



**“It is my responsibility to improve my circumstances and myself, and then support family, society and community to improve their circumstances.”**

**Roger Li**, Founder, Gadget Labs

Thunderbird School of Global Management, MBA '11

“A Hinrich scholar sets a chain of events to improve self and surroundings. Many lives get positively impacted by this ripple effect.”

**Creating a better world**

“Success for me is to make a better world. I believe that we can touch and transform many lives through individual contributions within the environments we inhabit. So it is my responsibility to improve my circumstances and myself, and then support family, society and community to improve their circumstances.”

Roger Li lives by the Chinese philosophy of making a better life for himself and, in the process, everyone around him. Being a firm believer of science, Roger emphasizes the need for wearing one’s own seat belt first before helping others. “If I cannot make my life better, how can I better others’ lives?”

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



**Working his way up**

Roger earned his undergraduate degree in Computer Science from the East China University of Technology and Science in Shanghai. After graduation, he started a career with Infosys in Bangalore, India. He then went to Shanghai and joined Hewlett-Packard as a service consultant and, later, as project manager for a global service team.

In 2010, Roger left for the US to earn his master’s degree at Thunderbird School of Global Management in Arizona as a Thunderbird Assistance Fund for Asian Students (TAFAS) scholar. TAFAS is supported by Thunderbird alumni and the Hinrich Foundation.

“I always say that behind each scholar’s success, there are a lot of people making an effort and doing a lot of legwork to make things happen,” he said. “I am extremely grateful to Mr. Merle Hinrich, who supported 50 percent of my scholarship; and Jean Shen, another Hinrich scholar; Kevin Rohrer, a Thunderbird

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alumnus; and Alex Boome; who were all key players in my selection as they interviewed me for the scholarship.”

After graduating in 2012, he started work as a management trainee with the sales team of Global Sources, a business-to-business media company facilitating trade with Greater China, and eventually led his own team. After his success in sales, he joined Global Sources Direct, responsible for developing cross-border online-to-offline distribution channels for emerging brands and startups from the Asia-Pacific region.

Roger discovered his strengths and interests while working at Global Sources Direct, where he also got exposure and experience that eventually led him to start his own company, Gadget Labs.

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“At Global Services Direct, we explored new business models. It was a very inspiring team and we thought of new, exciting ideas. Although I wasn’t 100 percent sure yet at that time, it made me realize that understanding market trends was my strength,” Roger said. “I think great people make great teams,” he added, explaining how healthy competition within a team tends to bring out the best in each member.



*Roger gets together with other Hinrich Foundation alumni during the inauguration meeting of the Alumni Leadership Committee in Manila, December 2015*

### **Creating his own path**

Backed by his MBA degree, work experience, enterprising spirit and desire to uplift his community, Roger started Gadget Labs, a digital marketing strategy company in Shenzhen, China. It specializes in market culture awareness and international product branding.

“We treat your brand as our own. We analyze its potential in the international market and position it in a way that eases its entry into global markets. In a way, we nurture a brand, create its identity and make sure that it becomes a well-known product all over the world by the time we are done.”

Gadget Labs has helped at more than 30 Chinese brands enter the US and European markets in its first four years. The work involves creating brand identities, designing communication plans and digital strategies, and executing successful launches.

“We work closely with our clients and analyze the smart hardware product by comparing it with the international electronic consumption market share, based on critical market research. We ensure that the product has a successful launch and would continue to see increase in sales, and finally that the product will have a potential in the global market. So, we do holistic nurturing of every brand that comes to Gadget Labs,”

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Established in 2015, Gadget Labs has teams strategically placed in Shenzhen, Hong Kong and Los Angeles.



*Hinrich Foundation’s Alumni Leadership Committee (ALC) together with CEO Kathryn Dioth and Program Director Alex Boome during the first ALC meeting in 2015 at Intramuros, the old Spanish walled city in Manila, Philippines*

“We are not yet very big, but not that small either,” Roger said, noting that his vision is for his company to further succeed. Five years from now, he aspires that Gadget Labs will become a market leader in serving Chinese consumer electronic products and helping them to enter global markets.

### **Multicultural exposure**

Roger noted how his multicultural exposure both from his studies and work gave him a different perspective in looking at things, and opportunities.

“I always felt the stress of competition and financial demands while studying, so I didn’t really feel the accomplishment of finishing my education in a transnational environment. Studying and working in India and United States opened my mind and gave me the opportunity to interact with different cultures and meet different people who impacted my thinking and outlook,” he said.

His MBA degree completely changed the rules of the game for him and gave him an edge to pursue his success.

“China is a big market. As an English-speaking Chinese professional, I had the advantage of communication on my side and I knew that whatever I choose to do, I had a fair chance of making a success of it,” said Roger.

“The MBA course was a reinforcement of my belief. I had an opportunity in hand to distinguish myself. I knew that I had to carve a niche for myself before taking care of others.”



*The Hinrich Foundation Alumni Leadership Committee together with Mr. Merle A. Hinrich, industry leaders and the Hinrich Foundation team at the Hong Kong Golf Club in March, 2018*

“Scholars need to realize that a lot of people help them to get to the next step, to be where you are, so always be grateful for all the challenges that come your way and convert them into opportunities with hard work,”

Roger grew up in the impoverished Anhui province in China, where every student had to face stiff competition to qualify for an undergraduate degree.

“Anhui is in the middle of China. It is densely populated and underdeveloped. As a result, every student hailing from that region faces intense competition,” he said. “I was not a top scorer, but I did get a place in the University of Shanghai.”

#### **Work hard and be grateful**

Roger believes that the only way forward for scholars to achieve success is to really work hard. “In my dictionary, there is no work-life balance for students.

“Scholars need to realize that a lot of people help them to get to the next step, to be where you are, so always be grateful for all the challenges that come your way and convert them into opportunities with hard work,” he added.

Roger also said that scholars should bear in mind the responsibility that comes with financial success. “All of us need to treat financial success with a certain perspective.”

He believes that financial gain without improving the welfare of others is meaningless. Valuable advice from someone, who, time and again proved how hard work and ambition honed with the right values can change the landscape of one’s life.

## 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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