



“It’s important to find passion in even small, mundane jobs. In the completion of little tasks lies the key to achieving bigger things.”

Khiem Vu, Chief Representative, Global Sources,
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
Hong Kong Baptist University, MAIJS '07
Chinese University of Hong Kong, MBA '16

Listen to your heart

For Khiem Vu, the talented young Hinrich Global Trade Leader based in Vietnam, the road to success is never-ending. He has always set new goals at every point in his life, and has achieved them despite obstacles and failure.

Talent and tenacity are two traits that have always held him in good stead. Khiem is passionate about giving 100 percent to any task he undertakes, however big or small it may be.

Although he prefers “listening to his heart” in order to achieve his goals, Khiem possesses a keen, analytical mind that helps him analyze his failures as well as successes to derive better learning for himself and his teams.

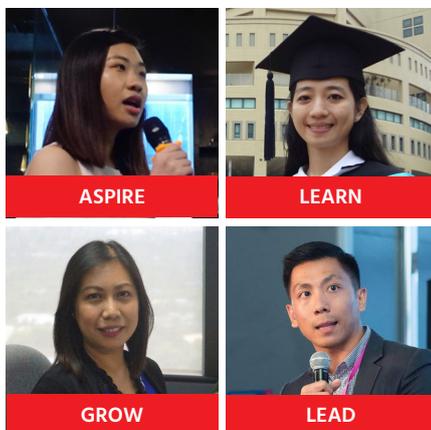
Communication is the key

Khiem is a double Hinrich Foundation scholar, having been awarded a scholarship twice. He was among the first batch of Vietnamese scholars, studying Master of Arts in International Journalism Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University in 2007. His second postgraduate degree is Master of Business Administration in General Management from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. (CUHK)

After graduating from the first scholarship course, Khiem led the Hinrich Foundation’s Export Trade Assistance Program for seven years, where he proudly engaged with a number of young talents, ranging from fellow scholars and alumni, to export suppliers and government organizations across Asia.

The Foundation then awarded him the second scholarship to study at the Hong Kong Chinese University. While there, Khiem was a part of the organizing team of the 2015 CUHK CSR Conference. He was also a member of the team who raised HK\$40,000 for poor residents in Hong Kong through Swire Properties’ annual charity campaign to raise funds, also known as Operation Santa Claus. Khiem then completed his final term through an exchange program at the University of Michigan.

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“Communication is the key. Journalism can really train you to become a critical thinker, to develop interviewing and interpersonal skills, mold your conversations to ensure the usage of right lingo for the right people. The first degree helped me in connecting to the export producers across Asia. It gave me a foothold into the trade industry, while at the time of the second scholarship, I was a mature learner and it helped me consolidate my learning and explore the international corporate arena.”



Khiem Vu (far left) shares a victory moment with his Chinese University of Hong Kong Santa Rocks team after raising HK\$40,000 at Swire Properties' Operation Santa Claus in Christmas 2014

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Ever the learner

“We are the new blood of the industry,” Khiem proclaimed. “We are on our way to explore, still battling out there to prove ourselves!” He is now the Chief Representative of Global Sources Vietnam office, in charge of sales and ensuring his partners get the best service.

Humble to the core, he still regards himself as a learner: “I lead a team yet some of them have far more experience than me.” He thinks being a Trade Facilitator is his USP (unique selling point), as he and his team have been instrumental in creating the first generation of Global Sources trade links with Vietnam suppliers and import buyers.

Khiem spoke of the time when he went back to Vietnam to source imports of lacquerware. “It was weird!” he said. “On one hand, I had to have some tough conversations with tough buyers. On the other hand, some of the producers were not friendly either. Many new small producers in Vietnam are from rural backgrounds and not up to speed with the basics of B2B marketing. They viewed the free support I was offering as just extra work because they did not understand the process and the benefits it would bring them.”

Looking for new products for buyers, Khiem even tried to help the local producers engage in free export promotion and market handmade Vietnamese products internationally. He recalled the time when he tried to offer the first turnkey solution to market Vietnamese products in international markets: “There was no infrastructure, no internet. Some of the producers had no cellphones.”

Khiem had to break the communication barrier and speak the language of the craftsmen to form a rapport and open channels of communication.

His perseverance paid off in the long run and he feels great satisfaction today for overcoming all obstacles and helping connect more Vietnamese producers to the global economy.



Khiem (far right) poses for a photo with the Global Sources sales team and the Dai Dong Tien export sales team at the latter's office in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Every new goal becomes a winning moment

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"At Global Sources, we try not to live in comfort zones. We don't like to do normal things; we like to do extraordinary things. That's why we can grow as team members as every goal becomes an opportunity for a winning moment. And we keep tweaking our goals to find what we can do next to make Global Sources a top choice in the industry, how we can further inspire customers and how we can sustain our trade goals."

