Helping individuals **adapt** to a flat world is not only the job of governments and companies. It is also the job of parents; they too need to know in what world their kids are growing up and what it will take for them to thrive.

– Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat*. 385

**WNC Goes Global**

In today’s **knowledge-based global economy**…the cold hard fact is that if we don’t get more of our own people **better educated, we’re in a losing fight**—a fight that if we shape up we can still win, and **win big**… Following last year’s tsunami, I spent a considerable amount of time in Southeast Asia, and I confess it was a real wake-up call for me. As I traveled throughout India, Singapore, and Indonesia, I came to the sobering realization that **an economic tsunami is fast bearing down on North Carolina and our entire nation**…Our natural inclination might be to batten down the hatches and hope to ride the storm out. But the truth of the matter is this: **if we don’t grab hold of the future and get more people better educated, we are going to be crushed by this tidal wave of highly educated people from all parts of the world competing for the jobs of tomorrow**—jobs that our children and their children will so desperately need to preserve their future.

– Erskine Bowles, Inaugural Address, April, 2006

**Globalization affects every individual in western North Carolina.** At AdvantageWest, our primary focus is looking at the positive aspects of globalization, i.e. the technological advances that can be gained from collaboration. The jobs of today are changing into high-tech, clean manufacturing with excellent wages.

– Elizabeth Voorhees, Director-Marketing & Communications, AdvantageWest Economic Development Group

Thomas Friedman, Erskine Bowles, and Elizabeth Voorhees, along with legislators and entrepreneurs, **know that we have a short period of time to retool for a seismic shift in the preparation for jobs of the 21st century. “WNC Goes Global”** is one more tool for the toolbox to help parents and educators prepare for the shift. Geared to students in grades 5-12 who study economics as part of the curriculum, **this exhibit uses the eyewitness accounts of regional business people who share their experience of competing in the global market. While not a thorough examination of a complex issue, “WNC Goes Global” is a snapshot of our community at a critical moment of transition.**

The exhibit is divided into four sections:

- **Meet the Business Owners**
- **How Did We Get Here?**
- **Words of Wisdom**
- **The Big Picture: Becoming a Global Citizen**

The exhibit was put together through interviews conducted by UNCA Undergraduate Research students, Alana Rade and Andrea Fernandez. During a summer internship through a grant from the Erskine Bowles Research Initiative, the students interviewed 15 regional business leaders. Over the fall, UNCA student Julia Robinson used the interviews to write much of the text, along with Center for Diversity Education staff members. It is also available on line at www.diversity.org. Our thanks go to our sponsors who are keenly aware of the need for education of teachers, students, parents and community members.

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**WNC GOES GLOBAL**

www.diversityed.org
Meet the Business Owners

Biltmore Oil Company
Eblen Oil
Rick Perkins
Asheville, NC
?
Employees

We’ve been providing oil for WNC since 1930. Biltmore Oil provides home heating fuel. We also operate 8 Eblen Short Stop Convenience and Gas Stations connected with Citgo. All of our oil and gas is imported from Venezuela.

Job Link
Helen Beck
Asheville, NC
15 Employees

We assist in retraining folks who have lost their jobs. If you don’t understand what’s going on in the global economy, you don’t understand exactly what’s going on with the local labor market. [Some workers] don’t want to get into training because they think someone is just going to come along and buy that plant, open it up and they’re going to go back to the mill and continue working, but that is not going to happen. It takes a while for them to understand that they’re going to have to retool themselves in order to compete in today’s labor market.

Blue Ridge Global
Alex Williams
Asheville, NC
23 Employees

We are the western hemisphere distributor for Martian Motors which are manufactured in China. The distribution center is in the old Square D plant. We expect to create 600 – 800 jobs in this facility, and it’s been a long time since Square D maintained that many jobs here. We believe that the pay scale will be good for administrative and collection positions.

GAS Distributors
Ric Goodman
Leicester, NC
2 employees

We import dried papayas, pineapples and other fruits for the North American market and then distribute them from our warehouse in Leicester. Our company is based in Costa Rica. I’m the U.S. marketing and import agent for a company called Casa Alementa, meaning house of nutrition or house of food. Casa Alementa had been in existence since 1993 or 1994. I joined them in 1996 or 1997. That company is basically in the business of procuring or growing fruit for the purpose of dehydration.

Alltec Lightning Protection and Grounding Systems
International Headquarters
Chris Bean
Harshul Gupta
Canton, NC
30 Employees

We provide lightning rods for every size of home and business in places all over the world. We have offices in Hong Kong and a small manufacturing facility in Sin Gin, China where we manufacture some of our surge protection products. We have a full office in India for engineering, sales, and managing the manufacturing licenses. At some point in the future we will probably open an office in Europe.

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WNC GOES GLOBAL
www.diversityed.org
Meet the Business Owners

Kimmel World Wide Movers
Paul Samuels
Asheville, NC
20 employees

We’re importing or exporting people’s stuff and pets. We take care of getting belongings packed up, taken to the port and loaded into a container. After the container is on a ship and sails on whatever ocean, we make sure that at the next port the container is taken off and either put in a warehouse or is brought to the residence where all the stuff is unpacked. And people do move with their cars and dune buggies and dogs and goldfish.

