



**“A Hinrich scholar values work-life balance. Peace of mind is as much a target as fame and material wealth.”**

**James Gong**, Operations Expert of Products  
Alibaba China  
Hong Kong Baptist University, BBA’13

For James Gong, success is a huge word. To be successful, one must be effective in his career and in a position of high influence. But for James, success is also about life.

“Besides being in a high-achieving position of influence, I also want to find contentment in my personal life. Or else I am not successful – I am just busy.”

**Starting out**

James is very close with his older sister who is a graduate of Peking University. Growing up, they talked a lot about having good careers and solving problems.

“During our childhood years, we observed the lives of our close and extended families. We watched and learned from those who were happy and the ones who were just too busy. We realized that we could solve problems only if we were in a relaxed, happy state. Happiness is a direct effect of healthy relationships. I decided early on that I wanted that balance in my life and I wanted to solve problems,” James said.

While in his second year at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, James received the Hinrich Foundation Global Trade Leader scholarship to study Business Administration at Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU). He graduated in 2013.

“Everything about my years in Hong Kong was exciting: the English instruction, the team projects and the overall life experience. The faculty at HKBU was very warm and receptive to outsiders. The University itself has a strong sense of community.

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Just like all scholars who studied in Hong Kong, James helped manage the Hinrich Foundation booth along with other HF scholars and alumni at the Global Sources trade shows every April and October in Hong Kong. This gave him the opportunity to interact with international buyers and visitors, and practice his business English skills.



*James spending time with other Hinrich Foundation scholars while studying at Hong Kong Baptist University in 2011. (1st row, L-R: Hunter Liao HKBU BBA '13; James Gong HKBU BBA '13; Pason Wong HKBU BBA '12; 2nd row L-R: Naratevy Kek, HKBU MAIJS '12; Celeste Zeng HKBU BBA '13 & NUS MBA '20; Khin Myat Thin Zar Tun HKBU MAIJS '12; Sally Yan, HKBU BBA '12; Yeqing Wang, HKBU BBA '12; Han Pham HKBU MAIJS '12)*

At the trade shows, James and the others stood for long hours and professionally greet visitors who came up to the Hinrich Foundation booth. James remembers it being a very energetic experience that helped promote the Hinrich Foundation and the products of its supplier beneficiaries to buyers from all over the world.

### Developing confidence

Right after graduation, James worked as a Business Analyst at Global Sources for more than two years. He then moved to a logistics company as an analyst for its overseas online shopping service.

In 2017, James hit a career milestone when he transferred to QFPay, a global mobile payment technology service and solutions provider, as Senior Operations Manager. QFPay partners with mobile wallet providers including Alipay, WeChat Pay, China Union Pay, among others. Servicing more than one million merchants across Asia, they executed over 500 million mobile payment transactions totaling \$30 billion in value since 2014.

“I want them to follow in my footsteps, study abroad and bring their knowledge and skills back home to benefit our country.”

According to James, “the mobile payment industry is very popular in China. No one carries wallets or cash anymore. My strength is to be able to communicate with merchants and enable my organization to serve customers better and gain profits for the company.”

In April 2020, James joined Alibaba, a Chinese multinational giant specializing in e-commerce, retail, internet and technology, as a Product Operations Expert. His job is to build operation systems and teams for projects related to



*James joins Alibaba as Product Operations Expert in April 2020, based in Shenzhen, China. Alibaba is a Chinese multinational specializing in e-commerce, retail, internet and technology*

accounting, taxation and finance services to Chinese suppliers. This is a new project of the cross-border supply chain service team. James is also in charge of online operations including content creation, activity/event operations, data operations and more!

James is the first Product Operations Expert on his project team, and he knows that his company has high expectations. He is excited to do his best to build out his team’s operation system to support their projects.

James attributes his success to his excellent organizational and communication skills. He sees the growth of these skills as part of his exposure and learning at the Hinrich Foundation.

“I would like to point back again at my experience at Global Sources trade shows in Hong Kong,” he said. “When I went to those fairs for the first time, everything looked so different.

We had all kinds of products - mainly from China, and I got to see how people talked to their customers to close sales. When I reached the Hinrich Foundation booth, all the beautiful things from across Asia that we promoted surprised me. I didn’t know how to promote our unique and handmade products myself. When people came to me and asked questions, I became very nervous. I was afraid that I may not be the right person to talk about them.

“Then, I watched our alumni and former Hinrich Foundation Export Consultants, Khiem Vu (Vietnam, HKBU MAIJS ’08 & CUHK MBA ’16) and Tina Sokneang

(Cambodia, HKBU MAIJS '11) talk to potential buyers. Gradually, I learned much more about our products and how to sell. Feeling more comfortable with the information, I began to talk to visitors with confidence. While it was difficult at first, it was a great experience that drove me to learn more and become better at communicating."