Khiem feels that he has many more winning moments in store for him. Currently, his most victorious moment is the time he held two positions at the same time during his tenure in Hinrich Foundation's Export Trade Assistance Program.

"I was challenged to scale up the program, to double its footprint in new countries where the team needed to curate more qualified SME exporter beneficiaries. Specifically those producers with the need, mentality and production capacity for export," he emphasized.

"I had to patch and connect them to global buyers, so to speak! At the same time, I had the responsibility of overseeing the social enterprise in Cambodia, which involved distributing handmade Cambodian products worldwide for securing jobs for disabled workers. The continued employment of those workers became a winning moment for me."



Khiem (right) visits Kenneth Cheung, owner of smart home startup Novus Techonology and fellow alumnus from the Chinese University of Hong Kong's MBA program, during a Global Sources Startup Launchpad Show in Hong Kong

Focus on innovation

Between study periods, he undertook an internship at Global Sources in Hong Kong, where he worked in sales on a new initiative called Startup Launchpad. It involved helping the hardware startup community in Hong Kong and the Pearl River Delta to scale up and stay sustainable through global trade.

His focus was showcasing the products from startup companies and to promote new ideas and connect them with investors. It gave him acute satisfaction to make the product commercially viable, launch it in the market and give the producers a platform to sell it internationally.

He enjoyed being involved with the Startup Launchpad, Asia's largest hardware startup trade show that facilitates global distribution between startups and renowned online and offline retailers. The event showcases over 300 startups to more than 63,000 global buyers from various countries and territories. Held twice a year in Hong Kong – Asia's trade hub – the Startup Launchpad showcases ideas, innovations and a plethora of educational seminars led by industry experts.

A great team works as one

"Sometimes, I lead from the front, at other times I let them lead," said the man who was responsible for the Vietnam Global Sources team's exemplary performance at a Hong Kong trade show in July 2017. The team was expected to showcase 15 booths at the international trade show but went on to secure 22 booths for the event.

An able leader, Khiem knows the strengths and weaknesses of his team, and tries to support them in the best way possible and motivate them to aim higher.

"Sometimes, I lead from the front, at other times I let them lead."



Khiem (far left) gets together with former Global Sources CEO Craig Pepples (middle) and Khoa Truong (second from right), a specialist from the Investment Trade Promotion Centre Ho Chi Minh City, at the Global Sources Fashion trade show in Hong Kong

He leads by example and is eager to get in the field with his team to offer the best support possible. "What connects us together are our common goals and our hearts!"

Important to be part of a system

Khiem is most thankful to be a Hinrich scholar alumni.

"The Hinrich Foundation has shaped my personality, my career as well as my attitude towards work," said an emotional Khiem. He feels that being part of the scholarship program exposed him to a very high standard of education, the kind he may not have received otherwise.

He believes that the opportunities that surround him today are all thanks to the Foundation. He finds strong commitment in his relationship with the Foundation as it keeps lending resources and support to its scholars even when they become alumni.

Creating new platforms, new jobs, new opportunities

"I think my path is connected to global trade."

Khiem stresses the important role trade plays in creating jobs and wants to facilitate and be part of this meaningful mission. "I am happy to be part of an industry that can create more opportunities for producers and create jobs and fresh opportunities for more and more people!"

Great men make way for small things. A true follower of the old adage, "God is in details," Khiem urges future Hinrich Global Trade Leaders to pay attention to the smallest of things that are sometimes too tedious and frustrating to do.

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The Hinrich Foundation Alumni Association – Alumni Leadership Committee members, (from left to right) Roger Li, Khiem Vu, Celeste Zeng, Laura Xiao, Megan Thomas, Lorie Cascaro and Ben Wong, together with (at the center) Alex Boome and Kathryn Dioth, pose to commemorate their visit to the Intramuros, a historic site in Manila, Philippines, on Nov. 21, 2015

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“It’s important to find the passion to be engaged in the smallest of unnamed, tedious jobs. It may sometimes become frustrating to achieve little things, but in their completion lies the key to achieving bigger things,” he said.

“Everyone wants to make a difference as soon as possible. It’s always logical to find bigger things to do so we can satisfy our urge for achievement. But sometimes, we forget that the success of big transformations lie in the efficient execution of smaller things!” Khiem believes that when a leader commits to taking care of the smallest of details to pave his way towards bigger things, he embraces privilege as well as responsibility. And that is the making of a true leader.

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



“My success is measured by my career achievements and my ability to try new initiatives at work.”

Laura Xiao

Operations Director
Workstem HR
Management System

Hinrich Foundation alumna
Thunderbird School of Mg't
MBA '10



“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,

Marketing &
Research Manager
AUSTRADE, Vietnam

Hinrich Foundation alumna
Hong Kong Baptist University,
MAIJ '2011



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

Sophal Bun,

Associate Dean
College of Media &
Communications
University of Cambodia

Hinrich Foundation alumnus
Hong Kong Baptist
University, MAIJ '14



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