



**“Success, for me, is practicing my daily ritual of adding value to my education and skills. It’s new life experiences and the value that comes along with that!”**

**Mai Nguyen**

Hong Kong Baptist University, MAIJS ‘11  
University of Auckland, MIB ‘21

Every Hinrich team member adds value to the system they function within. They lead by example and develop skills, programs and people along the way.

**Adding value**

“Success, for me, is simply leveling up on education and skills,” said Mai Nguyen, for whom adding value to her skills and knowledge is a daily ritual. “It’s what we learn from life, new learning and experiences, the value that we acquire as we lead our lives!”

**A global mindset**

Mai Nguyen is a Hinrich Global Trade Leader Scholar who completed her master’s degree in International Journalism Studies at the Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU). In her own words, “My interview with [Hinrich Foundation Program Director] Alex Boome in 2010 opened a new horizon for me,” she revealed.

**Hinrich Global Trade Leader pathway to success in trade**



As a young student, Mai always wanted to know how different countries regulate their institutions and develop their laws. Fiercely independent in nature, she was very clear that she wanted to have an international career. In her final year of studies as an undergraduate at Hanoi University, she was presented with many opportunities and choices: She decided to apply for the Hinrich Global Trade Leader Development Program to study journalism at HKBU.

“Hong Kong is the perfect place to study journalism due to freedom of speech, to get more proactive due to the fast pace of life, to be exposed to different cultures. One year in Hong Kong flew by so fast for me. I studied many new things, learned a lot, made many new friends, explored different cultures, enjoyed the fast life in the ‘City of Lights’, and I did equip myself with much needed life skills,” summarized Mai.

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Upon graduation from HKBU in 2011, she was invited for an interview with Global Sources Vietnam – the representative office of the Hong Kong- based

business-to-business trade media company. Global Sources offered her a business development position in Ho Chi Minh City – far from her hometown in the north of Vietnam. A bit unsure about the move, she consulted Alex, whom she regarded as her mentor. Alex suggested that she ‘keep an open mind’ and give it her best shot. She followed his advice and a short time later landed in Ho Chi Minh City.



*Mai and her classmates at Hong Kong Baptist University visit Phnom Penh, Cambodia*

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“It was a new phase of life. I had just graduated with my master’s degree and was anxious about living in a new environment. But I was embraced warmly by the Hinrich Foundation team members and greatly supported by my supervisor at Global Sources. I could seek help from anyone, learn from them and have fun with them. And I realized that I had made the right choice by being a Hinrich Global Trade Leader.”

“Merle Hinrich, founder of the Hinrich Foundation, has said that one of the three key factors to be successful in life is to bring sales into your life at least once. And after working in that position for a year, I have to say that I completely agree with his advice,” said Mai.

In 2012, after a year with Global Sources, she was offered a position with the Hinrich Foundation to lead the Hinrich Global Trade Leader Development Program.

### **Transforming the Global Trade Leader Development Program**

Mai recalled the feeling of being able to lead the team and the exhilaration of creating something new and worthwhile.

“A winning moment for me is the development of the Hinrich Global Trade Leader Program. I was handed that program in a very nascent stage with just a few scholars studying at just a few universities. And now, it has bloomed into a comprehensive powerful program with many unique components: 150 Global Trade Leaders to date from 12 countries studying at 11 programs at quality universities around the world with many global powerhouse corporate partners.”

The program in its early days covered scholarships, internships and career postings. As the first team member, she was responsible for program planning, budgeting, tracking, reporting and also the implementation in its entirety. As the program expanded, she was tasked with building a support team, and together they organized the program into systems, procedures with several well-rounded tracks and partnerships with companies engaged in international trade, such as VF Corp., Adidas Vietnam, Global Sources and TBS Group. She feels great satisfaction that the Trade Career Development (TCD) team's effort to make such a multifaceted system work has brought so much value to the trade sector and touched individual Hinrich Global Trade Leaders' lives.



*Mai and other Hinrich Foundation team members get together during an event*

"Sometimes, when I look back at the program and remember where we had started from, I am proud to say that my team and I built it from a concept to its current mature state. Success comes with great teamwork and my team is living proof of that!"

The Hinrich Global Trade Leader Development Program is now a full-fledged career plus education package for aspiring candidates looking to become leaders in the trade industry. Future employers handpick the aspirants and sponsor them to undertake a master's degree program in a multicultural environment. The overseas living and studying helps the scholars expand their worldview and bring a global perspective to their future work and the trade industry.

"It has been an amazing experience to have contributed to an important part of a system that promotes sustainable global trade," Mai summed up.

### **United vision**

"I am really proud of the TCD team at the Hinrich Foundation. Our team had [a] common vision to give a lot of themselves to the work that was in front of us. Although there was always so much critical work to do, we always trusted and supported each other to get it done professionally."