Ten Thousand Villages
Jennifer Elliott
Asheville, NC
5 Employees, 20 volunteers

We are part of a larger network of over 100 non-profit stores. All of us are committed to buying products that are handmade by artisans in Third-World countries and providing those artisans with a vital, fair income for those products. We sell those products in a North American market, and we tell their stories to North American customers. So there’s a selling part of our mission and there’s also an educational part of our mission.

Xai Xai Imports
Mini Matthews
Asheville, NC
3 employees

We work to expose people here to work from Africa and help find agents here to represent African products. It’s very difficult, however, because of exchange rates that change all the time. Most of the women and families that I work with don’t have email or phones. So I go to Africa myself and I hand pick what I think will sell. I have a store here in Asheville and also distribute through stores in Europe.

National Wiper Alliance
Jeff Slosman
Asheville, NC
20 Employees

We recycle rejected non-woven materials for cleaning materials. My whole belief from growing up under Maw Maw [Nettie Slosman] was that we should recycle and help out, so that’s still what we focus on; taking a lot of recycled, secondary products that would otherwise go to a landfill and giving them secondary homes.

I Play Baby Wear
Becky Cannon
Woodfin, NC
10 employees

We design, manufacture and distribute baby wear [manufactured in China] in places like Target, Wal-Mart, Babies R Us, and grocery stores like Harris Teeter and Giant Food. Currently, we are actually putting a lot of attention in specialty stores. So those are our larger customers. But we really want to build our specialty store. I have a distributor in Germany and she sells to 12 countries. We also sell to Singapore and Japan.

Volvo International
Paul West
Arden, NC
250 Employees

We build heavy construction equipment for the North American market right here in Western North Carolina. I work as a technical training specialist for different dealerships. There are four of us dealing with different product lines, and we do approximately thirty courses per year. I am from England, and before I came here I was a technical trainer in Sweden in what we call the “global hub.” During my time there I traveled to approximately thirty different countries all over the world including Russia, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Poland, Germany, France, New Zealand and China.

Mountain Area Information Network (MAIN)
Wally Bowen
Asheville, NC
15 Employees

We operate a cooperative modeled after the rural electric and telephone co-ops of the 1920s and 30s. MAIN offers affordable dial-up Internet access in 13 mountain counties, free Internet service for 60 public access terminals in rural libraries, and discount access for disabled citizens with severe economic hardship. MAIN helps people throughout WNC connect with people all around the world through broadband service.

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Where in the World are They?

Products and Suppliers, Oceans No Longer Separate

Where in the World are They?

- Shanghai
- Hong Kong
- Costa Rica
- Venezuela

Ten Thousand Villages
Biltmore Oil Company
Eblen Oil
Ten Thousand Villages

Ten Thousand Villages
A-B Tech Small Business Center
Alltec Lightning Protection and Grounding Systems
Blue Ridge Global
I Play Baby Wear
Owen Springs Global

Kimmel World
Wide Movers

GAS Distributors
Costa Rica

Volvo

Xai Xai Imports

Biltmore Oil Company
Eblen Oil
Ten Thousand Villages

Kimmel World
Wide Movers

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What are the most basic things you need to start and maintain a successful business?

**Capital, materials, and labor.** Businesses trying to compete in a free market seek out cheap raw materials and labor – this is the reason that so many textile companies, including Charlie Owen’s family business, came to WNC in the early part of the twentieth century. It’s also the reason that so many of those companies are now moving to developing countries where the materials cost less and people work for lower wages.

“I just can’t believe it. We sit around and say, ‘that’s not going to cost twenty-five cents to make in China.’ – not counting the material, but the labor. Twenty-five cents! How long would it take to make that? We would pay a dollar at home for a seamstress to sew a swim diaper. Our labor costs have gone down.”

– Becky Cannon

Now that much of the textile and furniture industries are moving overseas, what does that mean for the future of jobs in this area?

“There are winners and losers in Western North Carolina. If you look at it historically, productivity may have increased, and leisure and hospitality sales and health services have gone up, but the number of people employed in manufacturing has dropped in Buncombe County. There’s a reason that there are tons of factories across the southern United States that are closed now. The Textile industry has probably been the biggest loser across the board.”

– Charlie Owen III

“Factories moved from the northern United States to the southern United States for cheaper labor. Likewise, the biggest fear the Chinese have is cheaper labor in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The companies that were in China making products are now moving to those countries because there is cheaper labor there than in China. So maybe Sub-Saharan Africa will be next.”

– Charlie Owen III

Many people think that the economy here in Western North Carolina rests primarily on **tourism**, but we have always had a **large manufacturing base**. For the past century, **textiles and furniture** have been a vital part of the economy in WNC. Many people who live in our area have **depended on industry** for their jobs.
Alexander Graham Bell could have never imagined the world of Paul Samuels at Kimmel World Wide Movers. “Last week I went home and hung out and read. Around 10:00 pm I picked up the phone and called someone in India about business….It was as clear as a bell. The call cost seven cents a minute. I was getting ready to go to sleep and he was getting up.” Thanks to fiber optic cables buried in the oceans and satellites that beam signals from space, people in WNC are doing business through digitized documents and conversations with folks on the other side of the world.

