



# **“They Made It!” Book Excerpt**

How Chinese, French, German, Indian, Israeli and other foreign-born entrepreneurs contributed to high-tech innovation in Silicon Valley, the U.S. and Overseas

**By Angelika Blendstrup, Ph.D.**

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## Silicon Valley: A Slice of Life

“The voyage of discovery is not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”

**Marcel Proust**

### Susan Lucas-Conwell, CEO, SDForum

It has been many years since the apricot trees disappeared from Palo Alto and the image of success became a garage in this idea economy. For those who think that silicon grows on the trees now... this is what it's really about [in 2007<sup>1</sup>]:

- Area: 1500 square miles (roughly San Jose to San Francisco)
- Population: 2.43 million
  - 38 percent foreign-born (of which 33 percent are Asian)
  - 50 percent speak a second+ language
  - 28 percent under 19 yrs old and 42 percent under 45 yrs old
  - 41 percent have college degrees

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1. Statistics provided by the 2007 Index of Silicon Valley, Ref: [www.jointventure.org](http://www.jointventure.org)

- 6600 tech companies employing 250k, market cap \$450bn
- 284 tech workers per 1000 employees (vs. 51/1000 U.S. average)
- Highest level of R&D in the U.S.

And where's the money? Why do we care?

- **2005:** \$8bn invested in 950 deals of which 1.6 percent in seed/start-ups (\$132m in 47 deals)
- **2006:** \$4.6b in 550 deals of which three percent in seed/start-ups (\$130m in 40 deals)

*This is all happening in an area with less than one percent of the U.S. population, an area that saw its first high-tech company in 1939 but was dominated by agriculture until 50 years ago.*

*What's the magic potion? The right ingredients and a chemical reaction...*

## **The Circle of Innovation**

- The entrepreneurial theater burgeoning with ideas and innovation.
- Mature firms = potential clients, partners, successful exits.
- Professional service providers and the support needed to grow these businesses. They are also invaluable partners and connectors in and of themselves.
- Institutions of higher learning are a source of knowledge, technology and research, employees, future entrepreneurs.
- Government plays a very different role here than in many countries. Cities can provide tax incentives, offices, incubators... All levels of government (city, state and federal) are potential customers of products and can be connectors at official levels among countries providing special incentives to different regions (e.g., NAFTA).

## Contributions of SDForum

One of the crucial aspects of Silicon Valley is its networks; SDForum is one of the largest and oldest, representing a microcosm of the ecosystem for innovation. Created 23 years ago, SDForum is a non-profit dedicated to educating and creating relationships within the technology community, thus helping to transform innovation into scaleable businesses.

How does this network work? Here's an example:

- **Opelin**, an Indian Company (2003)
  - Developed in India
  - Opened office in Silicon Valley
  - Joined SDForum network to access investors, legal help, and industry thought leaders
  - Hired Silicon Valley-experienced CEO to help gain access to funding and customers
  - Raised \$1M in Angel funding
  - Rolled out to 23 countries in 20 languages because of connections made
  - ...still going strong

As you read this fascinating collection of interviews, I hope this slice of life in Silicon Valley will come alive for you and make you realize what the reality of the Valley is: many, many new eyes bringing their vision and energy, their talents to create and innovate in a very special place. The people are what make the Valley tick, and they have come from everywhere in the world, all walks of life. This book mirrors what it's like for those looking inside.



## Conclusion

### Lessons from Successful Foreign-Born Entrepreneurs

While some of you might see these interviews as anecdotal, as random thoughts of 38 individuals with whom I spent a short amount of time, the lessons I draw from their stories are congruent with broader studies.

In an important 2006 survey of 340 privately-held, venture-backed companies, Anderson and Platzer highlight the fact that, “Immigrant entrepreneurs and professionals contribute significantly to job creation and innovation in the United States. This analysis shows the striking propensity of immigrants to start and grow successful American companies, particularly in the technology field. The study’s findings reflect the benefits of an open policy toward legal immigration.”<sup>16</sup>

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16. Anderson, S. and M. Platzer, *American Made: The Impact of Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Professionals on U.S. Competitiveness*, National Venture Capital Association (NVCA), 2006.

