

London

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Business Matters

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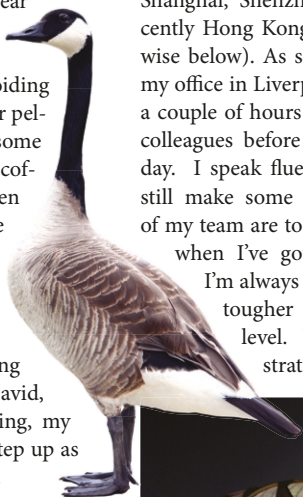
Working day

Edward Holroyd Pearce, co-founder of CRCC Asia



A.M.

“ I get up at 6.45am sharp every working day, and head straight out to walk our six year old Patterdale Terrier, Clio, in St James Park. After 50 minutes of avoiding encounters with geese or pelicans, I get home, have some toast and a quick cup of coffee for breakfast and then normally head into the office just before 9.00. I spend about three weeks every quarter in China, so sometimes the dog-walking is left to my partner David, or if we're both travelling, my long-suffering in-laws step up as a dog-boarding kennels.



My current responsibility is to look after the operations of our programme delivery offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and most recently Hong Kong (pictured clockwise below). As soon as I arrive at my office in Liverpool Street I catch a couple of hours with my Chinese colleagues before they finish their day. I speak fluent Chinese, but I still make some mistakes – some of my team are too polite to tell me when I've got a word wrong.

I'm always telling them to be tougher with my Chinese level. We may discuss strategic matters or I

help them solve the problems that have occurred during the day. We use Skype for conference calls or emails to communicate, and they are always pushing me to pay more attention to my WeChat.

Over the last nine years, we have learnt a lot from our experience. Our operations and management systems are well developed and steady. However, running a business is never straight forward, we still have to deal with many issues that occur unexpectedly from time to time. For example, one of our challenges is the change of regulations in China. Internships are still a fairly new concept in China, we often need to spend time explaining to visa officers that our programme participants are genuinely unpaid, and are short term interns. We hope they see our programme as a positive activity to improve understanding between China and the rest of the world, as well as providing students with a valuable life experience.

The most important part of our work is the responsibility to our programme participants. Most of them don't speak Chinese and it is their first time there, we are in loco parentis, and we take the responsibility of their wellbeing very seriously. We

can be contacted (and often are!) 24/7, as well as occasionally being contacted by their anxious parents in their home country. Luckily we haven't had too many major issues crop up, and if they do, my amazing colleagues in China always find a way to make things right.

Challenges

With the challenges of regulations, rising costs and managing a large team in multiple offices, life can get quite stressful. Of course, all businesses have similar issues. What makes it all worthwhile is the steady increase of the application numbers, often doubling year on year, and hearing very positive anecdotes from participants who not only love China, but also tell us about how they've performed in their job hunt when they get back to their home countries. We have an active programme alumni group, and I try to keep in personal contact with as many of our alumni as possible so I can really stay on top of our programme's value and ways to tweak our services to make them even better.

Occasionally I'll have lunch meetings, but if not, I'll grab a sandwich or something healthy-ish from Itsu or Pret.



Photo: Jean Wang



Photo: yuab 2003

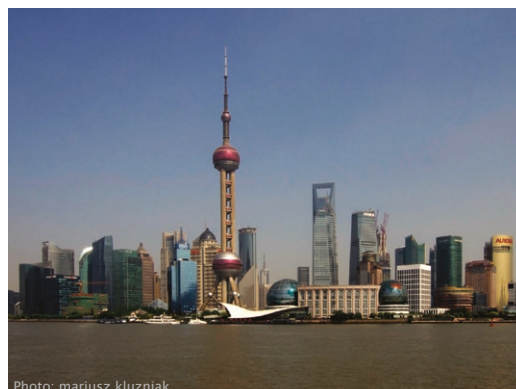


Photo: mariusz kluzniak



Photo: Steve Webel

We have 11 offices in total covering the States, Canada, Australia and a couple of European cities, as well as four offices in China, and we have about 50 staff members overall. My business partner Daniel Nivern and I set up CRCC Asia in 2006, specialising in connecting China and the global community through internships, study abroad programmes and consulting services. Our core business is to provide opportunities for western students to gain work experience at companies in China. Over the years, we have sent over 5,000 interns to China from all over the world. Our program prepares them well for today's globalised world, and gives them a head start for their future career progression, teaching them a bit about Chinese business culture and opening their mind to different ways of thinking.

"Internships are still a fairly new concept in China, we often need to spend time explaining to visa officers that our programme participants are genuinely unpaid."

P.M.

My business partner Daniel and our investor Tom are both based in the States. So the afternoon can quite frequently be taken up by discussions with them, or cracking through the many excel spreadsheets that I use to keep on top of our global monthly accounts.

Other than being a director at CRCC Asia, I also spend 15-30 per cent of my time co-chairing and looking after an organisation called the Young Icebreakers. It was set up by 48 Group Club chairman Stephen Perry after discussions with Premier Wen Jiabao, particu-



larly to foster better understanding amongst the younger generations in China and the UK. Through this role, I have had the privilege of meeting some key people in China and the UK, and it's a great learning experience. When the Chinese premier, Li Keqiang, made a visit to London last year, I got a chance to meet him in person, and was even able to ask questions relating to my core business at CRCC Asia.

Other than our internship programme, we have also invested in a few other smaller businesses including The Dragon Trip, a travel company; The Student Lawyer, a

resource platform for law graduates; and Lingos, an internet platform for language learning. As we have benefitted greatly from other investors' experience and funding, we are very pleased to now also be in a position to spread the spirit and support other fledgling businesses, particularly offering our global offices and experience of starting up a business to companies that might benefit.

After a busy day at work, I try to go home about 6pm on a 'Boris bike'. After a brief walk for Clio the dog, we make our dinner, often opting for Asian dishes such as Thai or Chinese. We are lucky enough to

live quite centrally, so a midweek trip to see a play, an opera or ballet, are not out of the question.

For holidays, we have had some wonderfully exotic travels recently to places such as Brazil, and this year will be no exception with upcoming travel to India and Japan. We are also spending a long weekend skiing in Cortina, as I can spend a day in our Venice office beforehand, happily combining work and leisure.

What's the future plan? Perhaps do a part time MBA or EMBA, as it would be good to consolidate my experience and give it some theoretical background, but for now starting a family is also in the pipeline, so an MBA might be put on hold for a while.

My day ideally ends with bed by 11pm, where I relish being able to sleep in my own bed and not having jetlag. ”

Edward Pearce was speaking to Yintong Betser, a China business specialist and the author of the acclaimed *Active Business Travel - China*
www.activeukchina.com

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