

## The Korea Business Interview Series

# “Working at the Top in SK Group: An Insiders’ Story”

with **Dr. Linda Myers**, who was "inpatriated" to Seoul to raise global mindsets, lead global talent management, develop global policies and practices, and help accelerate globalization of the SK Group. She previously earned her masters and doctoral degrees from Harvard University.

### Transcript of the Interview by KBC’s Tom Tucker on November 1

**Tom:** Hello, and thanks for joining us today at KoreaBusinessCentral.com. My name is Tom Tucker. I’m the host today, and I’m pleased that you could join us for this latest discussion in our Korea Business Interview Series.

Today I’m pleased to welcome Dr. Linda Myers, who is the first foreign female to have ever worked in South Korea at the executive level as the Vice President of Talent Management for SK Group.

Linda earned her doctorate from Harvard University, and she’s built a strong career and reputation in global human resources over the past 20 years, and was recruited by SK Telecom in the summer of 2007 to help globalize its business. By early 2008, she had been promoted to the role of Vice President of Talent Management for SK Holding Company, the keystone company of the SK Group.

Linda, welcome and thanks for joining us today. It’s great to have you.

**Dr. Myers:** I’m delighted to have been invited to join you, Tom, on the Korea Business Interview Series. Happy to be here.

**Tom:** Well, great. Linda, let’s begin by having you tell us a little bit more about yourself, your background and your experiences before joining SK.

**Dr. Myers:** Certainly. Well, hindsight, as they say, is 20/20, meaning that we’re able to understand much more when we look backward in time. So with this as the context, it’s quite clear today that my early personal background was the catalyst for my professional choices. There were four factors to this preparation for my global career. Let me explain.

First, I was the oldest child of two deaf adults and I lived within the culture of deafness in which my parents used primarily verbal and added sign language communication with one another and with my brother and me.

Second, my mother and her family all came from Vienna during World War II, which increased my understanding of cultural and linguistic differences that were created by geography.

Third, as a result of these early experiences and the sensitivity to others that this cultivated in me, I was chosen as an 11-year-old to be a representative from the United States to an international youth summer village, which was held over a summer at a boarding school in southern Norway. I'm not going to tell you what year it was. Kids from age 11, who represented 10 different countries participated. We had lots of activities to engage us in cross-cultural understanding.

So by the time I was 11, I had traveled to Europe and developed relationships with other kids from other countries and other cultures. All these experiences, these early experiences, prepared me very early in life for a career working in global human resources.

Years later, I spent my junior year of college in England, and when I chose my profession in human resources, my travel bug activated again and I favored the global. What this means is that I worked for companies after I graduated from college that were international. I was able to travel a little bit for work, and then later, I prepared for and I earned my professional global HR certification.

By the time I was 40, I had traveled to every continent. So far, I've worked for different lengths of time in Asia, South America and Europe, and I'd like to continue my global work and find another continent like Australia or the subcontinent of India in which to work.

**Tom:** Sounds terrific, sounds very interesting. I'm really looking forward to digging in here a little bit more with you. Let's talk about the sequence of events that led up to your work at SK, and what was your position and responsibilities there with the company?

**Dr. Myers:** Sure. Well, one day in mid-July 2007, I was going through my email box, and I noticed that I had received an email from someone whose name I didn't recognize, and it turned out to be a Korean executive recruiter saying that he represented a South Korean company that was looking for individuals with competency in global human resources. Basically, he was asking me whether I was interested in interviewing for a position with a Korean company.

I was skeptical as well as curious at first, but I became more interested as I did my homework, even though I knew enough by then to know that if I accepted the job, I would be taking a pretty significant career risk. My suspicion was confirmed when my colleague at the Society for Human Resources Management in Washington, D.C., which is the largest human resources association in the world, could not refer me to anyone who had been hired from the United States directly into a Korean company. For that matter, they couldn't refer me to anyone who had ever worked overseas in South Korea.