Their findings include:

- Over the past 15 years, immigrants have started 25 percent of U.S. public companies that were venture-backed, a high percentage of the most innovative companies in America.
- The current market capitalization of publicly traded immigrant-founded venture-backed companies in the United States exceeds \$500 billion.
- Forty percent of U.S. publicly traded venture-backed companies operating in high-technology manufacturing today were started by immigrants.
- Immigrants possess great entrepreneurial capacity, particularly in technical fields.
- The proportion of immigrant entrepreneurs among publicly traded venture-backed companies is particularly impressive when compared to entrepreneurs in the general U.S. population.
- Immigrant-founded venture-backed public companies today employ an estimated 220,000 people in the United States.

## Lessons Learned

I believe that my interviews show in detail why findings from this larger survey hold true for the individuals I talked to. A unique mix of characteristics shows up time and again in the interviews, which showcase the ability of immigrants to succeed in Silicon Valley and the U.S. in general.

Consider some of these characteristics, which stand out in the interviews. The people I talked with all exhibit:

- High intelligence, often coupled with a great educational background
- A willingness to work hard, focus, determination and perseverance
- A vision for success in their professional careers and personal lives

- Curiosity and passion
- Love of family and a dedication to supporting it
- An often uncanny insight into themselves and others
- Belief in themselves
- Openness to emotional and intellectual growth
- A tolerance for, even a love of, risk and the ability to (quickly) recover from failure
- An appetite to collaborate
- Humility
- A desire to give back to society

Now ask yourself, how many of these characteristics are found in a typical cross-section of the native-born population of, say, Boston, Massachusetts? Not many regions of the U.S. have whole populations who share these characteristics. But, I would say the same is true of a typical cross-section of Bristol, England; Bangalore, India; or Berlin, Germany. By setting out on their journey to Silicon Valley or other parts of the U.S., the people I spoke with are a self-selecting sample. They are anything but typical.

## **Recipes for Success**

Each person in this book tells a unique story. But the characteristics they have as a group are a wonderful “shopping list” for anyone looking to succeed in Silicon Valley. Bear in mind that there is no “secret sauce” that guarantees your success. But there are a number of “recipes for success” with ingredients that the people I met have used to their advantage. If you plan to immigrate to the U.S. and establish yourself in Silicon Valley, you should know that it is the extraordinary, not the ordinary, who succeed. With that in mind, consider some of the extraordinary aspects of the people I interviewed. Here are some recipes for success, which you might find, will work for you.

## **First Recipe: Stand Out from the Crowd**

“You come to this country to prove something to yourself, to really do the best you can in your education, the best you can in your profession, build a life and be successful. I really think it’s this sense of energy. I think of it as: you are successful when you get up in the morning, you’re really passionate about what you are doing, and you really care to take it to the next level.”

### **Omid Kordestani**

“It’s a great thing to know you can control forces, you can be in the front, you can think out of the box to win, and you can do things that really matter.”

### **Guy Gecht**

“The other thing that I remember from my early experience was the concept that everything was doable; that it was just a question of hard work, of merit, and that any door would open.”

### **Marc Onetto**

## **Key Skills**

- **Earn unique qualifications:** Success comes to people with superior intelligence and a well-rounded education. Many immigrants speak multiple languages fluently and use this to their advantage.
- **Work hard:** Be willing to apply yourself to the task at hand and go the extra mile. Very few people succeed in Silicon Valley working a standard 40-hour week. An understanding family helps.
- **Have a relentless focus:** Success in Silicon Valley is achieved by doing something different. Before Google, no one thought there was a profitable business model for search engines. Become passionate about a great idea and carry it through to completion.

## **Second Recipe: Strive for Excellence**

“Nevertheless, it is useful to have at least one profession or skill set that you are really, really good at, because you learn perseverance, you learn to understand the depth of a field.”

### **Aart de Geus**

“I think that the company, the passion that we put behind what we do, is not superfluous, and that’s what I teach to my team. Go for it. Spend the five or ten minutes: go the extra mile. That is what makes a difference.”

