UAlbany Weekend MBA Stories – Greg Lindstrom
IT Security Leader-Americas, Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC)

Last month, Greg Lindstrom traveled through Scandinavia on a dog sled.

Greg, IT Security Leader-Americas for Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) in Pittsfield, Mass, used marketing strategies he learned in the University at Albany’s executive Weekend MBA Program to win a contest sponsored by Fjällräven, a Swedish outerwear manufacturer and retailer. He collected nearly 3,100 social media votes, beating 45 other hopefuls for the coveted U.S. spot in the 300km Fjällräven Polar.

"I'd never been dog sledding before," he says. "The idea of the Fjällräven Polar is to give ordinary people an extraordinary experience."

Go to http://www.fjallraven.com/polar for more information on the polar expedition and to access some very neat footage.

Greg has actually had a number of extraordinary experiences in his 50 years. He has skied and hiked the Alps, tussled with a sea lion, come within inches of a charging blacktip shark, and watched Peter O'Toole play Macbeth from the front row of the Royal Shakespeare Theater. He is an IT leader, an athlete, an antiques dealer, a volunteer, and an author. Home is in Windsor, Mass. with his wife Karen, a radiology technician at Saratoga Hospital, and four rescued dogs. Together, the couple has five grown children and one grandson.

The Weekend MBA Program has added even more to Greg's life, both personally and professionally. In addition to the social media techniques he used to win the Fjallraven contest, he has honed his presentation, leadership and business management skills. He now feels better prepared to advance at SABIC – his main goal in seeking his MBA was to move from being an operational leader to a strategic leader at the company – and for what comes after retirement.

"I'll never slow down," he says.
Greg was born in Ohio, but moved to Germany as a young boy. His father was stationed at Zweibrücken Air Force Base, near the French border. He learned to ski on a class trip to Tirol, Austria. Other school trips took him twice to England. His football team went all the way to the European Championship, and he made the German track championships in two events.

After graduating from Zweibrücken American High School in 1981, Greg returned to the United States to attend college, and then followed his father into the military. He spent four years in U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command, with duties centered on electronic warfare. This led to a position within NASA, running inter-agency communications and working on payload security for the space shuttle.

His next position was at MCI Worldcom, which unfortunately went bankrupt. So he switched gears and went into the business of selling antiques, until an offer in New England drew him back into the corporate world. He joined General Electric (GE) in 2004 as global network manager for 220 locations worldwide. When SABIC purchased GE Plastics, Greg joined the Saudi Arabian manufacturer. He manages IT security for all of the Americas, and his team oversees day-to-day network operations in Asia and Europe.

While he was moving through his career, Greg was busy researching his family history. His aunt got him started when he was a teenager, and he made some fascinating discoveries. He’s a descendent of the last monarch in Great Britain to die in battle, James IV of Scotland, as well as the Tudor king Henry VII. He counts Henry VIII as an uncle, George Washington as 2nd cousin, and Prince William and Clint Eastwood as more distant relatives.

He published Vol. 1 of "Strength and Wisdom: Lindstrom Family History" last July. The book is available in Barnes and Noble and on Amazon.com. Two additional volumes are in the works.

When the Weekend MBA Program candidates traveled to Prague last summer, Greg stayed in Europe for two more weeks, backpacking across Sweden to further his genealogy research. It was then that he ran into some hikers wearing Fjällräven pants, providing his introduction to both the company and the contest.

The international nature of the UAlbany program was one of the things that drew Greg to it. He had been considering another online program until his manager at SABIC gave him the UAlbany brochure.

"I'm a very social person, so the idea of spending 22 months with the same group of individuals appealed to me," he says.

He also liked the "one class at a time" structure of the Weekend MBA Program, which has allowed him to focus his efforts more effectively.

The fact that just about every class includes a presentation helped him improve on what had been a weakness. He had a tendency to talk too fast when excited, and to go too deeply into a topic. His classmates supported him by letting him do the opening or summation for every talk.
"This has translated into improved work presentations," he shares, adding that his managers have noted the change. "It's actually an objective on my goals at work so it's important to my career growth."

Greg's final paper for the MBA program is on Servant Leadership, how to lead both upwards and downwards in an organization. He has come to realize that while he is a strong senior leader when in charge, he also thrives under the strong leadership of another.

"As a result, I've taken a more active role in my career path, and made a lateral move internally to provide that next level of success," he says.

On a more personal level, MBA classes in business law, accounting and finance have prepared Greg for his next career. He currently sells art and antiques on the side, but plans to focus on that business when he eventually retires from SABIC. For a time, he owned an art gallery in Connecticut.

"It was my first real business outside of IT so it was quite a learning experience," he says. "As I was working full-time in IT and running a full-time art business, things were bound to go wrong. What I learned in the MBA program will enable that business to build a solid foundation and succeed in the future."

Greg is happy to share his expertise with others in his community. He sits on the board of Taconic High School Academy in Pittsfield, and advises students on careers in IT and finance. He also has done volunteer work at the Berkshire Museum, The Colonial Theater, the Berkshire Theater Festival and Hancock Shaker Village.

Connect with Greg Lindstrom here:

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