Tim Berners-Lee, a British Computer scientist was standing on Mr. Bell’s shoulders, and many others, when he created the World Wide Web. “The Web exists because of a program which communicates between computers and the [Inter] Net. The Web could not be without the Net. The Web made the Net useful because people are really interested in information (not to mention knowledge and wisdom!) and don’t really want to have to know about computers and cables.” According to Thomas Friedman in The World is Flat, the number of Internet users grew from 600,000 to 40 million in the five years following its debut in 1991. At one point it was doubling every 53 days.

With a fiber optic cable infrastructure in place, the Internet needs server system way-stations such as local Charter Communications. By investing in an infrastructure with a broadband connection (the speed at which information may be transmitted through a computer system), the mountains are losing their reputation of being a remote place.

Chris Bean at Alltec was able to start a multinational business with offices in India and China because of the Internet. “Almost all of our customers find us through the Internet. We depend on our web page.”

Alex Williams, Blue Ridge Global, started his multi-million dollar business by staying up all night to talk to folks in China on the World Wide Web. “[I learned to talk to people in China and Taiwan] mainly over the phone and on the internet. I found it amazing. There are a lot of people willing to talk to you even if you are not in business. They are just hungry to know people from America.

I just built some relations that way while I was starting my retail business, and it was pretty successful. We can now track containers on the water. We enter a container in this system called Log Net, and we know when the boats leave China. We know when the boats are supposed to dock in Savannah or Charleston. We know the dates….The scheduling gets a little bit tricky because it has to be delivered when we need it, but we also don’t want to overload our factory. So, we have to be able to spread out our vessels and have people pick it up in Charleston.”

Charlie Owen of Springs Global adds, “The boats are faster and you can fit more containers on a boat. We always end up with more containers in this country empty, and it’s kind of hard to put empty ones on a boat….It’s like half the price because we just want to get the containers back. This country does ship raw materials and waste products such as plastic bottles, plastic chips, newspaper, waste fiber, cotton [and wood]. We grow approximately 20 million bales of cotton, but we only consume about 7 million, so about 13 million bales of cotton go somewhere else.”
How Did We Get Here?

Then there was the Digital World

“We are not giving these people a chance [to be in the flat world]. The kid who is connected to the Internet today, if he has curiosity [he] is as empowered as me. But if he does not get the right nutrition, he will never play that game.”

– Bill Gates, page 456, The World is Flat by Thomas Friedman

Digital Technology has changed how business people find each other, how goods get transported, and how new products are developed. Becky Cannon of I Play shares, “Ten years ago we would have had a seamstress create a mock from a sketch. It would take weeks of snail mail to determine the costs. Not anymore. “Photoshop! It is so amazing. We have a Sesame Street license. We thought of making an Elmo blanket, and usually we would have to make a sample. But now, we’ll just mock it up on Photoshop and send it to Sesame Street and ask what they think, rather than sending them a sample. It’s so easy!”

Where does your food come from?
Technology and globalization have also changed who delivers food to your grocery store. On average, the food on most plates in WNC has traveled 1,500 miles to reach its destination. Twenty years ago California grapes were only available in the summer and fall. Now because of the ease of transportation, increased communication, and changes in tariffs, grapes are shipped to the US in the winter and spring from Chile. Consumers enjoy kiwi, star fruit, mangos and all manner of fruits and vegetables because of globalization.

Due to the cheaper prices of large industrial farms who can supply huge amounts of produce, WNC has lost much of its farming base over the last fifty years. This loss of farmers and farmland is changing the landscape of our mountains. Peter Marks of the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project is working to help farmers educate consumers on buying locally grown foods. He says “Eating food grown locally means that food dollars stay in the local economy, that the food we eat is fresher, more nutritious, that we are caring for our environment, and that we’re thinking of our future and our children’s futures!”

But even in WNC not all the infrastructure is equal. Wally Bowen of Mountain Area Information Network (MAIN) played a major role in hooking the rural parts of WNC into the technology of the global economy. “In the last ten years, the efforts at MAIN have been on leveling the playing field between rural and urban areas. There were two pushes – one to provide on-line access to the region and the other was to increase computer skills and computer home ownership. Back in 1995 we got an $800,000 grant to provide access. We started with the libraries. If you wanted to go on line, you asked a staff member who had an AOL account. Now there is a new digital divide which is having access to high speed. The cost of a T-1 line (a big fat pipe) for high speed has decreased from $2,500 a month to $500 at MAIN but it is still out of reach in many rural areas.”

Finding employees who are comfortable with the new and rapidly changing technologies is not always easy. Paul West of Volvo shares “There are not many technical colleges in the USA that cater to technicians coming into this industry [construction equipment manufacturing], and this is a big problem for us at the moment. We have estimated that we, or our dealers, are possibly four hundred technicians short. There isn’t much competition. The dealers are forced to take people that are less qualified. … I would say that the United States has a long way to go with regards to education in all aspects of the construction industry. You get engine schools in the US, but our technicians need to know computer diagnostics, electronics, and hydraulics, as well as mechanics. There is a huge shortage of facilities that they can go to.”