### **Alex Vieux**

“The balance was a challenge; I always felt I needed to work very hard. I was working harder not because I was a woman or because I was discriminated against. It was because I have this very demanding work ethic.”

### **Aliza Peleg**

## **Key Skills**

- **Inventory your skills:** Have a clear understanding of what you are good at. Know your strengths. Focus on and leverage them.
- **Minimize your liabilities:** Hire people whose proficiencies complement yours. If you are good at engineering, team up with finance and marketing people.
- **Stay on top of your game:** Read the journals, research your field, network, and connect with world-class experts. Invest in your skills. Keep the blade sharp.

## **Third Recipe: Take a Chance—Carpe Diem!**

“America gave me the chance. Of that I am convinced. You will never uproot that from my head. That’s the American dream for someone who is coming from nowhere, whether it’s a Jewish kid, or Black, or White, Chinese, Israeli, Ukrainian, German, whoever it is, they all have a chance. There is a day when someone says, ‘Okay, show me what you can do.’ In Europe, nobody says, ‘Show me’.”

**Alex Vieux**

“Because people here [U.S.] are taught to think big, they are taught to think out of the box, they are taught to take risks and they are taught to tolerate failure.”

**Steve Westly**

“I saw very quickly that the American system was more about what you are capable of achieving, instead of where you were coming from.”

**Philippe Courtot**

“...[There is] a skill set that’s absolutely crucial, and that is to be able to make decisions on less than perfect information, and it happens all the time.”

**John Hennessy**

“The willingness to let people fail is very important because it gives flexibility to the economy. There are something like 600,000 new enterprises started each year in the United States and most of them fail, but some don’t and hope springs eternal.”

**George Shultz**

## Key Skills

- Learn to tolerate risks: Your decision to leave your country of your birth shows you are willing to embrace risk. Don't lose that edge.
- Believe in your vision: See what is possible, not what already exists.
- Be passionate: None of the people I talked with did things in half measures. All the chances they took, they were fully committed to.

## Fourth Recipe: Be Daring—Just go for it!

"I would say, don't worry about your title, about the corner office, about your status. Do a great job when you get here, work with people you like to work with, surround yourself with people who inspire you, make a contribution, and then great things are going to follow."

### Charly Kleissner

"Now that I am on the *dark side*, the other side [as a VC], whatever they say...you have to bet on an entrepreneur who has the enthusiasm and the guts and the get-go who wants to do it."

### Henry Wong

"The biggest thing you have to have is the passion to follow your dream and you have to have the determination to convert that into something tangible."

### Raj Singh

"...We just came here with six suitcases and a two year old kid and checked into a motel."

### Aliza Peleg

"My father certainly instilled in me the spirit: 'Don't be afraid of anybody, and don't take crap from anybody.' My father was a real maverick."

### Guy Kawasaki

## Key Skills

- Believe in yourself. Take the steps to make your wildest dreams come true.
- Ignore status symbols: Many of the most successful people in the Valley dress in jeans, take their families to a Mom and Pop restaurant, and drive a hybrid car. A concern with status symbols is more typical of traditional European and Asian societies.
- Cultivate your unique brand: Dare to be different. Stick to your roots. People will remember you for who you are—not the pale imitation of a native son you might be tempted to become. In Silicon Valley, it's okay for Indians to be Indian, Chinese to be Chinese, and even people from New York can keep their New York accents.
- Cultivate your uniqueness: If reading the stories in this book teaches one thing, it should be that there is no one path to success in Silicon Valley. Dare to be different, find your own way.

## Fifth Recipe: Keep at it—Push Yourself

“You can have a plan, but it's your ability, as they say, to tackle and block and to maneuver. I like to use the sailing analogy: you have to go with the wind direction, you keep making progress and you have to tack. And you have to be persistent; persistence alone wins.”

### Samba Murthy

“That's when I decided I wanted to go do a start-up. I knew I didn't have the experience then, nor did I have the money to start my own company back then, so I decided I first had to build up my experience. I decided to invest ten years of my time to get ready for a start-up.”

### Wu Fu Chen

“One main thing I learned is that success is really simply a matter of always doing better tomorrow what you do today.”

