

Up in the Air: Insights for Developing an International Scholar Career

Miguel Córdova gives advice on maximising international opportunities





Even though you may think your course is specifically local, you could be wrong

I've gotten on and off almost 28 airplanes and visited 16 different cities in the last 60 days. Quite a record! In fact, this article was written between Leeds, Lima, Cusco, Paris, Aix-en-Provence, Belgrade, and Ljubljana. Indeed, faculty international activity becomes very intense sometimes. Even though I do not consider myself an expert in the field, I will dare to share with you some insights and debunk some of the myths about developing an international career as faculty member of a business or management programme. So, put your seats in the upright position and fasten your seatbelts while I try to immerse you in the internationalisation waters of the faculty members in a business school.

International conferences are a must

Perhaps these could be considered as meta resources that provide you strategic access to many other opportunities such as collaborative teaching initiatives, research projects or funds, co-authorships, visiting periods abroad, etc. If you were thinking that the main outcome of an international conference is the presentation of your paper, well, face the reality, global experts say it's not. Nor even the feedback you could receive (if you're lucky to get good feedback). The two main outcomes of an international conference are: (i) networking and (ii) reaching the deadline (yes, otherwise you won't be able to find time to move forward with the writing of your paper and you know it). International conferences are the cornerstone of an international scholar's career, so try to get to as many social events within the conference as you can and force yourself to meet new people there, otherwise, it's pointless to go abroad. In sum, if you are a faculty member, attend them; if you are an internationalisation officer, fund them.

International interaction is a way to attain teaching excellence

According to global experts, there is no point in developing just a local teacher career without the opportunity to compare thoughts and ideas with international peers. International interaction promotes the improvement of local sessions, allowing the incorporation of fresh and intercultural insights. Even though you may think your course is specifically local, you could be wrong - other countries have a lot to contribute in terms of new trends or global challenges, regional perspectives, and updates from international agencies. In addition, international peers could be willing to develop new teaching programmes such as COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning), being keynote speakers in your classes, or invite you to do the same for theirs. Moreover, sharing information with them would allow you to improve your course's curriculum, including updated perspectives and cross-cutting topics. International knowledge makes good teaching great teaching.

Cross-country research is always more than welcome

Working together with international peers gives you the opportunity to compare, contrast, and support your local findings with international results. Thus, business research is more comprehensively developed as well as being more attractive for journals. Comparing the same business phenomenon under different contexts would shed light on valuable results that could be extrapolated to a diversity of circumstances, enriching business research and its applicability for practitioners.

International co-authorship increases the chances of publishing

Don't get me wrong, but is it because of the multi-perspective approach that you get through it rather than any preference or bias from academic journals. As top journals have editors and reviewers from different backgrounds and nationalities, submitting a paper which already includes a cross-cultural perspective and international collaborative work, enhances the paper's possibilities of being well understood and covering all aspects of a specific organisational field. Contrary to this, if you only decide for the comfortable local team of researchers, it is very likely that you will all have the same perspective, and no innovative insights nor novel methods will emerge. The more diverse the co-authors team is, the more robust and comprehensive the paper will be. Furthermore, it will have far better acceptance in different locations around the world, being capable of connecting and empathising with a wider audience.

More scholarships and funds on sight

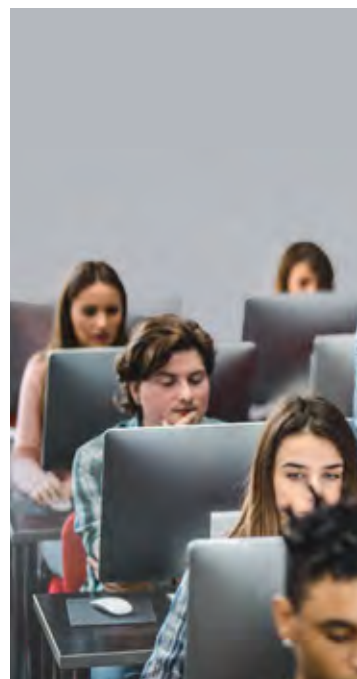
Think about your Department or Management School, same university, same authorities, same colleagues ... at the end means the same opportunities for all within. However, when you work together with international peers, opportunities can be multiplied. From the social networks' theory perspective, this is known as a bridge to different components inside the network to obtain external resources from them. Otherwise, information as well as the opportunities to apply this, would become redundant over time, and you and your colleagues could be competing again and again for the same piece of cheese. So, bridging foreign departments or universities would allow you to identify a variety of new competitive funds and/or new application processes.



Special projects, special appointments

Becoming an international scholar grants you access to global academic associations, international journals, international steering committees and boards of directors, these are constantly looking for new diverse members, editors and reviewers, country directors, etc. Even though accepting these international appointments would represent additional work (and this would be mostly unpaid), they would reinforce your regional/global scholarly position and provide you with valuable as well as strategic information to successfully conduct your administrative job and your scholastic activities of research and teaching.

I'm sure all this sounds very good so far, but where to start? Even though you are an internationalisation facilitator in your university or a scholar who wants to become an international one, it is important for you to recognise the huge power of an international career for faculty members. Acknowledging this is the first mandatory step to moving forward. Next, you need to find your own purpose, is it





to improve your research or teaching skills? Or perhaps both? Focusing on a target is crucial to assess the strengths that you are going to put into play and the international allies you may need. Do not underestimate the enormous advantages of face-to-face interaction. The pandemic scenario has tried to deceive us, suggesting we could replace on-site meetings with virtual ones. Some scholars do not see any difference between them, and unfortunately neither do some university authorities. Face-to-face interaction allows us to overcome the possible barrier of mistrust of others. Since more than 80% of communication is transmitted through body language there is often little opportunity to both generate and assess trust via a screen. 'In person' is to get to know people, online is for saying 'Hi' to them after you already know them. So, a combination of both would help to shape your internationalisation strategy. Once you hop on that trust barrier with your future international partners, you can then proceed to plan long-term collaborative initiatives with them. Otherwise, all the activities you may implement would have the risk of dying just after the first shot. The most valuable international initiatives are the ones that can be sustained over time, not the ones that vanish quickly. Finally, always give yourself the opportunity to meet new international colleagues. Remember that each of them has an entire universe of potentially good ideas and opportunities – as do you.



80%

More than 80% of communication is transmitted through body language



About the Author

Miguel Córdova is Associate Professor of Management at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP), Internationalisation Leader of the Management School at PUCP, and Vice Chair of Resources of the Teaching & Education SIG at the Academy of International Business (AIB). He holds a PhD in Strategic Management and Sustainability.