Technology also helps in time of crisis. Jennifer Elliott of Ten Thousand Villages shares, “In Indonesia they had an earthquake recently which affected a number of our artisan groups. We got an email from every single group except for maybe one or two telling us what happened to their workshops and their artisans…just sort of giving us an update… I think that it’s important that we don’t underestimate the difference that the Internet has made in the Third World, because they not only have access to email, but they can look at things online.”

Having an Internet infrastructure is the starting block for participation in a global economy. Chris Bean of Alltec shares, “Our biggest markets today are in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa which are areas where the infrastructure is not as up to date. If you look at telecommunications, there is still a lot of building going on in those regions, whereas the US wireless infrastructure is pretty much finished, though there are still a few holes to be filled in.”
You’re Never Too Young!

**Alex Williams**, who began his booming import business in his 20’s, explains that you don’t have to be voted “Most Likely to Succeed” in school to be a leader in business. “I wasn’t the smartest guy. I didn’t graduate from college. It just shows that there are people who are willing to **dedicate themselves at a young age and to look for opportunity** and not think that the picture is too big.” **Alex started a small** retail business selling scooters and helmets while working at a manufacturing plant. He **worked hard to make contacts** with companies in Asia, **despite much initial rejection**, and eventually gathered enough money to order one container of electric scooters, which quickly sold. Alex **formed a relationship** and **earned the trust** of a distributor in China who helped him finance larger orders. He quickly **expanded from storing** merchandise in his basement to **owning large warehouses** and retail stores and becoming the sole US distributor for Martian Motors.

Alex explains “When I was younger, I had aspirations to be where I am now, but was always thinking ‘Well, that’s going to be almost impossible.’ But, it’s **worth finding out whether it’s possible or not**. I mean, if you go for it and you try, even if you don’t get to where you’d hoped to, at least you know you tried. **America is full of risk takers. It’s full of immigrants.** There are still people that are willing to go to another place and take a chance for something better. And that is why, to me, we are such a great country.”

**Mini Matthews**, owner of Xai Xai in Asheville, explains how she started her business. “I **started traveling** when I was eighteen years old. You **become aware of what countries have** what they make, what their prices are and **what your country doesn’t have** …In Spain I was backpacking, and I saw a leather jacket. At home they were $1,300 a jacket. I saw them for the equivalent of thirty dollars in Spain. I bought six jackets. I got home and I **sold five of them and it paid for my trip**, and that’s how I started.”

**Paul Samuels** was **already established** in an Asheville business before he took on Kimmel World Wide Movers. “Kimmel & Associates started here about 21 years ago. I happened to be living here, and I met with the owner, and we talked about partnering up on executive search work. I worked with him directly for 19 years until this last year when I took him a business plan to do this global moving business and asked if I could **head it up and build it**. So, I **transitioned from one job into another**. I retired for one day. It was a good day. Then, I went back to work in the new company.”

Valuable resources are available for the people of Western North Carolina who wish to become an entrepreneur. **Russ Yelton** is the director of the Business Incubation Program and Small Business Center for A-B Tech. The mission of the program is to help businesses that are **just starting or trying to expand** to be successful in order to create jobs.

The Small Business Center at A-B Tech provides state of the art facilities for local businesses doing **everything from bottling hot sauce to biotechnology**. Yelton says, “We signed an agreement with the largest business incubator in China. They have over 400 companies in their program…We agreed to simply work together. They had clients who wanted to come here and set up an office, so we’d create a job that would help them and vice versa…Now for any client we want to send over there they will give them an office, apartment, and an assistant for free for the first 30 days just to help them get started. So we’re offering some of that back. We’ve also signed agreements with Technologico de Monterrey, which is an incubator in Guadalajara, Mexico…We’re involved with Asetachim Chemical Incubator in South Africa…**We’re creating jobs on an ongoing basis.”
Learn Another Language!

When asked what the keys are for today’s students to SUCCEED in a global economy, the most common responses were: travel when you can, and learn a second language.

“It’s critical to take on a second language, if not a third language.” – Ric Goodman.

“Learn a foreign language. That’s a given.” – Russ Yelton

“…definitely a foreign language, like Spanish.” – Becky Cannon

The educational system in the United States is facing the difficult challenge of creating structures for schools that will prepare American students to be competitive with their peers around the globe. The following “Words of Wisdom” panels highlight advice for students given by global business professionals in Western North Carolina.

Charlie Owen of Owen Manufacturing/Springs Global shares, “I have encouraged all three of my children, my girls especially, to pick one language to become fluent in. A friend of our son is going to China and has taken Chinese for a couple years in college. If you take Chinese and Mandarin, it’ll get you a long way. The hardest thing about global business, is the language barrier.”

“The one thing I would go back and redo is I would have, without a question, picked up a second language fluently…Harshul speaks three languages: Russian, Hindi, and English. That, to me, is a valuable asset. I would love to have more people in my company that could speak three languages…I never paid attention when I was taking Spanish. I didn’t think I would ever use it, honestly…It was one of those elective classes I chose to take because I thought it was an easy class to get through…That’s one of the regrets I have – not fluently learning it.”

– Chris Bean

“I still wish I knew how to speak Chinese,” says Alex Williams. “There were countless times that I called companies or emailed them, and there was no way of establishing any communication…If I would have known how to ask somebody, ‘How do I do it?’ that would have been the benefit of [knowing the language].”