### Khaled Olayan



“I think it is the absolute complete, unfettered social mobility that is possible, so with certain very limited constraints, you are what you can achieve. Period!”

**Nat Goldhaber**

### **Key Skills**

- Recover from failure: This is often seen as a “badge of honor” in the Valley.
- Collaborate: The many associations for foreign-born professionals are a great resource.
- Reinvent yourself: Never stop learning. Technology changes rapidly. Whatever you learned in college is now obsolete.
- Be persistent: Stay the course. Even with the fast pace at which the Valley moves, it can take time to realize your dreams.

### **Sixth Recipe: Be Aware**

“You have to become really aware of the cultural differences and if you’re not aware of them, you’re not going to be able to work well in this society. You have to look at yourself and understand your own culture to be able to understand others’. Mix up the pictures, don’t stay with what you’re most comfortable with.”

**Arno Penzias**

“In a multicultural environment, ‘careful observation’ is a challenge that may sometimes be required to understand cultural metaphors beyond what we are traditionally used to.”

**Rajesh Gupta**

## Key Skills

- Be culturally aware: Not only of American customs and manners, but also of the many different cultures that you will meet working in Silicon Valley.
- Be aware of the needs of your family: High-tech “work/life balance” does not match what other cultures, or even other parts of America, accept as normal. However, you need to make time for your family and keep it in your plans.
- Be aware of others: Including the value that your staff, colleagues and mentors can offer. No one succeeds alone. Be willing to ask questions to make sure you understand what others can offer to help in the success of your project.

## Seventh Recipe: Be a Leader

“An effective leader in a multi-national cultural setting probably says something like: ‘Hey, I will do my best to bring people that I believe can be the future leaders of this company. I will do my very best to train them with whatever the company has accumulated anywhere, and give them the base level of knowledge, I’ll give them the best connections possible and then I’ll unleash them to the market.’ I think that lacking that realization is often what prevents people from being an okay manager or an okay leader to becoming a great leader. It is about total empowerment, it is cultural appreciation at such a thorough level, that you are willing to give it up.”

### Allen Wang

“One of the biggest challenges to leadership is that it is so easy to believe that everybody has the same DNA and to treat them all the same, as opposed to really understanding what motivates people and how they would like to be treated.”

### Shantanu Narayen

*“When you become a CEO, the key to being successful is actually to pick up what the right decision is, not to be right.”*

**Guy Gecht**

“For me, the first most important characteristic of a leader is to be able to listen, and define an action plan that empowers the maximum of employees.”

**Marylene Delbourg Delphis**

**Key Skills**

- Develop self-understanding: Leaders know their own strengths and weaknesses, when they can accomplish something alone and when they need to ask for help.
- Embody the vision of the company or the project: Whether you lead a team or a whole company, the people you work with need to be inspired by your example. An authoritarian style of leadership is uncommon in Silicon Valley. Collaborative, inspiring leaders have been the norm since Hewlett and Packard established the “HP Way” in the 1950s.
- Set the direction: As well as embodying an inspiring vision, leaders excel at execution. In the fast paced, high-tech world, decisions need to be made often and fast. Most of our interviewees live at a fast pace and don’t shy away from making quick calls.

**Eighth Recipe: Be Innovative**

“The biggest challenge, to be quite honest with you, was getting the Internet into operation.”

**Vinton Cerf**

“I was proposing to the company to do something audacious which had not been done before.”

**Suhas Patil**

“If you can present an idea, a concept, a technical piece that excels—you win. I don’t care who you are, you’re Martian, I don’t care.”

**Henry Wong**

“Because life is not just spice and curry, you know. There are other things, so keep an open mind.”

**Samba Murthy**

**Key Skills**

- Develop your creativity: Have fun at work. Look for the playful aspects of your projects. Look for new ways to do things.
- Think differently: Use your experience as an immigrant “outsider” to your advantage and look at issues from a different angle. Don’t be afraid to challenge the assumptions in your industry.
- Broaden your horizons: Many foreign-born professionals stick with social groups from their native countries. Step outside the box and take every opportunity to meet people from other cultures and backgrounds.
- Cultivate your curiosity: Be relentlessly curious about your own industry, other industries and other cultures. Network and attend trade shows. You never know where the next innovative idea will come from.

