

The marshall mba prime program



I joined Ernst and Young in September 2007 as and was excited at the prospect of being a part of a truly global organization. The opportunities for international business relations were not lost on me, especially since I was operating from my firms Jordan office. As a result of its unique location, Ernst and Young Jordan office operations focused around Middle East region.

In April 2008, my Manager informed me of my nomination to serve on a team that were to travel to the Libyan capital Tripoli to audit an Oil and Gas firm. The opportunity of working in a foreign country excited me and I promptly accepted the nomination. Part of the challenge was to audit an industry I had limited knowledge about since Jordan was not a crude oil exporting country. The other would be to interact with the different cultural mentalities of our clients' multinational staff.

The Audit team comprised two Senior Associates and five junior associates including myself. The flight to Tripoli was uneventful and upon arrival at our location a heterogeneous mix of people representing our client greeted us. At first I could not help but go through the motions as I shook hands and tried to keep track of the names of our hosts. As I got settled in my hotel room later that night and after a formal reception with our hosts, I was still astonished as to how many different international delicacies were offered at the dinner.

The audit proper began in earnest the next morning as we set up our workstations and devices. About two-thirds of our Client's Finance department staffers were from different countries in Europe, the others being Americans, Egyptians, India nationals, Pakistanis and a few Libyans.

Although most of the staffers communicated in English, some of the expatriates were quite knowledgeable in Arabic: this pleasantly surprised

me.

After work hours most days, we would mostly dine at the hotel or at nearby restaurants with our hosts. At first I bonded more quickly with my Arabic speaking hosts, but as the weeks went by visited many of the exotic restaurants in the Tripoli suburbs with my other hosts. During these 'food adventures' I was more cautious and only ordered traditionally Arabic dishes. In contrast, most of my European and American hosts seemed to enjoy the various Libyan delicacies and seemed to get along really well with the locals and did so mostly on first names basis.

Aside from audit business, most of our discussions were informal and personal. My hosts seemed to know a lot about the Middle East and my country Jordan. One of the Americans told stories of when he had visited the King's palace in Amman many years ago. Another European had briefly lectured in one of Jordan's most popular schools having previously lived in Jerusalem and Cairo. On the other hand, my interactions with my less travelled Arabic hosts centered more on the similarities of our cultures and our peculiar life's experiences. I was particularly fond of the Libyan accent and loved listening to their experiences in the International business arena. Most of the Libyans like myself were educated in their home country and were very passionate about acquiring even more education even if it meant going abroad.

In the three weeks the Audit process would take, I was exposed to a multicultural working environment inside a seemingly homogenous country. Having interacted with persons of different nationalities, sampled continental delicacies and completed my first International business assignment, the portrait of the Oil and gas business world in my mind is a little less daunting.

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I am very pleased with the working trip and even more proud of the very positive feedback about my motherland Jordan.