

Cross-Cultural Business Fellowship



Training Leaders for Cross-Cultural Business

This real-world business experience paired with hands-on instruction and training will equip and prepare you to open, run, and grow a business.

The Challenges

Aspiring cross-cultural entrepreneurs usually have never operated a business. They move across the world and then attempt to “figure it out” on the fly - starting from a disadvantage.

Most expat-run businesses fail to become stable, profitable businesses. Instead, the business often relies on ongoing subsidized funding or shuts down altogether with little or no impact to the surrounding community, much less any return to investors, debtors, or shareholders. In our experience, the average lifespan of a cross-cultural business is short, and the average of dollars lost is high when the salary spent to pay the business owner is taken into account. In addition, the toll on the business person and his or her family is high. Many aspiring entrepreneurs leave altogether, and investors who believed they were investing in a real business become disillusioned.



A Solution

The Market Project’s Cross-Cultural Business Fellowship will help prepare aspiring entrepreneurs to launch, run, and scale a company that will have an impact on individual lives and whole communities.

The Fellowship offers the following:

- Rigorous testing that helps identify strengths and weaknesses in skills that are required to be successful.
- Six (6) months of a standardized teaching and reading program along with customized coaching to address weaknesses and reinforce strengths.
- Real-world experience working in and managing an existing cross-cultural business.
- Guided creation of a future business concept along with coaching and assistance in preparation for securing funding. This stage could include introduction to funding sources and help securing funds from impact investors.

Come work with The Market Project for a year in a real and profitable cross-cultural business. The Market Project creates thriving businesses that offer stable jobs for survivors of trauma, exploitation and trafficking, with a focus on products and services that emphasize hands-on engagement, workplace training and healing support.

The time you invest in this training will provide you with a controlled experience that lets you make any possible mistakes without adverse repercussions and enable you to grow in your ability to manage a company.

Critical Business Fundamentals	Normal Prep	The Market Project's Cross-Cultural Business Fellowship	
Articulating vision and long-term goals	X	✓	Some lessons can't be learned from a book. In addition to using self-assessment tools, your time working in a real-life company will teach you more about your strengths and interests. Personal coaches will also work with you to help you discern business roles and business models that align with who you are.
Achieving work/life balance	X	✓	
Deciding on a business model that aligns with your strengths	X	✓	
Human Resources	X	✓	Your fellowship will give you invaluable experience in various business practices. You'll learn practical skills about leading people, understanding customers, managing finances, and building systems. With designated time working in various business departments, you'll better understand common challenges and gain tools to solve problems.
Market research	X	✓	
Sales methodology	X	✓	
Product/service testing, iteration, market fit	X	✓	
Accounting and Finance	X	✓	
Systems and processes	X	✓	
Building a successful management team	X	✓	

Business ownership and governance	X	✓	experience working as part of a cross-cultural management team where you'll learn what it takes to work with owners, managers, and team members from a different culture to execute the business vision.
Timeline planning and implementation	X	✓	
Business planning	X	✓	The experience you gain managing a business will significantly educate your business plan.

A Week in the Life of a Fellow

What might an average week look like in The Market Project's Cross-Cultural Business Fellowship?



Monday: You participate in a staff meeting with the national management team. You report on the progress of an accounting project you're working on with other team

members, and you hear other reports on sales, human resources, production, and finance. You see some team members working well and others failing to achieve their goals. You work with the general manager to set priorities and decide how to address problems.

Tuesday: After a morning of study you have lunch with other employees at the business and talk about your families. You're getting to know everyone and learning more about what they value in life. Language is a bit challenging with some of the employees, because they don't speak English well. You may need to ask a national to provide informal interpretation for you.

Wednesday: You have a phone call with your business coach to discuss the book summary that you wrote. It turned out to be a timely book because it coincides with a human resource project you're working on at the business. Later that day you meet with an assistant manager to continue the work on creating new employment contracts, making sure they support the new management structure that just got approved.