I knew that professionals had to be sent to Korea as expats from U.S. or European countries, but at that point, I just couldn't find them. But that didn't stop me. Until that point in my career, I had never assumed a job that anyone else had filled before me, and it looked as though this could follow the same pattern. I'd always been a trailblazer. I enjoyed the work, and this opportunity meant that I could possibly do my trailblazing overseas.

In these emails, my job was explained very simply without any job description and without any list of objectives, and it was to help SK Telecom globalize. I had no idea what that meant in concrete terms, but I was pretty self-confident that I could go about analyzing the telephone company once I arrived in Korea. Even after I arrived, there was no job description.

There was hardly, as I would learn quickly, even no orientation and no preparation for absorbing me into the organization. This was really puzzling to me at first, and soon I realized that there just wasn't going to be any support. I was going to have to figure this out all on my own.

It took me four months to understand that I was working for one company in a 12-company group. I had no idea that SK was a group until I began to see the SK logo on many other buildings in Seoul and on the metal overhead roofs of gas stations.

I was so confused. I just thought that logos were interchangeable in Korea, and that idea wasn't so strange because there was so many other things that were so strange to me when I first came. But when I finally broke down and asked, I was laughed at, presumably, for my ignorance.

After that, I created a graphic to explain the structure of SK Group that I gave to everyone inside and outside the company, which made its way into every presentation and every orientation I ever created. Now, no one will ever be confused about SK Group.

**Tom:** It does sound a bit confusing, and a bit overwhelming and a bit intimidating to come into such a situation without support, without the roadmap and to have to figure out everything on your own. It sounds like it was definitely an interesting and challenging situation.

Tell us a little bit about SK for those in our audience who might not be familiar with the group.

**Dr. Myers:** Well, SK Group is a holding company. It's a conglomerate of different businesses that is owned by the Chey family. It began in 1953 just after the Korean War. The fledgling Korean government gave businesses its support as well as favors to certain families to begin businesses that would help to restore the country after the devastation of war.

Today, SK Group has about 35,000 employees working across 12, 13, 14 different companies in energy and gas, telecom and shipping, import and export, computers, engineering and construction, securities, hotels, and chemicals. It's really easiest to understand all of the South Korean conglomerates which includes famous companies like Samsung, LG and Hyundai, as well as Doosan, which are all called chaebols, by thinking about our solar system with the sun in the middle and the planets revolving around it.

A holding company is essentially like the sun and owns the company logo. At SK Group, SK executives called the logo the wings of happiness, even though the rest of the world sees a yellow and orange butterfly with the letters S and K embedded in the wings. You can see it on the website [www.skcareers.com](http://www.skcareers.com), as well as any other page that belongs to the SK Group.

The other operating companies that belong to the SK Group belong so when they pay a licensing fee to the holding company as well as when they promise to follow an internally-developed management system as well as a performance evaluation process. These are the only things that are uniform across the group.

The holding company owns the business' assets and the operating companies have possession of the assets, but don't own the assets. Movement of people across the 12 companies is most often permitted to the very highest executive and the most senior employees. There's no internal posting system for jobs, there's no bidding system for jobs; you go where you're told.

**Tom:** Let's talk a little bit about your initial experiences. Tell us about your early experiences in the job and some of the challenges that you faced, and also let's talk about the cross-cultural learning curve and maybe some of the joys of the job.

**Dr. Myers:** Well, there were certainly challenges, there was a learning curve that was very steep, and there were lots of joys. My early experiences ranged from excited and happy and joyful to confused to discouraged and sometimes even to anger. There were a couple of reasons for this, and some of them are really obvious.

First, are the cultural differences between Eastern and Western ways of conducting businesses. The second was really an absence of overture from the SK human resources department to help bridge that gap for me. The third was SK's lack of experience with foreigners and its feeble attempt to prepare for new foreigners, including asking what might be helpful to help them feel more comfortable, what they wanted to learn or discuss what should be learned in order to be successful in their world. The last was their lack of familiarity with global human resources concepts, which was exactly why they had hired me.