How can we conduct any business with people from around the world if we don’t speak the same language? Thankfully, for Americans, much of the world can speak and understand the English language. “The American culture is a lazy culture. The vast majority of us only know one language, but, everyone else knows their native language plus English, so a lot of business is conducted in English. But, if you have the local language it does give you an advantage, because it can break down some barriers and put the client on a different level with you.”

– Chris Bean

Some businesses use other resources to communicate with people abroad. Paul Samuels talks about problem solving methods used in his business. “If there’s no one there who speaks English, we’ll try and communicate as best we can. We use translation services and other people we know here in Asheville to help us craft letters in their language and try to communicate with them that way.”

Many people in the business community express regret about not working hard to learn another language when they were in school.
Words of Wisdom:

Travel

“If you have the chance to travel, go!”
– Russ Yelton

“...travel opens your eyes. Different countries in the same business have different problems.” – Paul West

“Travel.” – Mini Matthews

Whether traveling to another state or region of the U.S. or to a country across the globe, we have much to learn from visiting places that are different than where we live. There are specific ways to travel, that can help a person get the most out of their experience. Becky Cannon, CEO of I PLAY, explains, “Travel in ways that are not just like a tourist, but friendship wise, exchange-like. Do something where you are really connecting with people. Person to person contact, I think, is a really important thing to broaden your view and realize that there are so many different ways of doing things.”

The truth is that traveling, especially out of the country, is an expensive endeavor. Not everyone has the means to embark on long trips by plane or boat. In fact, as of 2005, only 21% of the US population had a passport to travel outside the country. There are so many ways, however, to have a traveling experience without leaving your home town. Find ways to challenge your comfort zone. Visit restaurants owned by people from other countries. Go to cultural festivals and music or dancing events that are different than your regular experience. Visit diverse places of worship. Have conversations with people who are from another country. Expose yourself to all your community has to offer!

Often colleges provide students with the opportunity to travel abroad while in school. “Go abroad, keep an open mind, and show some respect. Pick up a book on the country you’re going to and read a bit about it. Go online and Google, it’s the quickest way. Look under “etiquette” and “things to learn” for a few words. Find a food that you like. Find something about the culture that interests you and go.”

– Russ Yelton

“I traveled to approximately thirty different countries all over the world: Russia, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Poland, Germany, France, New Zealand. That was a fantastic experience! And, I have been to China a few times as well, which was a great experience, and not just in cosmopolitan Shanghai, but out in the provinces to visit customers. But, I didn’t like the food.”

– Paul West

“You have different societies in each of the countries and different perceptions of buying procedures or accepting a technology. People need to actually go there and know how the business is done in those countries.”

“If you don’t travel abroad and you watch the news, you develop stereotypes very easily. And, it doesn’t matter in what country you view the news, if you watch that news in that country long enough, you only see it through those eyes, and those eyes don’t always portray the way things really are...There are things you don’t know, things you never really think about, and when you go to these countries and you see how these people live and you put yourself in their shoes, all of a sudden you are thinking from a different perspective.”

“Go abroad and see the way that the people live. Eat the food they eat, and shop where they shop. See how they live their daily lives, because there are some significant differences. People who don’t travel automatically resist it because that is not what they are used to.”

– Chris Bean

“Now between the three of us at this [Ten Thousand Villages] store, we have visited five different countries...We visit the villages and the artisans. We see the products being made and the working conditions that they’re in and the difference that it’s making. We get to hear stories first hand so that we’re able to tell those stories in the store. So, one way we’re trying to increase the connection is being able to speak about fair trade in a first hand kind of way...Working at this store has shaped my world view and my perspective, because I’ve had the opportunity to travel.”

– Jennifer Elliott
Words of Wisdom:

Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands

Understanding cultural differences and adapting to them is important for success in global business.

Customs and traditions are different everywhere you go. “Not everybody thinks about work in the same way. Not everybody thinks about valuing their time or money or other things in the same way. There are a lot of different ways to live your life, and a lot of different ways to set up your values and priorities.”

– Jennifer Elliott

“‘It’s not just about language. It’s about something that we call ‘kiss, bow, or shake hands.’ It’s a book...It’s how to talk to people, how you address them, how fast you talk, how you approach them from a business point of view. In the United States, everyone is casual. You don’t call someone ‘Mr. Jones.’ You say Bob, and you just call them by their first name. That’s normal here, but if you go to Germany and call someone by their first name, they’re offended. You might call them by that when you know them, but you address them a lot more formally in a business setting. There’s all this etiquette about when you talk about business and when you don’t, and we have to be careful about slang.”

– Paul Samuels

Because American businesses are becoming so dependent on the constant movement of shipping containers around the world, we need to be aware of events, such as cultural or religious holidays, that can affect manufacturing and shipping schedules in countries where we do business. Charlie Owen explains, “To deal with the Chinese New Year we just order ahead. We know they’re not going to be shipping for two weeks, so if we have a program that’s ongoing, we just order more to be delivered before.”

“Just imagine you were going to work in India. People think it is OK to contact people at ten thirty to eleven o’clock at night. They have the frame of mind that the work has to be done, so they never stop. You would find it pretty weird if at ten o’clock somebody was calling to buy a product, but if you don’t take the call you have missed a sale. That’s the way it’s done there.”

