intermediate and advanced students (pathways are available for those who do not need or want to study a language). A wide range of studies modules are also provided allowing you to tailor your degree to suit your career plans, whether that it is in international business like our graduates at Intralink, government, other institutions and organisations, or further research at doctoral level.

For more information on entry requirements and admissions procedures, please go to the SEAS website: www.shef.ac.uk/seas.

Here are some of their stories...



Stuart Coyle (Taipei)

“Having decided that my future lay in China’s vibrant economy, I knew that I would require specific skills and knowledge: SEAS’s MSc in Chinese Language, Business and International Relations offered all of this. After graduation, I spent two years in Taiwan honing my Mandarin, understanding the island’s intrinsic relationship with the mainland, and gaining experience in Taiwan’s semiconductor industry. Through SEAS’s alumni network, I learnt of the opportunity to work for Intralink which seemed an ideal destination for a person of my background. I spent three years with Intralink in mainland China, building knowledge of a variety of industries, interacting with local and foreign business leaders and bringing overseas technologies into China. Now we have embarked on a new venture – Intralink Taiwan – for me, full circle and for Intralink, an extension of our footprint in the major economies of East Asia.”



Kshitij Kumar (Tokyo)

The unique MSc in East Asian Business I followed at Sheffield offers the flexibility to specialise in the business and economics of Japan while at the same time attend modules in the Business School for skills that enhance your professional profile. Both of these are needed to work at Intralink which is at the forefront of intercultural and intercontinental business. Japan is viewed as being at the forefront of technology, which is why representing our client’s new technologies to the Japanese can be just as challenging as it is exciting and rewarding. Not only are we expected to be “Japan Experts” but also technically adept enough to efficiently promote these new technologies to a competitive and difficult-to-penetrate market. Intralink is, therefore, a great value-add for our clients because the team is a cohort of bilingual country-specific professionals with diverse technical backgrounds.”



Alyn Watkins (Shanghai)

“I graduated with an MSc in Chinese Business and International Relations from SEAS in 2006 and the education received from SEAS provided a solid base from which to tackle the various challenges of working in mainland China. As was the case with fellow students at the time of graduation, it was difficult to find opportunities in China when based in the UK. Fortunately, I was lucky enough to secure an internship with Intralink in mid 2007. Intralink represents a wide selection of clients active in many industries and, therefore, offers fresh graduates with the opportunity to accumulate valuable experience through exposure and responsibility from the outset. Working for a dynamic and flexible SME in China’s fast-changing economic and business landscape provides opportunities for continuing challenges and development of core business competencies.”



Mark Hedley (Shanghai)

“Shortly after completing an MSc in Chinese Business and International Relations in 2007, I started an internship at Intralink Shanghai. Since then, I have been involved in a number of business development and market research projects for various European and American companies looking to enter the Chinese market. Working at Intralink has given me the opportunity to deepen my understanding of China’s business environment, and to develop my own sales, research and report writing skills. It has also enabled me to apply to a practical context much of the core knowledge about China provided by the SEAS course. SEAS also provided me with the language skills necessary for carrying out desk research and face-to-face meetings in Chinese. The use of contemporary economic and business related material in Chinese language classes means that the language taught at SEAS can readily be applied to real-world business scenarios.”



Ed Baker (Tokyo)

“Doing a Master’s in East Asian Business at SEAS has given me a solid platform to pursue a career in the region. The advanced Japanese language classes, in particular, were excellent and are fundamental to the work that I do on a daily basis. In addition, SEAS’ access to the Universities’ business school, the Chubu Internship and broader regional political economic perspective has also been of great value and importance. Working at Intralink has enabled me to build on these skills and has provided me with exciting “hands-on” experience in the fast-growing high-tech sectors.”