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PLAYBOOK INTERVIEW

This instalment of the Next Gen GM Playbook catches up with Jennifer King, a true Third Culture Kid, born in Germany. Jennifer has had an enviable background and footprint over many countries all of which have shaped her story to date.

Since childhood she has spent the extent of her time living in both Germany and the United States of America, moving a total of twenty six times! After taking a gap year working on the first AIDA cruise ship in the Caribbean, as an animator, she returned to Germany and obtained her degree in Marketing and Sales.

Jennifer gained an apprenticeship at BMZ, part of the Publicis Group and from there her career progressed through various subsidiaries. This backdrop provided Jennifer with valuable insight, knowledge and networks that served as excellent skill sets and gave a foundation for her future career trajectory in the Global Mobility industry.

Sixteen years ago, Jennifer married Alan who at the time was serving in the British Army. Despite plans for Alan to be deployed to Cyprus, they remained in Germany and as many in the Global Mobility industry can attest to, a spouse often gives up a career to join their partner on Assignment.

Having already resigned from her role, Jennifer found success in being selected to lead training and development initiatives and expansion for Subway® during their launch into the German market.



One year into her new career at Subway, a family event changed her career path and she embraced it. With Alan recently being released from his post, the couple used their experience to shape a reputable temporary lodging in the area. Through assisting spouses with setting up landlord appointments and utility connections, an accidental destination services provider was born with the registration of Easy Stay Germany. This was later sold as Jennifer returned her focus on growing the family business.

Ten years ago, King and Mayr was founded with her husband and business partner Holger Mayr. They have assisted many employees to navigate Germany and within three years, were the recipient of the Forum for Expatriate Management Best Destination Services Provider of the Year. Since then, the team at King and Mayr have amassed an impressive collection of twenty awards and nominations.

Life experiences and personal relationships are the cornerstone of what Jennifer loves about the industry and she openly shares her high and lows. Jennifer and Alan lost their first son, Miles, three years ago, but are thankful to have welcomed Maxwell into the world two years and two days later. A self described "mumpreneur" Jennifer enjoys studying the art of positive thinking and travelling in her "spare" time!

LOOK BEYOND THE EDGE OF YOUR PLATE

In your world of work, whoever gets the opportunity to read this, you have likely been asked this question or some variation thereof, "what keeps you up at night?"

Admittedly for Jennifer, it is Maxwell that keeps her up at night! I could hear and see him in the background and I do not know about you, but I can never hear a baby laugh and have it not draw a smile. When we opened up this catch up the coronavirus pandemic phase three was a backdrop and generally speaking you would posit that work related issues dominated what kept you up at night.

No?

Just me then?

In hearing her story, what came through loud and clear was a groundedness in honest introspection. It was not surprising to hear Jennifer mind maps some of the common themes over the past ten months that kept her up at night. Top of the list was negativity, the way in which she sees where world politics is heading and how decisions are being made and seemingly how we are working against each other instead of together.

Where her mindset shifts to next is the question "what kind of future will this shape out to be and are you looking at what is beyond the edge of your plate to shape that desired future?" Jennifer goes onto say that the impact of this means that people who do not have the worldview or bigger visions are just the ones who look on their own plate.

How beautiful is that!

It is very easy to say and perhaps harder to do but undoubtedly, this is an industry of service and in hearing her story and experiences, you get how much Jennifer cares about the intent behind that service. Let your role be grounded in a principle of looking beyond the edge of your plate, seek out what it really means and how this service industry can evolve and build new experiences.

Collectively having gone through a worldwide pandemic, consider beyond the edge of your plate with a new lens, the lives of the ones we are servicing and how the "why" we are moving them has likely shifted. Now more than ever we are tasked to build a new worldview, understand the visions and desires of our workforce and build futures we can all be proud of.

CONNECT AND SOLVE FOR THE EXPERIENCE

Jennifer holds the grounded view of the Global Mobility industry, as one that is committed to working together as best as it can. Within the Global Mobility industry you have the privilege of working more often than not with like minded individuals, some who may be globetrotters or who travel a lot and have a different world view in general than someone who may be local.