Thursday: You and the general manager meet with a junior manager and another employee who have been having a lot of conflict. The junior manager has had a bad performance evaluation, and you also determine that he is the cause of the conflict. You and the general manager have an intense conversation with him and communicate that without immediate improvement he will be fired. You struggle with how your love for these people sometimes involves hard choices.

Friday: At breakfast with your spouse you talk more about how hard the conversation the day before was, but that the person responded well. Your spouse also shares some of the stress at home with the kids with their schooling. You both discuss the highs and lows of living cross-culturally and imagine together what it would be like to do this sort of life for 10 years or more. Friday afternoon, you complete a self-assessment tool that helps you better understand who you are, your personal goals, and what types of roles you enjoy.

Saturday: You're reading, and you come up with a killer idea for a potential business that you'd like to start. You jot down some notes and email a couple of friends who are in a similar business to ask their advice.

Sunday: You go to church or a local teahouse where you see some other expats. You are surrounded by people speaking other languages. You end up having lunch with a few expats and a couple of people from work. You talk about how the city is growing and your excitement to see sustainable improvement for the community.

Timelines for the Fellowship

Prior to the start of the Fellowship, the Fellow completes the application and assessment process, which is noted below. The Fellowship is 13 months. Throughout, the Fellow will work 20 hours per week as a part-time assistant manager embedded in an existing business. In parallel with work duties, the Fellow will complete the prescribed learning and reading program (6 months) and complete the business planning process in preparation for a new business startup (7 months).

Prior to Start Date	Event
November	Application period opens
January	Selection of finalists for interviews
February	Finish finalist interview and Fellow selection
April	Fellow visits business site(s)
May	Secure all documentation, travel preparation, and needed visas
June 1st	Skills testing
June 15th	Travel to site
After Start Date	
First 2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Business acclimation and training
First 6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete the prescribed learning and reading program. ● At the 90-day point, complete a 360 review
Months 7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Begin research and create business plan for a company to be launched. ● At the 180-day point, complete second 360 review.
Months 10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discussions with funding sources and begin preparations for company launch.
Month 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Train next cohort, prepare for exit, complete final evaluations, exit interviews.
End date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Final Review of business plan and Fellow

Final Evaluation

At the end of the Fellowship, each Fellow will receive a final evaluation. It will evaluate the Fellow's business knowledge and management skills and will inform the Fellow how they have grown in their time with the program. The final business plan will be evaluated and measured using specific success criteria. It will be assessed to determine its future viability.

Each Fellow will leave this program with a much more realistic understanding of what type of commitment it takes to start, run, and scale a successful cross-cultural business. Fellows will have gained valuable experience operating a business in a foreign culture. Each Fellow will leave with an approved business plan that has been evaluated by experienced international entrepreneurs and coaches.

Costs and Financial Arrangements

- Application fee payable by applicant is a non-refundable \$250 USD
- Cost of the program to the Fellow is \$12,400 USD
- Fellow is responsible for all travel costs for Fellow and Fellow's family to and from the Fellowship. If married, fellows cannot live apart from their spouse and young children during the Fellowship.
- Fellow will be provided with a nominal stipend (equivalent to a local salary) from the host company while on site, but will be responsible to pay for all living, travel, and miscellaneous expenses.
- The Fellow will not be paid for the work done for the host company.
- Fellowship will provide the Fellow any work visas needed.
- Fellowship will provide all instruction, coaching, evaluation, and review.

Trainer and Coach

James Dirksen is the Director of Business Creation at The Market Project. He has over 20 years' experience bringing products and services to the global market and 10 years' experience coaching and working in impact businesses around the globe. He began his career as a consultant working at Northrup Grumman and PricewaterhouseCoopers. In 1997 he began working in the computer and network security industry and has started, grown, and sold companies and technology to companies including Microsoft, Symantec, Telefonica, Verizon Wireless, AT&T, Citrix, and Cisco. James has a degree in biology and chemistry from Point Loma University. He lives with his wife Dana and their children near Portland, Oregon.

Interested? Online application at www.marketproject.org/engage/fellowship.