**Ninth Recipe: Be Passionate**

“I always had a very intense desire to do exactly what I wanted to do, both in coming to this country and starting the companies that I did. This is still true for me today. My passion in life, if you will, is to build better products.”

**Andy Bechtolsheim**

“I think if you pursue things that you are interested in and you work very hard at them and you’re passionate about them, you’ll probably be successful IF you have selected a good environment.”

**Miriam Rivera**

“I love what I do and if you get a lot of satisfaction and reward from what you do, time goes by quickly.”

**Qi Lu**

“I love what I do, I do what I love **and** I get paid for it.”

**Jean-Louis Gassée**

## **Key Skills**

- Put passion into every aspect of your work: The trick is not just to feel passionately about your job, but to act passionately too.
- Renew your passion: Think back to what your original goal was. Peel off the layers. Get back to your first instincts, recall what you wanted to accomplish.
- Look for new solutions—passionately: Keep the dynamics alive. The people around you will catch the same bug you have.
- Be inspired by others: Seek out people who are passionate about their work and spend time with them.

## **Tenth Recipe: Build a Network**

“Networking is a very important success factor.”

**Dina Bitton**

“It’s a small place. A lot of us know each other. We worked for one another at one time or the other, we have competed, we have cooperated.”

**Vinton Cerf**

“It’s [success] a self-fulfilling prophecy when you surround yourself with successful people.”

**Chi Foon Chan**

“To be a successful leader, your people have to be successful with you. This is the only way to lead to success—and you cannot do it alone.”

**Khaled Olayan**

### **Key Skills**

- Never stop networking: Just as this book was written as a result of networking, so should you cultivate your network from the day you arrive here. Make it a continuous process.
- Pay it forward: Don’t just join a network looking for what you can get out of it. Make real contributions and rewards will come.
- Network online: There are a growing number of online networks such as LinkedIn, Facebook and others. Be selective with whom you link, but grow your network.
- Develop superior networking skills: Don’t keep information close to the vest, work with others, include them; together you will guarantee each other’s successes and growth.
- Invest in collaborative decision-making and project development. Don’t be a lone wolf. Teamwork is key to success.

### **Eleventh Recipe: Give Back**

“At a young age, success is if you meet your goals. You set goals for yourself and, if you meet them, or go beyond them, you are successful. At a later age, that is not sufficient; you want to leave your mark on society by giving back and improving life around you.”

**Dan Maydan**

“If you combine the skills, the mindset, the culture with the financial contribution, you can accomplish great things with relatively few resources [talking about his philanthropic work, IVN, in Israel]. It was very satisfying to see that we could do this—a bunch of high-tech CEOs. We did not claim any expertise in education, we were able to put our minds together and solve this problem.”

### **Eric Benhamou**

“Money is a part of life and it is necessary to make money, but when you have made that money, what can you do with it? The only thing you can do is to give it away. And give it away, because that is the way you can influence and guide things that happen in society. So if you make money beyond your own needs, then you are in a position to contribute in a philanthropic way.”

### **Suhas Patil**

“I had this sense from early childhood that to be successful in life, one must do something that will outlast one’s lifetime and leave an impact for the future.”

### **Rajesh Gupta**

“This can be done [creating a global foundation] through education, providing rights for women—especially providing empowerment for women—using microcredit cooperatives and computers to educate women and their children. Then the whole world becomes a lot better.”

### **Kamran Elahian**

## **Key Skills**

- Give early and give often: In 1940, when HP had been in business less than a year, Bill Hewlett and Dave Packard gave their first check to charity. Don’t wait until you are a millionaire to give back.
- Give your time as well as money: There’s no better way to serve the community than by volunteering through a local service club or community organization.

- **Make a difference:** You have a unique opportunity to balance your work-life with meaningful personal rewards when you make a difference in someone's life.
- **Use your best skills:** Non-profits often need the managerial, technical and leadership skills you hone at work.

## **Twelfth Recipe: Have Fun, Enjoy the Ride**

“For me, I’m a little bit happy-go-lucky. I enjoy the journey.”

