

Describe your
greatest achievement
to date. what effect
has this achievement
had ...

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BUSTER**

In determining my greatest achievement to I would have to say it is in reaching the level of management I have attained so far within the English-speaking, Western-dominated world. Growing up and being educated in South Korea, I was always fascinated with the international trade that I had observed from my earliest childhood. I received my Bachelor's Degree in South Korea and knew I could succeed in business there, but my ambitions were larger than I felt I could reach if I remained in South Korea. To truly understand the international market, I felt I had to experience it from an international perspective. However, taking the step to move to the United States was a big chance in trying to obtain my goals. I knew this would be a highly competitive market in terms of not only business, but in obtaining and retaining higher level management positions. I would be behind the curve of many people just because I was not familiar with many of the practices and customs of people who had lived in the United States their entire lives. Moving to this different environment meant I would have to learn an entirely new way of living and acting in order to survive in the larger marketplace, but I knew it was a chance I had to take if I wanted to achieve my objectives.

Moving to the United States and trying to succeed in business here required a lot of adjustment to a new way of living and a new set of expectations. I had to perfect my English to the spoken, as opposed to instructed, usage and I had to lose enough of my South Korean accent to make it possible for customers, who were already unhappy with my company, feel less frustrated when they tried to talk with me. There are many expressions used in the English language that mean something very different from their literal

translation which made this process a little more difficult as well. These were things that I could not learn through books or overnight and I had to have a great deal of patience and persistence to achieve acceptable levels of understanding and communication. It took me my first year in the United States to reach a level of communication that I felt was acceptable prior to taking my next step in achieving my goal.

There are also many other aspects to the American culture that they do not teach in books, that I could only learn through experiencing them. For example, there are many confusing double standards present in the American workforce. There is a stated emphasis on the importance of holidays and time off work that I found puzzling because of an implied expectation that this time be used to catch up on work-related things that may have fallen behind somehow. Learning to balance these types of inconsistencies has been a constant challenge to me, who feel it is an honor to have the opportunities in front of me. In addition, policies such as Affirmative Action have been implied as the reason why I have been given the chances I have, but I know I have had to work just as hard, if not harder, than many of my colleagues to achieve the levels I have. For each step I have taken, I have had to learn new customs, new traditions, new language usage and new approaches that have often seemed second nature to those who grew up in the United States. Instead of feeling angry or bitter about this situation, as many have indicated I might, I feel challenged and invigorated.

Through patience, hard work, persistence and careful attention to details, I have been able to reach a level of professional development I only dreamed

about in South Korea. With each step I take, I realize I am closer to realizing my dreams than I have ever been which only gives me more incentive to continue working to overcome any hurdles that might arise and to take advantage of every opportunity that comes my way. Through this process, I realize I have become a stronger, better-rounded person than I was when I left my native land. The process of reaching the level of management I have reached has affected every aspect of my life and character, and that is why I consider it to be among my greatest achievements to date.