



“Apart from international trade, a quality graduate trade program equips one with knowledge in accounting, operations, policy study and more. That enabled me to become recognized as an all-around high achiever at work.”

Aveline Xu

Senior Sales Manager, Avery Dennison
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Starting out as a Human Resource Assistant, Aveline Xu has made great strides in her career advancement within a short span of time. With a sharp mind and an outgoing personality, she was presented with the opportunity to join the sales team, which was her first foray into global trade. Today, she is a Senior Sales Manager at Avery Dennison, a Fortune 500 multinational manufacturer and distributor of pressure-sensitive adhesive materials, apparel branding labels and tags for some of the leading sportswear brands in the world, RFID inlays and specialty medical products. She credits her fast-tracked career to her master’s education focused on international trade.

Read on to find out how hard work and higher education have enabled Aveline to advance her career in this exciting global business, moving from China, her homeland, to live in Ho Chi Minh City with responsibility for business in Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand.

Aveline Xu introduction

In a world of rapid globalization, what are some of the key skills that makes a successful leader? Aveline Xu has catapulted from a human resource assistant to a senior manager with substantial regional responsibilities in less than 10 years.

In this exclusive interview, she reveals some of the key challenges prevalent in today’s global trade sector and how to turn them into career growth opportunities. She also shares how she attained ongoing growth in her international career through lifelong learning, including graduating with a master’s program focused on global trade.

What do you love about your career in global trade?

When I first started out with Avery Dennison as a human resource assistant in China, I wasn’t quite sure what to expect in my first job. After two years into

human resources, I was offered an opportunity in sales – and that was my first step into international trade. I took a leap of faith and have never looked back. Today, I am a Senior Sales Manager at Avery Dennison based in Ho Chi Minh City. I am responsible for facilitating trade of high-value pressure-sensitive materials – such as apparel labeling – across Southeast Asia for some of the leading sportswear and other brands in the world.

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A career in international trade continues to be a very rewarding path, as I have been able to transcend the numbers and connect deeply with people from all walks of life and cultures. Working in trade provides me with a platform to forge mutually beneficial relationships with companies around the world and enables me to contribute to my company's sustainable business growth.

How did you develop your passion to work in international trade?

My passion for international trade grew from the global exposure it afforded me to advance my knowledge in cross-cultural human relations, communications and trade policy. With diverse skillsets, I was able to work across functional areas and connect with internal and external stakeholders.

In essence, the passion came from gaining knowledge and applying the learnings to clinch successful deals at work: That is the fuel that turbocharges my interest in international trade.

What are the growing opportunities for career advancement in international trade?

I believe there are three areas of growth for people looking to advance their career in international trade, namely: traceability, digitalization and sustainability.

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In the textile sector, I observed that sourcing of materials is constantly shifting to different regions, coupled with the global movement to reduce carbon emission. As such, there are great opportunities for people to grow their career in areas advancing sustainability.

For instance – and this is a bit technical, but it excites me – Avery partners with suppliers to develop world-class radio-frequency identification (RFID), electromagnetic fields to automatically identify and track tags attached to objects, which covers a wide range of inlay designs for operations in frequency bands.

The implementation of RFID has addressed one of the key challenges in global supply chain – traceability. With the use of RFID, companies can track the location of goods in the warehouse and during transit; monitor inventory turnover rate and optimize the inventory hold, thus, achieving cost efficiency and reducing wastage.

I foresee a huge demand for talent in digitizing trade processes to achieve sustainable growth: People should pay close attention to upskilling themselves to keep pace with sustainability trends and initiatives around the world.

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How can leaders in global trade make a positive impact in the world?

As countries advance their sustainability goals, implementing sustainability initiatives is one of the ways that trade leaders can make direct and positive impacts on the triple bottom line: people, planet and profit.

At Avery, we have moved to using environmentally friendly ink for printing of the labels and packaging. Not only does this enable sustainable profits, but we also empower our customers to meet their net zero targets. And that is important to all of us: Simply put, net zero means cutting greenhouse gas emissions to as close to zero as possible to save our planet from the consequences of climate change.

We also continually explore solutions to optimize the supply chain. In a conventional setting, the printing of the labels takes place at different plants. We are currently exploring alternative methods to offer in-house printing solutions for our clients.

This will reduce the inefficiencies within the order-to-make process and accelerate time-to-market products. Most importantly, this reduces data governance and copyright issues arising from printing the logos offshore. We also provide software and hardware support for the in-house printing solutions to ensure customers meet compliance standards.

