



Alumnus Subject

Norman Chan
MBA in International Management



Graduated

2002

Place of Work

InteractChina.com

Position

Co-founder / Chief Executive

InteractChina.com is an e-commerce company providing a platform for Oriental and ethnic artisans to promote their handcrafted products to the rest of the world. Norman founded the company in 2004 with his wife. He graduated in 2002 with an MBA, and is now responsible for developing the company's overall strategy, executing its business plan and taking the company forward in the global market.

Great minds *go on to* great places

What were your main reasons for choosing Royal Holloway?

For a business education with an international flavour, I believe one must look at things from a global perspective and make a choice about where to study by looking at good schools across the globe. As my Bachelor BBA degree was obtained in Toronto, a business school outside North America seemed the logical step in broadening my perspective. The UK, and specifically London, seemed to me a good choice for business learning, living and networking. Among the schools in London, the University of London colleges are no doubt at the top of the list for academic excellence and reputation. Royal Holloway offered a unique one year MBA that emphasised international management. It was a forward looking programme, and one of the few of high quality in London that directly dealt with the ever increasing trend for globalisation.

What attracted you to the course?

I enjoy working in a team, and am energised when a bunch of talented people work hard to achieve a common goal. Management is all about organising, motivating and directing a group

of diverse people from different expertises and backgrounds to work together and achieve a pre-defined goal. I also have interests in issues relating to organisation, management practices and politics, so studying management seemed an appropriate move in order to gain a more structured understanding of these areas.

How did you find studying in the UK?

I think that the strong research-orientated tradition in UK universities provides a solid foundation for students aiming to build up a core base of knowledge in their professions. Through frequent group discussions and teacher-student interaction, students are able to develop good analytical and critical thinking skills.

Can you tell us about your Royal Holloway experience?

I had a wonderful time studying at Royal Holloway and enjoyed the whole year very much, from the stimulating class discussions, spending hours on group projects, soccer games on the sports pitches, jacket potatoes in Founder's and beers in the Monkey's Forehead. All of it adds up to a very fun and memorable experience.

What was your favourite aspect of the course?

I particularly valued the group discussion time in classes, in which professors and classmates of different backgrounds and professions could exchange thoughts and ideas. It was mentally stimulating and challenging, and a very effective way to learn and think through management issues.

What did you learn that you still apply to your work today?

The diverse student backgrounds and the emphasis in the course on international perspectives are two good aspects that prove useful in today's business world. At InteractChina.com, our customers are based on five continents, from countries such as the US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Brazil, Israel, Australia and Thailand to name just a few. Having a basic understanding of their people, market and culture proves key to developing these markets and establishing a good, sustainable relationship. From a team management perspective, our staff members are from China, Hong Kong, France, Germany and Italy. You have to understand these different backgrounds, cultures and mindsets in an international context, especially when you are collaborating with them to achieve a common goal.



people with passion

“The UK experience is truly remarkable and unique, especially for those who want to gain some international exposure.”



What sort of company is Interact China?

I founded the company in 2004 with my wife, with the mission of helping marginalised producers and ethnic minority communities to move from vulnerability to self-sufficiency. We partner and grow together with ethnic artisans across China, selling products from ornaments to carving arts and wall masks. We serve both retail and wholesale customers across Europe, North and South America, Australia and Asia.

Tell us about your current role at Interact China.

As a co-founder and chief executive, I am responsible for planning and co-ordinating the overall direction and development of the company. My role is to define the company culture and maintain the strong sense of group spirit. I am also involved in general management, and co-ordinate IT development, market development, product development and team member training.

How has your career progressed since graduating?

When I graduated from the Bachelor BBA, my profession was in commercial real estate

consultancy, which involved project marketing for Grade A office and corporate real estate solutions. After graduating from my MBA, I went to Shanghai and worked in management consultancy, helping MNCs in China to cope with management issues. In 2004, my wife and I decided to start our own venture, InteractChina.com, which has since become my full time priority.

What does a typical day involve?

As my role involves quite a broad range of duties and responsibilities, there is no 'typical day' in the sense of routine tasks. A lot of my job involves thinking about how to move the company forward and executing this at a strategic level, and identifying areas to improve upon. I also spend time developing our team members' skills, making an effort to optimise team collaboration to ensure that our business runs in an effective and efficient manner.

Do you have any tips for students thinking about studying in the UK?

The UK experience is truly remarkable and unique, especially for those who want to gain some international exposure. The UK is a highly

civilised, social, cultural and economic scene. To make sure that you get the most out of it, I would recommend that you actively participate in the Student Union and local community activities, mix with students that are of different backgrounds and who have different interests, interact with your professors to benefit from their insights. Don't forget to take time to visit museums, galleries, theatres, bookstores and pubs in London, as well as visiting the surrounding areas like Virginia Water and Windsor.

What is your most outstanding memory of your time at Royal Holloway?

There are many memorable events that I can think of, but if I had to name just one then I would say a good friendship that had developed during the course of studying and continues today. I thank Royal Holloway for providing me with the platform from which I could meet and make friends with people from different parts of the world.

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