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Author shares insights

BY RICHARD PACHTER

Stacie Nevadomski Berdan grew up in Boca Raton, graduated from Pope John Paul II High School and received her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Florida Atlantic University. Now living in Weston, Conn., with her husband and twin daughters, she frequently returns to South Florida to lecture at FAU in the MBA program.

A former executive at marketing communications firm Burson-Marsteller and Unilever, she's in the midst of promoting her book, *Getting Ahead By Going Abroad*, written with fellow marketing communications executive, Perry Yeatman. She has done overseas work herself: The day after her wedding at the Biltmore, she and her husband headed to Hong Kong for a three-year assignment.

This interview was conducted by telephone in early March.

Q: Who would benefit from reading your book and working abroad?

A: Really, anyone from high school students on up. Here in the States, we're sometimes a little insulated from the rest of the world. It's not uncommon for me to run into people, in the Midwest, for example, who don't ever want to work outside their hometown, never mind outside the country! But as we're moving more toward a true global economy, international work experience is not only a valuable thing to add to your résumé, it's also the best way to learn about other markets. There's no substitute for actually living and working in a foreign country.

Q: You wrote this with women in mind, though aren't they still subject to gender discrimination throughout the world?

A: Seventy to 80 percent of the book applies to men as well as women. But to your other point, the United States is by far the most progressive place in the world insofar as gender issues are concerned, but women still get paid 75 cents on the dollar compared to men. Around the world, discrimination still exists against women executives, though there are exceptions, notably in Western Europe. But even in some cultures where discrimination is prevalent, Western women, especially older ones, preferably with a little gray hair, are welcome -- in China and India, for example.

But throughout the world, regardless of one's gender, the assumption is that you must be great or else why would your company send you here? Instant credibility! (Berdan laughs.)

Q: Right now, the dollar is quite weak compared to other currencies. What's the impact on Americans working overseas?

A: Obviously, in countries where the currency is pounds or euros, getting paid in dollars is not so good. But before taking an international posting, you can negotiate your compensation, factoring in the cost of living after doing some research. I recommend, throughout my book, that you have to check to see what the most recent conditions are before going anywhere.

There are some countries, though, where the value of their money is pegged to the dollar. And there are

some countries where the cost of living is pretty reasonable to begin with. Vietnam, Brazil and other Latin American and Eastern European countries aren't too bad right now.

Q: The review of your book is running with one on Mary Bosrock's guide to business travel in Asia. We thought that would be a good match. *Are you familiar with her work?*

A: Yes. Mary does a great job with her books, though it's important to keep in mind that things change rapidly; politics, finance, that sort of thing. It's a good resource, but you have to keep current, too.

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