

It seems that accountants who succeed in changing careers typically have a practical game plan — and plenty of determination — to go along with their soaring dreams

the many historic but often run-down villas that have come on the real estate market in recent years.

It's a long journey from his early days as a junior at Peat Marwick in 1989, followed by the Investment Funds Institute of Canada, which he joined in the early 1990s. Indeed, Scoffield freely admits that the journey has been nothing if not circuitous. "How did I get started in this?" he chuckles. "I have no idea."

In the telling, though, the story unfolds with a certain logic. At the encouragement of his wife, Elizabeth, Scoffield left Bay Street in 1992 and relocated to Port Hope, Ont., a town east of Toronto. They bought and restored an old commercial building for his wife's retail business and Scoffield set himself up as a sole practitioner. But in 2009, the couple decided to fulfill a longtime wish to live in Europe. After the UK's home prices proved unattainable, they discovered that dilapidated French manor houses were very reasonable, provided one was prepared to put in the work.

That December, Scoffield sold his practice and the couple made the leap, using the proceeds to start fixing up their new old home. It soon became apparent not only that other investors were making similar moves, but that they needed advice on how to approach the renovations, obtain the permits and do the actual work. Using his own experience, Scoffield set himself up as a consultant and general building contractor. "You buy

it and I'll tell you how to [renovate] it." While he maintains his designation and feels his accounting background has been useful in establishing the business, Scoffield revels in the life he's found in a small town in France. "I do enjoy getting up in the morning and figuring out if I'm going to mix plaster or put stones on a wall."

The trainer: Tracie Marquardt

English has long been the lingua franca of global business. But, as Tracie Marquardt observes, the opportunities for linguistic misunderstanding still abound — especially when corporate teams with members from all over the world find themselves working on a common project. "What I do is help auditors and other financial professionals recognize the impact of their words," says Marquardt, 46. "I understand the big faux pas you can make."

Marquardt got her first taste of the international business environment while working on a series of US-based financial audit assignments with Deloitte in the early 1990s. She liked her experience so much that she transferred to the US in 1994. Then in 2002, she moved to Germany in search of an even more international flavour.

Like many anglophones overseas, Marquardt fell into language training as a way of supporting herself and soon realized there was a burgeoning demand for specialized training for audi-

Voices of experience

MICHEL BOULAY — the cop

"Choose a career path that is professionally satisfying and gives you the quality of life you seek. In my case, this meant living in a smaller community with shorter commutes and more time with my family. How much you can make should not be the main focus of your career."

WILL SCOFFIELD — the renovator

"The biggest hurdle with a move like this is fear: fear of the unknown, fear of failure, fear of rejection. Regardless of how well you plan or don't plan, there will always be something that will surprise you."

TRACIE MARQUARDT — the trainer

"When starting your own business, choose something that you are passionate about, that makes you excited to get up every morning. Know why you do what you do, and who your perfect customer is."

PETER PRABHU — the matchmaker

"If you are targeting a specific organization or industry, try to connect with as many people from that organization as possible, from as many different functional areas as you can. Then when an opening arises, you'll be fully prepared."

SIMONE SANGSTER — the problem-solver

"In many senses, in a move like this, you end up starting down [at] the bottom again. [But] I was very open to all the trials and tests that came along the way, as well as the opportunities. I was always looking forward."

PAUL LANDRY — the recruiter

"You need to get into the entrepreneurial mindset, which means taking risks and developing the confidence to sell. By critically evaluating [your strengths and weaknesses], you can start identifying other positions and careers where your strengths are magnified and your weaknesses are minimized." —JL

tors and other financial professionals who wanted to hone their business-English skills. That included native English speakers who wanted to improve their overall business communication skills. She started training auditors from around the world who were working with pan-European financial companies and organizations. After 11 years working in the field, she recently opened her own training business based in Heidelberg.

To date, Marquardt has taught English auditing phrases to hundreds of workshop participants, along with techniques for presenting information in ways that won't inadvertently offend colleagues and clients. From her experience as an auditor, she knows such professionals sometimes have to deliver bracing financial news, so strong communication skills are vital for ensuring the information is received in the spirit intended.

"If you can show someone the risk of not doing something, they're more likely to take the action you'd like them to take," she says. "I am successful because I know what others want from the training and coaching. I help them reach that goal because I have been in their shoes."

The matchmaker: Peter Prabhu

As a young CA, Peter Prabhu developed a keen urge to travel. Just two years into an entry-level gig at Price Waterhouse in Toronto, he decided to take a graduate management degree at Cambridge University — an experience that "opened [his] eyes to international opportunities." Prabhu leapt at the chance to

work in foreign locales, signing on for stints with J.P. Morgan, Bank of America and Citigroup in Hong Kong, Singapore and finally New York. There, with the dot-com boom in full flower in the late 1990s, he set out to develop his own ecommerce and web development consulting practice.

Later, the firm, called Interstice Consulting, evolved to serve as a bridge between firms in different countries that wanted to do business together. In 2004, it won a contract in Moscow. Fascinated by emerging markets and still eager to travel, Prabhu decided to move to the Russian capital. It turned out to be a savvy business decision. Most international firms, including retailers, need Russian partners, as well as some practical advice on how to navigate one of the world's trickier investment environments.

Prabhu, now 45, loves working as an entrepreneur in a place like Moscow. "It's always changing. Just being in Russia is enriching on a personal basis." That fluidity applies to his work life as well: every day brings genuinely different challenges and opportunities. He adds that the trick to tapping into that kind of professional diversity is to act — now. "The longer you stay in a single job, the harder it is to take that leap."

The recruiter: Paul Landry

Anyone who spends even a little time with Paul Landry soon realizes his passion is dealing with people, not sitting in front of a computer. "I joke around with my clients that I get paid to talk on the phone," says Landry, the 36-year-old national director

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