– Harshul Gupta

“In France you need an appointment for everything that you do. If we were a company in France and I wanted to go see Harshul, and he is right across from our door, I would actually have to make an appointment to go see him. People have completely different concepts of how to do their daily lives. I have a friend who lives in Dubai. He told me several years ago that it is a great place to live, but the hardest thing for him to get over was when nine o’clock came around in the evening, and they were getting ready for bed. He and his wife would be winding down, and someone would knock on the door, and it would be a neighbor or some friend they have met. They would want to come over and socialize for a few hours. They are very social people. Of course, they expect you to make Turkish coffee… and everybody shares in conversations and desserts. To them the time thing really doesn’t stop at ten.”

– Chris Bean

“I would question my guide in China regularly to be sure I was doing the right thing… He said, ‘You know in this region when someone says ‘Cheers!’ you take a sip. But, if they say ‘Cheers!’ and the glasses touch, then you bottom up and drink it all.’ At the end of the conference over 300 Chinese guests are on stage and toasting the delegates, and they clink their glasses. So, what do I do? Bottoms up! No, they were from a different part of China! So when they came down to the table individually to toast, they found it very amusing that I had bottomed up. But, each of them understood why and told me that they were very appreciative of the respect that I had shown them. So even when you try to do the right thing, it doesn’t always happen. The Chinese have this thing called face: giving face, saving face, and taking face. They take it all very seriously. For instance, when I bottomed up and wasn’t supposed to, no one pointed out that I had messed up. They gave me a measure of respect.”

– Russ Yelton

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“Everyone keeps saying the world is getting smaller and it’s cliché, but it’s cliché because it’s true!”
– Jennifer Elliott

“I went to Washington DC with a group to meet with international movers and international forwarders, and they were all interested in forming partnerships. That was a byproduct of being open to doing that, and it really has opened us up to looking at other opportunities in business that we might not have been open to.”
- Paul Samuels

It is often hard work to develop relationships and networks in the business community, and people can be protective of their sources in a competitive environment. One entrepreneur said, “You don’t want to give out your sources. We’ve developed relationships and that’s really valuable. We developed them over time and through other relationships and through our networking.”

Jeff Slosman explains that trust and relationships sometimes transcend price, “I can’t compete on the cheapest; I’ll tell people up front that we’ll never be the cheapest, but hopefully we’ll be the best. And, it’s all about relationships.”

“Words of Wisdom: It’s all about Relationships!”

When it comes to networking, as the song says, it’s a small world after all. Many business leaders attribute their success to personal connections they have made over time with people all around the world. Global communities thrive on friendships and trust, and, despite distance, many people form close bonds with others living all over the earth.

“In life, everything is about building relationships and there are so many people to help you along – many good people that want to see you win.”
– Alex Williams

“In China they won’t tell you no. They’ll say, ‘We’ll get back with you later’ or something like that, because they’re trying to give you face. You really need to build that relationship so that you can have an honest dialogue, because they don’t want to insult you.”
– Russ Yelton

Ric Goodman explains how meeting new people through friends helped him to begin his dried fruit business in Costa Rica. They introduced us to the cultural minister of Costa Rica who in turn knew a family friend in the dried fruit business. Proper connections helped him to begin his current business in Costa Rica. I went down and met with the guys that are now my partners. They are two brothers who are Costa Ricans. We have formed a partnership. They have allowed me to become a true partner in the business, allowed me to acquire land which I always wanted to do down there. We have become like family. When I go down there, I stay in one of the houses and I have a room. So it’s really nice. We have formed a really close bond.”

Chris Bean and Harshul Gupta speak about the necessity of relationship building in their lightning protection equipment business. “There is a relationship that has to develop before they will give you the order. Typically, I don’t just pick up the phone and order something. It’s more of a true relationship building process, and this is the case in Latin America especially and in Asia. There is a process. The relationship is important, and it takes time.”

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Over the years, United States citizens have grown accustomed to being a major world power. Recently, Americans have become concerned that young people, the future of the country, are falling far behind students in other countries. As American students make their way into the working world, will they be able to compete?

“If you’re making a softball here, and someone is making it in Korea and in Pakistan, that’s who you’re competing with. The Internet today is like going down the street shopping. You go right online and you don’t know where somebody is located... The Internet has really closed how big the world is. It has really brought it closer together... You can have your catalogue on the web and communicate relatively inexpensively with the other side of the world.”

– Jeff Slosman

Thomas Friedman describes keys for success in the new middle class society of the United States and of the world in a global economy. “The jobs of the new middle require you to be a good collaborator, leverager, adapter, explainer, synthesizer, model builder, localizer, or personalizer, and these approaches require you, among other things, to be able to learn how to learn, to bring curiosity and passion to your work, to play well with others, and to nurture your right brain skills.”

