

What unique, personal qualities and/or life experiences will you bring to the Marshall MBA Program?

Russia is not a very comfortable place to live. Over the last decade, class divisions, economic instability, corruption, and the philosophical revolution from Communism to Capitalism have temporarily devastated my homeland's economy and culture. Living through the transition from a Communist bureaucracy to a free market society, I have personally experienced what most American could never dream about in their worst nightmare: poverty, national wars, corruption and a lack of choice, but I survived and prospered. I will bring to the program, enthusiasm, diverse life experiences, languages and cultures, dedication, the ability to make good decisions under pressure, my desire for excellence, and, of course, a sense of humor.

After the collapse of the former Soviet Union, Russians fell into two categories: the rich and well connected, and everyone else. Unfortunately, I was in the category of everyone else, and life became very difficult. In Russia, bribery was very common; therefore, education was not provided solely on merit but on how much a family could pay. Admission to the best schools and grades could be bought. The privileged class received the best education, jobs and opportunities. Everyone else struggled. Even though I was Valedictorian of my school without the family resources or connections, I did not have a chance to attend the prestigious Moscow University of International Affairs, which was my dream. Alternate opportunities for the bright and ambitious were in the fields of medicine, law, engineering, military, and teaching. I became a teacher of Russian language and literature.

While experimenting with a free-market philosophy, the Russian economy became a "flea market". Most of the Russian intelligentsia faced either unemployment or an unreliable paycheck. To survive these radical changes, adaptation to the new economy of commerce became a necessity. In Russia, I was employed full time by three large Western corporations which gave me the opportunity to experience first hand how business was conducted. Unfortunately, these companies withdrew from Russia due to the volatile business environment. Finally, I obtained stable employment with a British cosmetic firm and was able to exhibit my talents of dedication, enthusiasm, initiative, people skills, and ability to work hard. I was given the most difficult tasks because of my problem solving abilities and

people skills. Some of my duties were to meet the company's hopeless deadlines for its projects, mediate between disgruntled employees, and create a positive image for the company with the public.

Furthermore, my ability to understand five languages -- Russian, Belo Russian, Ukrainian, Polish and English – and knowledge of traditions and cultural diversities gathered from my international trips, helped me to gain respect and recognition with my employer and co-workers. Working under the constant pressure from supervisors and competitors did not destroy my individuality and self-esteem, but taught me to be diplomatic, consistent and to persevere. In addition, my sense of humor was a bridge to establishing rapport with different types of people. An old Russian song says: "Share your smile, and it will come to you back. It takes stress away and brings people together."

In conclusion, life in Russia forged my strong will and taught me how to be a survivor. It also gave me an opportunity to realize my untapped potential. I will bring to the Marshall MBA Program varied life experience, languages and culture, my ability to work hard, make thoughtful nonstandard decisions, find a unique way of dealing with people and problems, and the ability to organize and lead. I will bring to the class initiative, dedication, and humor.

There is no question that The Marshall School of Business is one of the best, and I want to learn from and be associated with excellence. The USC Marshall MBA Program will be proud to have me as one of its graduates in the future.