For career advancement in your sector, what educational pathway would you recommend?

Communication is the key for career advancement, as it helps to facilitate impactful conversations with internal and external stakeholders. And, with active listening skills, you will be able to pick up relevant information that is vital for identifying international business opportunities.

I recently completed the Master of Global Trade program at RMIT Vietnam thanks to a Hinrich Foundation scholarship, and it significantly advanced my knowledge and skills in international trade. This quality program equipped me with both experience and a powerful network to enhance my understanding and application of international trade practices. For instance, I was acquainted with thought leaders and mentors with rich expertise in the field of logistics, trade finance, trade law, policy advisory and more – right across global value chains. This greatly broadened my horizons and enriched my work experience.

I would highly recommend that anyone considering a career in international trade – or fast-tracking their career in trade – pursue trade-specific higher education to gain valuable insight and build a diverse network.

Apart from international trade, a quality graduate trade program equips one with knowledge in accounting, operations, policy study and more. That enabled me to become recognized as an all-around high achiever at work. I would highly recommend that anyone considering a career in international trade – or fast-tracking their career in trade – pursue trade-specific higher education to gain valuable insight and build a diverse network.

When choosing a graduate program, it's important to look at the International Trade Rankings, which specialize in the ranking of graduate trade programs globally. With deep analysis in trade course offerings, program design, employability and work-ready experience, the International Trade Rankings

provide a north star in the sea of graduate programs worldwide. This helps students to identify the right master's that will ultimately help them secure employment and advance their career.

What is the greatest challenge the sector is facing?

Recently, the greatest challenge in the trade industry is the conundrum between globalization and localization.

Undeterred by Covid, war and inflation, global trade hit a record high of \$28.5 trillion in 2021. However, Covid has shifted consumer demand to durable goods, resulting in a disrupted supply chain. The supply chain gridlock is further constrained by the diminishing supply of raw materials, such as rare earth minerals or natural gas due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Rising interest rates have also weakened the appeal of local currencies in emerging markets, leading to a capital outflow to other markets. In fact, United States Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) fell from US \$125.3 billion in the second quarter of 2022 to \$69.5 billion in the third quarter.

Fueled by labor shortages and shipping delays, supply chain leaders are assessing how to reshape the supply chain for a post-Covid world. Based on my observations, some companies are reshoring and nearshoring plants to decrease global risk.

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has cut its global trade forecast to 1%. That said, is globalisation dead? Although international trade faces headwinds in 2023, globalization is still the economic vehicle that provides jobs, affordable consumer goods and increases GDP of trade partners. True leadership to be able to handle whatever challenges may come requires continuous lifelong learning.

How should one stay up to date on the latest trends in global trade?

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It's critical to build intangible assets in your career to stay up to date on the latest trends in global trade. A nation's trade policy can influence the forces of the supply chain and how goods are exchanged with other countries, thus, driving economic opportunities and geopolitical stability. But, how do you keep up on complex trade policies between 195 countries around the world?

One of the ways is through the Hinrich Foundation's industry research and resources. The education hub for international trade provides trade research, reports and weekly news updates to keep you up to date about the latest industry trends – from foreign direct investment to sustainable trade. In a world of fake news, it has been my go-to channel for highly reliable information.

About the Hinrich Foundation

The [Hinrich Foundation](#) is a unique Asia-based philanthropic organization that works to advance mutually beneficial and sustainable global trade. Sustainable global trade strengthens relationships between nations and improves people's lives. We believe the most effective way to advance sustainable global trade is to invest in informing and training the people engaged in trade.

It supports research and education programs that build understanding and leadership in global trade. Its goal is to build a network of next-generation trade leaders by partnering with universities and corporations across global value chains.

Its team of global trade experts and practitioners apply their deep knowledge and experience in trade, economics, policymaking and education to deliver the Foundation's programs. Key initiatives include:

[International Trade Rankings](#)

Created in partnership with educational rankings expert QS, the International Trade Rankings provide a data-driven list of the world's top international trade-related graduate programs

[Hinrich Trade Educators Center](#)

The Trade Educators Center provides educators and students access to a collection of free classroom discussion guides, reading lists, whitepapers and videos focused on real-world business and policy scenarios

[Global Business Scholarships](#)

Annual scholarships awarded to people with a passion for pursuing or advancing their careers in global trade through master's study at Georgetown University, London School of Economics, Nanyang Technological University, INSEAD and the University of Auckland.

For more information, visit hinrichfoundation.com

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