– Thomas Friedman, The World is Flat. 309

Some statistics about the future of science in the US are bleak. According to the National Science Foundation, half of America’s scientists and engineers are forty years or older, and the average is steadily rising. Only 4% of NASA workers are under thirty. “NASA administrator Sean O’Keefe testified before Congress in 2002: Our mission of understanding and protecting our home planet and exploring the universe and searching for life will not be carried out if we don’t have the people to do it.” – Thomas Friedman, The World is Flat. 309
“I think the biggest skill any young person can have is dedication. It doesn’t matter what you do in life if you are willing to dedicate and commit yourself to be the best, then you will be. There are people who are willing to dedicate themselves at a young age and to look for opportunity and not think that the picture is too big.”

– Alex Williams

“Be flexible
“The minute you start flying into other countries you need to be a little more open minded. Learn to think the way another society may think. Don’t be trapped in your own ideas, because each society is different…Things may motivate you that don’t motivate them.”

– Ric Goodman

Words of Wisdom:

Riding the Wave

My analogy is being a surfer. We’re looking for the wave. We ride it, and when the wave dies, as they always do, you’ve got to look for the next one and ride it for as long as you can. If you do that looking for a job, you’ll do the same thing.”

– Jeff Slosman

“You need to have a liberal arts background…We have to go back and create stuff…We have to create things that make use of the resources we have. You have to be able to change direction easily and react to the marketplace.”

– Charlie Owen

People need a better understanding of Geography in the world, the flow of goods and services around the world, and what those flows are and why they happen.

“You have to be able to have customer service skills…You need to be able to manage your finances”

– Jennifer Elliott

“Stay open. Always try to view the world with your eyes wide open instead of letting them filter through prejudice and with negativity and what other people tell you because that’s just their perception. It’s better to draw your own conclusions.”

– Paul Samuels

“I think one thing that students should do is problem solving…Thinking about different ideas and alternatives of how you can make things work better…You always have to be thinking. ‘Don’t be in the box. Just be out of the box.’”

– Becky Cannon

“You still need people knowing the science behind what we do, but they also need the qualification to take it along and sell it. See, selling it by itself becomes an art and...selling outside the US requires other skills.”

– Harshul Gupta

“I just think it’s good for students to really think about early on, seventh and eighth grade, what they want to do with their life. Start looking at careers and where they want to go and what it takes to get there and what they want to make. Some of them have very unrealistic ideas of what they can really earn when they go out with a general degree or a liberal arts degree from a college. You need to be very specific about your education and your career that you want to pursue. Some students choose to learn a trade or to be involved in something else. There is always something they can do.”

– Helen Beck

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The challenge for us in this newly interconnected world is to learn how to be respectful global citizens. The world is getting smaller every day and our decisions affect the rest of the global community and vice versa. The multiple challenges to the big picture of the global economy include Fair Trade, the Environment and Security, among many other obstacles. A global community is built on a foundation of a local sense of tradition, place and economic vitality, which must be nurtured by citizens in WNC as well as in every town and village around the world.

The economic model of Capitalism has provided multiple opportunities for people to improve their quality of life. So why is there still such an enormous population of people in the world who are suffering due to poverty, disease, war, lack of education and resources? While the cycle of prosperity has helped some, it has not brought the promised benefits to everybody.

“In 2005, of the over 2.8 billion workers in the world, nearly 1.4 billion still did not earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the US $2 a day poverty line – just as many as ten years ago. Among these working poor, 520 million lived with their families in extreme poverty on less than US $1 a day. Even though this is less than ten years ago, it still means that nearly every fifth worker in the world has to face the almost impossible situation of surviving with less than US $1 a day for each family member.” International Labor Organization Global Employment Trends, January 2006

One response to this challenge that has grown out of the global economy is the concept of fair trade. “Fair Trade is an equitable and fair partnership between marketers in North America and producers in other parts of the world. A fair trade partnership works to provide low-income artisans and farmers with a living wage for their work.” – The Fair Trade Federation

Economic Note: Do workers in WNC make enough to support themselves and their families? The NC Justice Center has found that a one parent/one child household in Buncombe Co. would need to earn $13 an hour to pay for the basic necessities of life. Yet the minimum wage is still only $6.15 an hour.

In the United States, the largest fair trade organization is called Ten Thousand Villages. Jennifer Elliot is the manager of the store in downtown Asheville. “Very often the artisans that we work with are women who do not have access to markets or access to jobs or education. Another example is working with people who are disfranchised because of their ethnic background or their social status. How you spend your money really makes a difference. Fair Trade allows them to make a living and enjoy their work and put their kids through school,” says Jennifer Elliot.

“It's important to me, in thinking about the future of the planet and the future of communities and countries and governments and everybody relating to each other, that we treat each other with respect and dignity.” – Jennifer Elliot

Competition Goes Sour:
Mini Matthews of Xai Xai works with artisans in South Africa to create a variety of artifacts to fit the American designer market. She tells the story of visitors who went to the homes of the artisans she worked with. “The two ladies who stayed in my home went to visit this project where they make these little animals out of wire. They filmed it and what I didn’t know was that they had an agent in China, and they went straight to China and knocked off everything. So forty three families lost their jobs in South Africa. Those are the challenges I have.”

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The Big Picture: Becoming a Global Citizen

The Environment

“One planet, one experiment.”

Did you know?
• It takes as few as four days for air pollution created in China to cross the Pacific Ocean and reach North America.
• The U.S. makes up only 5% of the world’s population, but uses 25% of the world’s annual energy production.