### **Chi Foon Chan**

[To the question: Are you having fun?] “Oh, yes, I am! Talk about really connecting the whole world together! All of my companies give people the technology to enable mobility—to connect and exchange ideas.”

### **Kamran Elahian**

“We then spent most of our energies protecting what we have, instead of thinking of how we could better enjoy and grow to better enjoy what we have and grow a better future for us all.”

### **Philippe Courtot**

## **Key Skills**

- **Enjoy the ride:** Don't focus only on the end result, enjoy where you are today. Take the time to stop and smell the roses.
- **Don't lose sight of the little things:** Take pleasure in the details that make your life enjoyable. Take breaks. Enjoy your surroundings. If you are new to Silicon Valley, take a day trip to the Santa Cruz Mountains and Half Moon Bay.
- **Work hard and play hard:** Have fun with your family and friends around you. It is important to include them in your journey.



## Policy Implications

Many immigrants arrive in the U.S. on either foreign student or H-1B visas. H-1B visas are temporary visas used to hire skilled foreign nationals for up to six years. While both have historically allowed significant numbers of immigrants to enter the U.S., these circumstances are changing.

Security issues since 9/11 have slowed down the rate at which foreign students are choosing to enter the U.S. It is claimed that, "Visa requirements imposed on foreign students since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks are confusing, redundant and causing more problems than they solve."<sup>17</sup>

Congress has not allocated a sufficient number of H-1B visas. In 9 of the past 11 years, employers have used up the entire quota of H-1B visas prior to the end of the fiscal year. This year, 2007, the H-1B visas were gone the same day they were made available, such was the rush.

The danger, as identified by the NVCA report, is that, "The brightest minds worldwide are willing to neither wait nor put up with the uncertainty. They are going to other places, including Australia, Canada and Europe."<sup>18</sup>

It is obvious that if Silicon Valley (and the greater U.S.) is to maintain its competitive edge, immigration restrictions currently in place must be lifted. The current policy is "indiscriminate and affects our ability to attract the talent that the valley needs."<sup>19</sup>

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17. Boulard, G., "Black Issues in Higher Education," 'Foreign student visa process clumsy and cumbersome, educators say,' 2004. Ref:

[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0DXK/is\\_19\\_21/ai\\_n8964634](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0DXK/is_19_21/ai_n8964634)

18. Anderson, S. and M. Platzer, American Made: The Impact of Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Professionals on U.S. Competitiveness, National Venture Capital Association (NVCA), 2006, 11.

19. Koo, G., "On Immigration: Silicon Valley needs immigrant minds," New America Media, February 16, 2006. Ref:

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2006/02/16/EDG U9GJE5F1.DTL>

Hopefully, anyone reading this book outside the U.S., who wishes to immigrate, or come to work here, will be able to find a solution and secure a visa. This is the first hurdle to overcome.

## Closing Thoughts

“...nobody is great without work...There’s no evidence of high level performance without experience or practice. Reinforcing that no-free-lunch finding is vast evidence that even the most accomplished people need around ten years of hard work before becoming world-class, a pattern so well established researchers call it the ten-year rule.”

**“What it takes to be great,” Geoffrey Colvin,  
*Fortune Magazine*, October 30, 2006<sup>20</sup>**

“If I could say just one thing about Silicon Valley, this is it: every generation that came before us had to make a choice in life between pursuing a steady career and pursuing wild adventures. In Silicon Valley, that trade-off has been recircuited. By injecting mind-boggling amounts of risk into the once stodgy domain of gray-suited business, young people no longer have to choose. It’s a two-for-one deal: the career path has become an adventure into the unknown. More happens here and so quickly, satisfying anybody’s craving for newness. In six months you might get a job, be laid off, start a company, sell it, become a consultant, who knows?”

***The Nudist on The Late Shift*, Po Bronson<sup>21</sup>**

Silicon Valley is a place to realize your dreams. It’s a place where the journey is as rewarding as the destination. The people I interviewed all mirrored this attitude. They were interested in the way they do things, in the innovation they were part of, and not necessarily in the outcome. This is easy for them, you might say, since they have truly “Made It!”

