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Full of networking experience in Prague and Vienna

Throughout the entire schedule of the study abroad, I sincerely enjoyed many on-site experiences in both Prague and Vienna. When I decided to participate in this course in February, I was afraid of one thing that since the length of the on-site experience was only for 8 days, it might not pay off because of the short period of time. However, I applied and determined that no matter how short the period was, I would use all my efforts to meet every goal as well as enjoy myself every day. Now, looking back on my 8-day experiences, I can confidently say that I tried my best and have been satisfied with the outcomes of the courses each day. I even felt I had stayed there longer than 8 days, because of the full of day-to-day experiences. On this paper, I will describe many individual experiences which would really make a big impact on me and possibly my future.

From the beginning till the end, my main goal was clear, which was networking as many people as I could for the short period. I never forgot this single goal and carefully arranged my schedule every day. Therefore, whenever I met with a person who could be interested in business and become a future friend, I asked many questions and exchanged business cards. To illustrate, at the Ruckel Crystal, we met and talked to the marketing and sales director, Ms. Jana Hubena, after the company tour. At the last minutes, I asked several questions to her, such as what Japanese companies do import their crystal products and sell them in the market, and what the procedures I should possibly take to become a future importer of the Ruckel Crystal in Japan. Ms. Hubena kindly answered all of the questions and introduced me two current importers in Japan as well as the necessary requirements as an importer. As soon as I came back to the US, I sent her an E-mail and asked further questions. Regarding the Ruckel Crystal, I had some concerns,

such as the working condition at the manufacturing factory and their targeting customers. In Prague, I found a lot of low-priced crystal products at the souvenir shops, which was not handmade, and I was not sure how the business had been profitable during the economic recession. Now, in order to make this business opportunity in reality, my next task should be to research and analyze the crystal products market in Japan.

While I enjoyed networking with most lecturers, such as the PR director at the OPEC and two professors at the New York University in Prague, my most favorite presenter was Mrs. Claudia Roithinger coming from the Austrian Business Agency (ABA). I initially expected that the ABA presentation might be not so interesting because the ABA would simply be a chamber of commerce in Vienna. Contrary to my initial expectation, I thought their role as an investment and corporate supporter has been much higher than the roles chamber of commerce generally operates. As appointed by the Austrian government, the ABA's investment consultants offer free consulting service for any companies considering investment in the Austrian market. They hold extensive data regarding the past and current economic circumstance in the nation and Ms. Roithinger is knowledgeable in the past investment cases. Moreover, the ABA has two foreign branches in New York City and Tokyo, and their local consultants answer any concerns and help prepare for the future investment between two nations. After the lecture, I talked to her and found out that there is one key person in Tokyo, whom I should speak when my company decides to invest in Austria from Japan. His name is Mr. Yoshino and she explained that many Japanese companies, such as the Yakult and Yamaha, have talked to him before they actually started investing in Austria. Overall, I thought the ABA could be very helpful for private companies investing in Austria and I would like to keep in touch with the consultants, especially after the graduation in May.

In addition to the companies we visited as a part of the course, there are many networking opportunities in Prague outside of the lectures. For example, during the lunch break, I visited the Embassy of Japan in Prague and tried to receive some contact information of Japanese people who have successfully operated business in Prague. Although I did not make an appointment before the visit, the director kindly introduced me several people, including a Japanese businessman working for trading company in Austria, a Czech businessman who support investment of Japanese companies in Prague, and a university professor researching the business administration at Czech university. The director explained me about the current economic situation in Prague, since the beginning of the 21st century, more and more Japanese manufacturing companies, such as TOYOTA and Panasonic, have invested in Prague and employed many local technicians as engineers. Most of the investment had been highly successful until the last year when the economic crisis hit the market. As a result, the investment suddenly stopped and some companies already stopped manufacturing in Prague. Currently, it seems like the Embassy has much fewer amounts of workloads compared with a year ago, and they hoped that the economic crisis would be over by the end of 2009 and Japanese businessmen as well as Japanese tourists would return to Prague.

After I talked to the director at the Embassy, I found a bulletin board and several Czech students listed their name and contact information because they would want to learn Japanese in Prague and have been interested in some Japanese culture. The director at the Embassy told me that there are some number of students in the exchange program between Japan and Czech. Generally speaking, most of the students study either international relations or arts and music in Prague. I thought this might be a big chance to meet new students in Prague, so I wrote down all the contact information and later sent an E-mail to them. In Prague, I was very happy about

finding many opportunities as followed by the schedule. I recognized that the group behavior should be as much important as my networking. However, if I were simply a tourist and only enjoyed the sightseeing in Prague, I would have not been able to take a time and find these networking opportunities. I was truly excited every night, because I have expanded and learned about many business opportunities as accomplishing the single goal.

Lastly, besides the learning experiences through the networking opportunities, I even learned an important lesson through the soccer games in Prague and Vienna. Since I am a big soccer fan, especially about the European soccer leagues, as soon as arriving in Prague, I visited the tourist information center and found information watching the professional soccer game on the night. I successfully enter the stadium and really enjoyed the game itself. However, after the game, I felt that some people were jealous of me and a couple of people even told me that they wished they could enjoy the game with me. Although I told them that since I found out the game at the last minutes, I would not have enough time to tell everyone about that, I got a little discouraged because I could not share the fantastic opportunity in Prague with the other classmates. Therefore, I had a strong will that in Vienna I should watch the professional soccer game with everyone who would be interested in watching the soccer. As a result, seven students, including me, enjoyed the game at the stadium on the last day in Vienna and all of us made a great memory because the game was fantastic. After the game, I felt a different kind of pleasure. I was happy because I was able to arrange the opportunity and introduce six classmates one of the best experiences during the Spring 2009. I feel it is essential that sharing happiness and opportunities would create more happiness and more opportunities. It might be easier to enjoy by myself and become successful, but it is much greater to share the success with the others. This experience through the soccer game might be the most important lesson through the course.