Mai deems that trust amongst teammates is the most important attribute in order to achieve great results. She feels that the TCD team had plenty of trust and it was the main reason why they could enhance the Hinrich Global Trade Leader Development Program and grow it into its current form.

“My strength is in consolidating knowledge on various areas and initiatives that are taken to create something visible and functional.”

**A specialist with project management and systems**

“I am good with managing projects and creating systems,” said Mai. “My strength is in consolidating knowledge on various areas and initiatives that are taken to create something visible and functional.” However, there is more to Mai than the programs and systems that she has put in place. In her undergraduate student life, Mai was a board member of Volunteers for Peace Vietnam (VPV). She also led a team of 10 people to run a club called Indigo, which helped to develop soft skills and English language proficiency of young people.

“At that time, I had just started learning how to put things together to make a program and a system work in terms of HR, content development, partnership development and logistics. I remembered I spent hours just trying to map out different ways of making the project functional and have a viable system to back it up,” Mai recalled of her very first experience with building organizational systems.

The experience of Indigo came in handy when Mai was asked to lead the Hinrich Global Trade Leader Development Program, where her natural ability to put things together into a functional body bore fruit.



*Mai's meets Hinrich Foundation team members and Global Trade Leaders at a welcome reception*

**Contributing even more to international trade & investment**

In 2017, Mai built on her background of promoting sustainable global trade by accepting a role as marketing and research manager with the Australian Trade and Investment Commission of the Australian Government (AUSTRADE) in Ho Chi Minh City. “My marketing work is aimed at making Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia visible to Australian businesses and make Australia visible to businesses in these Asian nations in order to promote trade and investment between these countries,” Mai said proudly.



*Mai's work experience after graduating from Hong Kong Baptist University include working for Global Sources*

### Being a leader

Mai is thankful to the Hinrich Foundation and her mentor, Alex Boome, for bringing to life her dream of having an international career. She regards the Hinrich Foundation as a place where young people are nurtured: She feels that her leadership skills were honed to perfection during her time there.

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“At the Hinrich Foundation, Alex gave me all the needed opportunities and exposure to develop myself, and I always feel grateful for that amazing support at the right time in my life. Five years at Hinrich Foundation changed me and gave me a solid foundation for further development. Despite challenges, he never gave up on coaching me and other scholars.”

### Mai elaborated on her view on leadership and management:

For me, leading people will make you a different person and perhaps bring out the best in anyone. When the TCD program expanded, I was given the opportunity to step into the role of manager and mentor to my team members: I feel grateful for the way it shaped my thinking and behavior.

Many people think that being a manager means you are responsible for the work of the subordinates. That's too simplistic a way of defining leadership. If you think in a holistic way, being a manager means you are responsible for several years of your subordinates' experiences when they are working for you: development, happiness at work, motivation, contribution, skills development and more. That is a huge responsibility.

I grew into a better person when I was leading my team for I knew I held their happiness in my hands. I spent a lot of time supporting their individual development as well as opportunities for them.

### Stretching boundaries

Mai's tenacity drives her to improve her skills more and more each day. “I strongly believe that when you try hard enough, change will happen: Something positive and something real,” Mai declared resolutely.



*Mai catches up with Hinrich Foundation team members based in other countries during various training workshops*

“Patience is the key. In school we are always in a rush to learn quickly and assume responsibility too soon.”

Mai urges the new generation of Hinrich Global Trade Leaders to never be satisfied with mediocre work output. She feels that “life is full of opportunity costs and sometimes it is not about a good or bad choice, but more about different paths.

“Once you make a decision, the best thing to do is not to look back but use all that you can to make your choice a good one. Additionally, never put a boundary on yourself because you can always do more. One day when you look back, you will be a lot further ahead than you thought you would be.”

## Read more stories of inspiration from our Hinrich Global Trade Leaders [here](#).



“Success, for me is maximizing one’s potential in a meaningful way”

**Naratevy Kek**

Communications  
Coordinator , Oxfam,  
Cambodia

Hinrich Foundation alumna  
Hong Kong Baptist University  
MA in International Journalism  
Studies '12



“Growing up I did a lot of sports - wrestling, football, basketball. That helped me build my character and ability to work in a team and understand that everyone has a role.”

**Ben Wong**

Eureka Nova Accelerator  
Assistant General  
Manager

Hinrich Foundation alumnus  
Chinese University of  
Hong Kong, MBA '15



“Success for me is happiness and seeking knowledge everyday. It’s important for me to go bed each night knowing that I have learned something new!”

**Lauren Kyger,**

Associate Editor,  
TradeVistas, United  
States

Hinrich Foundation alumnus  
Tsinghua University, MA in  
Global Business Journalism '16



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