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**What was the most memorable teaching moment?**

Gavin was my partner and we were teaching in the English speaking class, but there really was not one guy who spoke English extremely well. The make up of the class was very interesting. There were various ages and backgrounds. What was a really interesting commonality was the lack of exposure to the rest of the world. The Internet was not as prevalent back then; it would be interesting to see how this has changed. Perhaps because of this, business principles were different, very different. For example, Lululemon pants for \$70 was a very strange concept to them; it didn't make sense.

**Who was an interesting individual that you met during the program?**

The host was the most memorable, she spoke English well and you can actually have a well sustained conversation. She showed great hospitality and hearing about her story, day to day life was interesting and what her aspirations were beyond just hosting us.

**Tell us about an unforgettable cultural experience that you were not expecting.**

What stuck out was that almost every person you met had a "Russian Soul." The Russian Soul is a shorthand for some sort of cultural outlook that was stoic... This outlook did affect a lot of the entrepreneurship especially given that we were in a remote area, so it was even more difficult. There were many more successful entrepreneurs but they tend to be more pessimistic or perhaps realistic? There was always this sense of self-demotion.

**Are there any skills that you gained through LEADER that you still use today?**

The whole act of getting up and doing a case and facilitating a conversation is something I still do all the time and doing it through LEADER definitely helped me develop those skills more. Using "International English" language is also a very important skill that you learn to pick up. We often carried on long sessions and used complicated language. In Russia everybody had a certain proficiency, but they would lose it if you used too much slang and they wouldn't understand.

**Are you still entrepreneurial today? And if so, how do you keep an entrepreneurial spirit while working in a corporate environment?**

For sure, being at a pretty small office that is entrepreneurial it is very apparent. When I was in Bangkok, I met the head of a company that was growing at double digits, something that is rare to see for big corporations in North America, but his ambition didn't stop there. He wanted to triple the size of his company in 12 years. We often don't have that level of ambition in Canada. We often don't think BIG enough and daring enough. Perhaps it's because in corporate Canada and US there are more shareholders and quarterly reports with budgets that need to be met. However, for the start-ups in North America, as a mentor our role is often to try to quantify and fact base things. However, the most successful entrepreneurs do not always operate like that. They have ambitious goals and plans and you, as a mentor, need to foster those ideas and encourage that dream.

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Darwin Smith graduated from the MBA program at Ivey and is one of the founding members of the BCG Calgary office. He focuses his practice on energy and industrial goods clients, helping them with corporate strategy, corporate development, marketing and sales, and operational excellence. He is a P. Eng in Alberta and has a mix of engineering, operational management, and consulting experience. Darwin participated in the LEADER program in 2007 and travelled to Nizhny Tagil, Russia.