

Synopsis of the 3 professional international career paths of AFCA members, EUFASA 2022 (Martina Kieser, professional coach)

Thank you, Pascale, Marie-Florence and Jean-François for your wonderful testimonies. The 3 of you have shown us that as the spouse of a diplomat you are an essential part of your husband's or wife's professional life.

Nevertheless, we keep within ourselves our identities as professional actors, not in a linear way but allowing for continuity in a disruptive manner.

Pascale, Jean-François and Marie-Florence have made the most and the best of their situation. After listening to them we discovered their differences and what they have in common.

- 3 different paths
- 3 different moments in their lives
- 3 different sorts of personal and professional fulfillment

And what do they have in common?

I would like to call it something like wisdom or positive beliefs:

- 1) Sometimes you have a choice and sometimes you do not
- 2) Your couple and your family are a unique team
- 3) And you are the secret team-leader (sort of like a secret agent) while your spouse is in the limelight

We are one person therefore one identity but in reality, we have many identities.

Yours paths are examples of your multiple facets and identities.

Let's take a moment to think about what a secret team leader means:

You are the backbone of the success as regards to your family's project as well as everyone's wellbeing.

Your spouse is appointed to a position in a foreign country and you are the one who follows. We understand that the success of every mission is due to the success of the team. Every team member has his/her role to play.

To my mind, the success of family fulfillment and couple-projects depends in large part on open and transparent communication.

This kind of communication is undoubtedly your inner skill, and it is not something that can be described in a CV. You- as an authentic person - will automatically demonstrate this inner skill during a job interview.

Antoine de Saint Euxpéry said: « L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux »

« What is essential is invisible to the eye »!

So how to be seen as an employable person?

The secret -hidden team-leader accepts to be invisible for a specific time in order to be visible again at another specific moment.

Each time that person is visible, he or she finds himself/herself in a different context. And in each new context you just reveal another aspect of yourself the one that you already have. Sometimes it is difficult to accept that the recognition that you believe you deserve does not appear immediately. We sometimes have to be patient – and many times even often!

As an accompanying spouse you could be tempted to see yourself as “playing second fiddle”. Pascale, Jean-François and Marie-Florence showed us that there is no reason for believing this.

Recent studies-point out that experts have observed radical changes in business habits. All of you, have already demonstrated your ability to be a major part of this change. Somehow you are avant gardists!

Some essentials from these studies:

- One will have several jobs in different domains in one's career.
- Recruiters emphasize soft skills over hard skills – hard skills can be learned – soft skills cannot!
- Adaptability is most important to professional success.
- Intercultural strengths and foreign language skills make the difference.
- Ability to accept loss in order to win later.
- Awareness of your EGO prevents self -promotion.
- Ability to maintain self-esteem in all circumstances.
- All kinds of experience, both the good and the bad, provide constant learning.
- Ability to transform self-reflection into constructive action.
- Never complain. Never give up.
- Don't attempt to anticipate project challenges.
- To be able to solve successfully a variety of problems
- Try to be a generalist instead of an expert
- Cultivate an active networking process.

Perhaps, all of you without knowing it you may be considered as models for future job applicants.

“Your experience is like gold”

How to translate this experience to our daily life would be our next challenge.

We could ask ourselves: Does professional success feel like the only success?

One day, looking back on your careers as a couple what can you say that would make you feel proud and of what you accomplished?

That's why at the beginning I spoke about wisdom:

Cultivate emotional wealth: be happy with what you have, not with what you don't have.

Happiness is something that is cultivated from within.

And happiness is something that remains within.

Yes- your career may have been suspended for the moment. Think about how to reinvent yourself?

In your daily life you meet local people and you remark the opportunities how you can be useful to them. This can lead to local job possibilities.

This is a moment of self-satisfaction that adds to your happiness. You discovered within yourself another way of self-fulfillment.
And don't forget to think about what would be marketable when you return home. Jen-François pointed this out.

In short 3 things we can learn from our speaker's testimonies:

- 1) they have found something to do other than their former profession; they have discovered new opportunities
- 2) new opportunities- it means also a discovery of hidden talents or skills that you have but really weren't aware of

We all have the potential to do many different things if we put our mind to it and take the time.

You will be stepping out of your comfort zone. So, seize the moment and the time for introspection.

Think about:

- What do you enjoy?
- What previous accomplishments do you have?
- How can you put all of this to use?
- **Who** can you make contact with in your new surroundings?
- What organizations are of interest to you?

As for the 3rd point we can learn from our guest speakers:

- 3) not to be dependent in every sense of the term – remember you also have your own identity, your own soft skills and your own potential of happiness.

If a part of your former independence has been lost – ask yourself: who are you in your new role? and how to rebound?

- It is an opportunity for reinvention,
- An opportunity to find a meaningful purpose to fill your time,
- To create new experiences,
- To identify realistic goals
- To plan smaller objectives than before
- To remember that your identity is always there but it has become a “work in progress”.

To conclude I would like to refer to Michelle Obama:

“Your success will be determined by your own confidence and fortitude.”

And personally, I would like to conclude by saying

Be an inspired and inspiring person!

Thank you for your attention. And now you have the opportunity of asking our guest speakers some questions or to give us your own testimony.

Martina KIESER

May 2022