



“Don’t limit your opportunities by not knowing what your next step is. Just keep reaching out and something will come through for you.”

Dr Lynne Sprugel
Founder and CEO, Abuzz Global

It is in situations where we do not know if we will succeed or fail that we really learn about ourselves. Throughout her career, Lynne Sprugel has been in these situations – or what she calls “mini journeys” – that led her to many opportunities in different aspects of international trade.

She attributes her achievements to her desire for lifelong learning and a strong sense of curiosity, but “some of it is luck,” she says, “and just putting yourself out there.”

Get involved & reach out

Lynne emphasizes the benefits of getting involved in associations and a variety of networking events.

Her first internship with Bank of Boston was a result of attending a meeting of the International Trade Association in Dallas despite being “semi-shy.” She made it happen by shaking hands with many people and telling them she was looking for internships.

“You just never know where your career will lead you. But, if you sit at home or don’t get involved in these different associations, then you really limit your opportunities,” Lynne says.

While in her 20s in Los Angeles, she thought her career was over. She took a big risk quitting her first job with electronics goods supplier RadioShack, when it closed its LA office. Rather than returning to her hometown of Fort Worth, Texas, to work at its headquarters, she chose to stay in California.

Wanting to get a customs broker’s license, she joined the Foreign Trade Association of Southern California, which was offering a customs broker course at the time. She attended the classes in a hotel at Los Angeles International Airport for 35 weeks.

One day, she was preparing for a class at the lobby when a flight attendant asked what she was studying. Lynne replied it was customs regulations and she was looking for a job. The woman gave her the number of her friend, Robert Krieger who owned a customs brokerage, Norman Krieger. Days later, Lynne was hired.

“You could look at it as a very difficult time because I was young. It was a big city. I didn’t know a lot of people. Just by sitting in a hotel, talking to people, boom, my next job,” she says.

“Don’t limit your opportunities by not knowing what your next step is. Just keep reaching out and something will come through for you,” she advises.

Learning other cultures and languages

Her Spanish class and visits to Mexico, plus her love for sports, piqued her interest in the whole aspect of global trade. She knew by then that she wanted an international career.

Lynne grew up in a place where she did not have much interaction with other cultures. Before the internet, her source of information about other countries was encyclopedias such as the “World Book.” Her Girl Scout Pen Pal badge opened up friendships in England and Australia.

It was in her ninth grade Spanish class that she fell in love with learning other cultures and languages. She traveled to Mexico for a week as part of the course. It was her first real interaction with people from a different culture.

In the same year, she also became good friends with an exchange student from Germany and they played basketball on the same team. Having German roots herself, Lynne was enthusiastic about learning the language and culture.

Her next visit to Mexico was through an exchange program during college. She lived with a Mexican family whose father was a shoe salesman. From him, she learned about domestic production and distribution of shoes. This led her to realize, “I like this and I love meeting people.”

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Career dedicated to sourcing & value creation

Lynne arrived in Hong Kong in 2014 while working for US retailer Academy Sports and Outdoors. As the Vice President and Managing Director for International Sourcing Operations, she set up and managed its Asia Sourcing Hub in Hong Kong.

Lynne reached her career goals by stepping out of her comfort zone. From leaving her hometown for bigger opportunities, she eventually lived in Hong Kong for six years. She arrived in Hong Kong in 2014 while working for US retailer Academy Sports + Outdoors. As the Vice President and Managing Director for International Sourcing Operations, she set up and managed its Asia Sourcing Hub in Hong Kong.

She chose the office location after conducting a detailed market survey, built the recruitment strategy, created the organization structure and processes, and provided technology and staff training. It was part of the five-year sourcing plan in Asia which she created for the company, along with opening more offices in China.

Her responsibilities included management of quality assurance, production and sourcing, logistics and factory compliance, and office administration (HR, IT, tax, legal and accounting). While in Hong Kong, she sourced new private labels and boosted Academy’s brand by enhancing product quality and ensuring factory compliance and product safety.

Lynne worked for Academy for 15 years, from helping build its customs compliance department and Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism validations to import logistics, and then into the global sourcing area. She joined its Texas office as a Director of Domestic and International Logistics and Compliance in 2005, then a Senior Director for Import Logistics and Compliance in 2008. A year later, she became Vice President for Global Sourcing before she moved to Hong Kong.

Within her role, she developed a strategic direction for sourcing private labels from manufacturers in over 50 countries. In four years, she increased direct orders from \$800 million to \$1.4 billion, and company savings of about \$200 million.

Her career in global sourcing began with American department store chain JCPenney as an International Sourcing Manager. Within her role, she developed a strategic direction for sourcing private labels from manufacturers in over 50 countries. In four years, she increased direct orders from \$800 million to \$1.4 billion, and company savings of about \$200 million.

From JCPenney, she worked at Medici Systems before joining Haggar Clothing Company. Then, she started her own consulting firm, Global Trade Solutions, which led her to be hired full-time by Academy.

Pursuing her desire to learn more, she earned her Doctor in Business Administration from City University of Hong Kong. "It was an incredible journey. I highly recommend it to anybody. It is a lot of work, but it was just a priceless experience – meeting all our cohorts from all over the world," she says. During this time, she was able to take advantage of executive education programs at UC-Berkeley, Stanford, and Cambridge.

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She encourages young trade leaders to branch out their experiences and have exposure to other cultures. "Over time, you gain some confidence from those successes and from the failures too. You learn from the things that didn't go right," she says. "It's the combination of all those different experiences you bring into your next leadership position that helps grow the company."

Giving back through education

In her next five-year plan, Lynne wants to continue giving back to the industry and to young professionals and students who want to learn about global trade.

Having parents who were both teachers, Lynne shares their passion for education. In her next five-year plan, she will continue giving back to the industry and to young professionals and students who want to learn about global trade.

It has been her quest to pass on some of the different aspects of education, not only in her career at the companies she has worked for, but also throughout her entire career.

Teaching has always been part of her journey from the moment she earned her customs broker's license. She taught in different community colleges in Dallas at night. Then, she began teaching at the University of Dallas after earning her Master in Business Administration from the university.

When she finished her employment with Academy in June 2020, Lynne founded her advisory firm, Abuzz Global. It provides educational content related to retail and the global supply chain for universities and companies, as well as consulting

services for setting up overseas offices. She is also the Chair of AmCham Hong Kong Apparel, Footwear & Supply Chain Committee, as well as on the Board of Directors of the Americas Apparel Producers Network (AAPN).

While focusing on her company, Lynne also taught and collaborated with the Hinrich Foundation in building course content for the Master of Global Trade at RMIT University in Vietnam. She was also a Visiting Professor for the Master of Global Trade program where she taught International Strategy.

“Most of the things I did had something to do with global trade. It’s given me a very blessed life of experiences.”

Lynne’s expertise and passion to share with next-generation trade leaders is built upon her 35-year career in trade, combined with 19 years of teaching, and lifelong learning. “Trade has been my lifelong career. Most of the things I did had something to do with global trade. It’s given me a very blessed life of experiences,” she says.

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.

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