“If enough species are extinguished, will the ecosystem collapse, and will the extinction of most other species follow soon afterward? The only answer anyone can give is: possibly. By the time we find out however, it might be too late. One planet, one experiment.” – E.O. Wilson

Imagine a world in which there are few trees, little clean air and water, seriously depleted resources (such as oil) that we rely on for energy needs, and countless plant and animal species disappearing every year. Unfortunately, this has become a reality for much of our planet, and as more and more people are swept into the global economy, our earth’s health is more and more at risk. Industry has always threatened the vitality of the natural world, but globalization has increased the pace of destruction.

The health of the earth is of the utmost importance to the survival of future generations of humans. What are some ways that you can help to keep our environment healthy? While in developing countries, swelling population growth is the primary challenge, countries like the U.S need to work on our consumption habits. Everybody can learn to be a responsible consumer, which means simply consuming less and looking for alternatives to limited natural resources. Many companies, including some in WNC, are adjusting to this challenge in several important ways: by recycling and using recycled materials, following standards issued by the government to keep the environment clean, and considering alternatives to conserve the earth’s resources.

Becky Cannon of I Play Baby Wear points out that the developing countries she works with, primarily China, Thailand, and Cambodia, do not make the environment a priority in the rush to develop business and enter the competitive global economy as quickly as possible. But she also recognizes that the U.S., in spite of the regulations that do exist, has a long way to go towards cleaning up its environmental practices.

“We need to conserve. In Europe, they recycle everything, there are no consumables – it’s not wasteful. Within 100 years, places will be underwater because of global warming. New generations need to be more conscious.” – Rick Perkins of Biltmore Oil

When it comes to the environment, Jeff Slosman of National Allied Wipers says that it is important for businesses to uphold American regulatory standards, even when they are working abroad. “I was talking to [a larger company] last week. No what matter what country they’re in, they’ll go by the highest regulations possible. So if they have a plant in China, they will still abide by U.S. EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) regulations, which is commendable. Too many other companies go to these other countries to save money by not following regulations.”
The Big Picture: Becoming a Global Citizen

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Through technology, everyone in the world is able to see how everyone else lives. For many, this raises issues of equity and justice – how can it be fair that some people have so much, while others live with so little? Some people living in poverty feel exploited by the global economy, which sometimes forces countries to modernize before they are ready. In addition, the Western ideas of “progress” and “modernization” can be abhorrent to people with different cultural ideals. The combination of these sentiments is creating a powerful backlash against globalization in some areas of the world that are resisting the spread of capitalism or having difficulties adjusting to the newly globalized economy. Terrorists have even cited the spread of capitalism and American culture as reasons for their actions.

What happens when people are left behind? They get frustrated. And this can ultimately lead to violence, which affects all of us.

Rick Perkins of Eblen Shortstop & Biltmore Oil points out that global instability and terrorism are closely related to the scarcity of oil and the dependency of the global economy on such a limited resource. International commerce runs on oil, and any disruption in the supply would have serious consequences for the political and economic stability of the entire planet.

In this country we rely on oil from other countries. According to Perkins, the United States imports a large volume of its oil from Venezuela and countries in the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia. We need oil – it is critical to operating our entire economy. Other countries have it. What does that mean for our political relationships with those countries? When we try to exert our influence on these oil-rich countries, people get angry – and terrorism becomes more of a threat.

The U.S. still produces nearly 40% of its own oil. However, political instability has resulted when leaders, such as Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, attempt to nationalize the oil industry in their countries. Our consumption of oil is not only an environmental concern, but it has also become an issue of national security.

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“We are dealing with a limited supply of oil, and we’re not being conservative enough with the product. This is a problem.” – Rick Perkins

In developing countries with enormous populations, like China and India, there is a growing middle class. As this middle class becomes more affluent, levels of resource consumption are starting to catch up with those of the United States. But can the world afford this? One of China’s development goals is to have a car in every garage within a few years. But could the earth sustain this level of consumption by the 1.5 billion people who live in China? According to Lester Brown of the Earth Policy Institute, if China used petroleum at the same rate that Americans do now, by 2031 China would need 99 million barrels of oil a day (more than the 79 million barrels produced per day in the entire world). In other words, it would be devastating.

On the other hand, how can we tell China that they can’t have a car in every garage if some families in this country have three or more cars? We need to emerge as leaders in curtailing our global levels of consumption.

“For geopolitical reasons, we cannot tell them no, we cannot tell China and India, ‘it is not your turn.’ And for moral reasons, we have lost the ability to lecture anyone.” says Philip K. Verleger, Jr., leading oil economist. “Restoring our moral standing on energy is now a vital national security and environmental issue.”

What are some ways we can strive to be responsible global citizens?

- Consume less
- Ride a bicycle, walk, or take the bus
- Look for fairly traded products
- Buy locally-grown fruits and vegetables (don’t just look for the cheapest price)
- Read the newspaper to find out what is going on the world, then talk to people about it
- Embrace your family and local cultural traditions – don’t rely on technology. Step away from the computer every once in awhile.

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The Big Picture: Becoming a Global Citizen

Wrapping Up

Thought on the effects of a World Getting Smaller

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