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20. Colvin, G., “What it takes to be great,” *Fortune Magazine*, October 30, 2006. Ref: [http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune\\_archive/2006/10/30/8391794/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2006/10/30/8391794/index.htm)

21. Bronson, P., *The Nudist on the Late Shift: And Other True Tales of Silicon Valley*, Random House, New York, NY, 1999, xxvii.

But it's precisely this approach that helped them "make it." If you can't cultivate this mindset, you might be better staying in Bordeaux, Bangalore or Beijing.

Silicon Valley is a small place where people know each other, and depend on each other to get things done. This is also a place where friendship and helping people is important. It's important to safeguard your reputation. The people in your network will quickly hear if you weren't up front.

The Valley relies on networks—business, friendship, collaboration, the old guys helping out the new, younger ones. Don't abuse the trust of the people you meet socially or at work.

But above all, Silicon Valley is a unique place where the opportunity to be great and do great things is alive and well. Now that you've read this book, won't you join in?

# A List of Possible Questions to Ask

How would you describe what you are doing professionally today?

How did your childhood experiences and/or your family influence your choice of career?

What role did your education play in what you are currently doing?

What were some of the biggest obstacles/challenges you had to overcome to be successful?

What does it mean to you to be successful?

What factors contributed to your success?

Could you have become as successful outside of the Silicon Valley (or did this environment give you something you can't find elsewhere)?

Does your background as a Frenchman/Chinese/Indian etc. give you unique advantages as a leader in your company?

Or, how does your foreign background affect where you are today?

Has the window of opportunity closed in the Silicon Valley and opened elsewhere?

What are the greatest challenges for multicultural leadership today?

What three things are most important to keep in mind to be a great leader?

What are the three things to never do as a leader?

What advice would you give (Indians, Chinese, French, etc.) who are either living here or coming here to work?

Do you have anyone else you can suggest I talk to?

## **B** Universities Interviewees Attended

- Ben Gurion University, Israel
- Bowling Green State University, U.S.
- Carnegie Mellon, U.S
- Case Western, U.S.
- Columbia University, U.S.
- Cornell University, U.S.
- École Central, France
- École Nationale Supérieure des Télécommunications, France
- Fudan University, China
- Georgetown, U.S.
- Golden Gate University, U.S.
- IIT, Delhi, India
- IIT, Kanpur, India
- McMaster University, Canada
- MIT, U.S.

- Osmania University, India
- Paris (Orsay) University, France
- Polytechnical Institute, Singapore
- Princeton University, U.S.
- Rutgers University, U.S.
- SMU, U.S.
- Stanford University, U.S.
- State University of New York at Buffalo, U.S.
- State University of New York at Stony Brook, U.S.
- Technion Institute, Israel
- Technische Universitaet, Germany
- Tel Aviv University, Israel
- Tsinghua University, China
- UC Berkeley, U.S.
- UC Davis, U.S.
- UCLA, U.S.
- University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom
- Vienna University of Technology, Austria
- Weizmann Institute, Israel

## About the Author



Angelika Blendstrup, Ph.D., is the founder and principal of Blendstrup & Associates.<sup>8</sup> She specializes in individualized, intercultural business communications training, accent reduction, and presentation skill coaching. She works with international as well as U.S. executives to assist them in improving their written and oral communications skills, and prepares them how to write and give effective presentations.

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8. <http://www.professional-business-communications.com>



Angelika holds a Ph.D. in Bilingual, Bicultural Education from Stanford University. She speaks five languages and has taught U.S. business communications skills to international executives both privately as well as in companies in the Silicon Valley such as DreamWorks, Sun Microsystems, Microsoft, Oracle and Cisco.

Angelika teaches classes at Stanford University on topics such as cross cultural communication, managing virtual teams and the art of interviewing successfully.

Angelika is the Co-President of *InterFrench Silicon Valley (SiliconFrench)* whose goal is to merge the best features of the French and American cultures.

She is also a Co-Executive Editor of the *Happy About International Business Communications* series. Angelika can be reached at [angelika.blendstrup@gmail.com](mailto:angelika.blendstrup@gmail.com).

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