James acknowledges that the experiences as a Hinrich scholar coordinator gave him a boost of confidence and cultivated his communication and sales skills, which contributes to how he fits into a special niche within his current industry.

### Winning moment

"In 2018, I led a project at QFPay that was not very popular because it was not making any money. It was big challenge for me how to [figure out how to] turn it around. We found success by working closely with just one client. We focused on its requirements and solution until it was able to successfully launch its products and transactions became steady. We summarized the success case of this client and made it a showcase.

"We planned a campaign centering on our showcase and used our company's marketing resources to get more sales leads. Our clients – who were satisfied with our service – became paid agents by referring us to their friends. It is now a profitable project with almost US \$1.4 million in transaction value. That was a winning moment for me," James said.

In his current industry, James encounters many small merchants who do not have the knowledge to create ad campaigns to sell their services. His team has been instrumental in supporting small merchants and creating communication material to help their business.

"I want Cambodia to move from a developing economy to a developed economy."



James (far left) attends the reception for the Myanmar Central Bank visiting group to China at QFPay's Shenzhen office in September 2019. The Government of Myanmar is exploring ways to attract Chinese tourists and businesses, including by introducing Alipay and WeChat Pay in Myanmar instead of typical cash payments. During the visit, James and QFPay's chairwoman demonstrated QFPay's products to the delegation

“First and foremost, I am thankful to my wife and two children. They are my best friends who make me feel hopeful, courageous and worthy of pursuing my dreams and my career in trade. Second, to Hinrich Foundation helping me achieve knowledge skills that can help me give back to my country.”



*Mr. Hinrich welcomes James at the 1st grand gathering of Hinrich Foundation Alumni Association Global Connect: Vietnam 2019 in Ho Chi Minh City*

### **Valuing teamwork & gratitude**

James has gained tremendous insight working in his industry and with people from all walks of life.

“A good team embraces a shared value, which says that they are together and working for the company. It may not be a unit of good friends, but they need to respect each other and have enough comfort level to seek help from each other for the greater benefit of the company,” James said.

According to James, once everyone is on the same page about being there to do their best for the company, their combined output will always reap greater results. He also adds that each person of the team has their unique strengths and interests, so it is a leadership imperative to match the right person to the right job.

James also often reflects on gratitude and the reasons why he has achieved the success he has had thus far. “I owe a debt of gratitude to the Hinrich Foundation, Global Sources, my parents and my elder sister who have helped me a lot to achieve what I have achieved.”

James puts a lot of stock on healthy relationships, at work and in his personal life. A problem solver by nature, he gives credit to his elder sister for influencing his outlook.

Despite his success, James remains humble to the core, believing that he could do more to drive reforms or contribute to the mobile payment industry, but he tries hard to make the lives of merchants around him easier.

In the future, James sees himself working abroad, particularly in Southeast Asia or Africa. He envisions himself in a higher and a more influential position in the mobile payment industry, so he can make further valuable contributions in this rapidly rising market.

### Keep striving

When asked for some words of wisdom for future Hinrich Foundation scholars, James said: "I feel that young Chinese scholars sometimes don't have much confidence in themselves. I have been in their shoes. Sometimes, we are asked to work on a contract of three years with very low salaries. That puts questions into our minds regarding our abilities and standing in the world. My advice to them is to stay patient and keep striving harder. Soon, they will be able to see the shape of their futures."

James believes that trying harder and staying patient are ways for future Hinrich scholars to reach their goals in life and career.



*James and his group of fellow HF alumni and staff embark on the Amazing Race activity through Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam during the HFAA Global Connect in September 2019. Pictured left to right: Dory Do, HKBU MAIJS '16; Sam Li, HKBU BBA '16; Emerela Puspita, Former HF Export Consultant, Indonesia; Agnes Batallones, HF Graphic Artist; Alex Ward, HF Employer Partner Manager; Najmul Muhammad, HKPU MSEM '16; Alvin Zhang, James Gong's friend; James Gong; Rotha Chhoem DLSU MBA '15; Team facilitator*

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



*“A Hinrich scholar is a global citizen who gives back to the community and to the world.”*

**Sapphire Nguyen,**  
foodpanda, Singapore Senior Manager - Business Intelligence  
Hinrich Foundation alumna  
Thunderbird School of Mg't, MBA '10



*“A Hinrich scholar chooses to empower people to carry out their roles effectively.”*

**Genin Koh,**  
Program Manager for Global Procurement  
Micron Technology Singapore  
Hinrich Foundation alumna  
National University of Singapore, MBA '19



*“A Hinrich scholar values curiosity and delights in new conversations.”*

**Chandler Shan,**  
Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong SAR  
Hinrich Foundation alumnus  
BBA – HRM, Class of 2014



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