To be clear this is not to say that someone who has not lived abroad does not have a worldview but it will be remiss to not think this will change your outlook.

When you are driving the business of a life altering decision to move, ninety percent of the time you will be asked "have you had an international experience before?" In other words "do you know what I am going through and can you connect with that?"

This industry has come together like none other in response to the coronavirus pandemic's impact on the operational matters previously taken for granted. Realise that you can make space to find new relationship connectors and share more about your diverse experience to build that connection and your commitment to solve. Intentional relationships especially in a virtual world are even more critical to build at this stage.

An interesting side story was hearing how Jennifer experiences going into a municipality office and about the fifteen different papers that are needed to be submitted for a car leasing program. Ten of these are likely to be accepted as different municipalities are integrated, but one bank may not accept a portion of the documents. Everything is then on hold until that one document requirement is resolved.

Now imagine that experience from the lens of the employee on Assignment or Transfer. How can you make those connection points and find ways to solve them through building relationships, efficient processes or being staunch advocates for change going forward. These are likely systemic program or infrastructure issues that serve as barriers and sadly you will go through situations where people do not want to be responsible for a decision.

What Jennifer recommends is going in with an answer. She coaches her team to come up with solutions and to build the muscle to assess whether that solution is right. You can and will build influence in your career with this approach.

DO NOT TIPTOE TO SAFETY

We were on another mindmap around cultures, feedback, leadership and the trajectory we can shape or not shape in the Global Mobility industry. Jennifer, likely similar to you, has been actively listening to podcasts and materials around positive thinking with the quote “some people tiptoe through life, hoping to make it safely to death” resonating with Jennifer.

Jennifer imparted how cultural norms shaped how she grew up and was socialised to do things. “I can say that I am German, even though I do not consider myself as German but as a European. When I went back to Germany, everybody thought I was American. When I was in the United States of America, obviously, I was not integrated enough to be American. When I grew a bit older, I realised that for me, I am European because I like the European aspect, but I am definitely not German as in my point of view, Germans are stereotypical and straight by the book.”

Jennifer continued “I thought that sentence fits so much to the German culture. I look at my neighbours and I think everything is so routine, nothing is for now, everything is always for later. I really think they tiptoe through life, hoping to make it safely to death.”

“I do not ever want to do that.”

What Jennifer has been intentional in doing is working with clients that understand who is behind the King and Mayr contract. Getting rid of workloads that no longer serve them well or nobody finds real joy in or learns from. She refuses to regret not having done what she really loves or not being able to serve people that she really wants to partner with. Avoiding just simply looking for billables, transactions and getting through life.

So whether it be in your career or in your professional life or a combination of both, take ownership of how you tiptoe through life in this new landscape we have been given. Seize the opportunities that are ahead and ensure that what you do is a win win.

Jennifer actively listens as she mentors and continues to find learning or mentoring nuggets in her life such as “being a good leader also means being a good follower”. This muscle will build with daily practice and only in a set combination of not tiptoeing to safety.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sheryll's experience in Global Mobility spans over ten years across the Oil and Gas, EPCM, Professional Services and Technology industries. She has lent her expertise on designing entry requirements, expatriate policy, frameworks and best practices as a thought leader on a number of industry panels and in industry periodicals.

In an increasingly complex and competitive world of talent, consulting on the employee experience is one of Sheryll's primary focus along with the development and education of Global Mobility Professionals worldwide.

Originally from Jamaica, Sheryll has been a member of the Next Gen GM since May 2018 and will be undertaking more interviews as part of the Next Gen GM Playbook project!

Like the majority of you she fell into Global Mobility. However, remains a passionate and proud change agent in this industry and a member of the Next Gen GM network.

The genesis of Next Gen GM led her to think outside the box on how to create an inclusive, open space that enhances the employee experience, not only those relocating, but the Global Mobility Professionals who help make that happen.

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Global Mobility Leader

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