I was oriented on the company's management philosophy, which had both language and concepts in it that were unfamiliar, and when I asked questions, I got some productive answers, but sometimes no matter how carefully I asked the questions, I was perceived as critical and not accepting and honoring the status quo. Sometimes asking too many questions is a no-no in Korean culture.

What SK Group really could've done, and rather easily, was to send its own human resources people into the greater Seoul business community to identify the resources right outside its own doors.

Once I was able to do this for myself, I found my own career culture class, and from there, I was able to find a person who was able to serve as my career coach. I found many groups for expats

and I was accepted very quickly. So I soon found my place both within SK as well as outside in the greater Seoul community.

**Tom:** It certainly sounds like it. You faced both cultural and gender challenges in your position at the top of SK. Can you elaborate on those points?

**Dr. Myers:** I can. The three major factors that govern the cultural and gender challenges that I faced in my position include the fact that to a greater extent than most Asian cultures, the Koreans adhere to the traditional collectivist Confucian cultural traits of harmony, hierarchy, in-group, out-group, school ties, favoritism, status and rank. Anyone who was really interested in these concepts can do a whole lot more research and understanding, but we don't have time to do that right now.

But needless to say, my presence shook up the harmony of an all-Korean executive group of males, which included just one Korean woman who was an attorney with an MBA. I was the only executive who could not speak Korean, so I could not function without an interpreter, which incidentally, I had to ask for and whose presence also affected the group.

There was one person, one man, who reached out to me and who asked me to lunch, and he was a man who had spent many careers in the United States and who had a very clear understanding of how challenging my situation was. He was very kind and very encouraging, and was able to give you the perspective of how I was helping to change SK.

Secondly, my base of support was very, very powerful with the exception of my tenure. My position as Vice President of Global Talent Management was created by Chairman Chey himself, and I reported to the Senior Vice President of Corporate Culture who was well respected, who liked me, who appreciated the work that I was doing. This senior vice president reported to the CEO of the holding company who reported directly to Chairman Chey himself.

My five peers at the vice presidential level were responsible for human resources, the SK management system, training and development, performance appraisal, and management development. They were pleasant to me when we were together for our Monday morning meetings and lunch. But beyond that, there was very little interaction among us.

However, once the senior vice president's role changed and he left the holding company after two years to work in one of the operating companies, I was never supported in the same way by his replacement or by my closest peer who was the Vice President of Human Resources whose work and office was very close to mine, and in theory, whose work should've more closely aligned with mine.

Before I came to the holding company, he had told the Senior Vice President, my favorite boss, that I should not be brought in at a vice presidential role, I knew that the end was close. Lastly, when something doesn't go according to plan, the Koreans are quick to look for someone to find fault with.

The most significant and far-reaching contribution to SK Group that I made during my entire tenure was the design of an annual process that would measure how well changes and improvements in global talent management were being sustained. So this was never executed across the group, and I guess that was just my responsibility.

**Tom:** What are some of your early achievements of which you're most proud of, and what are some of your regrets?

**Dr. Myers:** I really have no regrets about my time at SK. I did an excellent job which was communicated to me by Koreans outside of human resources at SK Group, as well as by Koreans outside of SK Group in its entirety, as well as by Westerners who've been doing business in Seoul for many years. I tend to think that these perspectives were not able to be appreciated by some of the Koreans inside of human resources.

If I had one regret, it would be that I really could not understand clearly how the Koreans at SK Group in the human resources department perceived their place in the world and how they really viewed foreigners and what they legitimately expected me to contribute to their understanding of global human resources and talent management. For example, no SK Group holding company's human resources professional had ever been educated outside of Korea or spent any significant time outside of Korea.

Early in my career, when I was invited to join the group of Korean executive human resources professionals in Seoul who worked for global companies, Korean law firms, and Korean associations, I was really honored to be invited.

Soon, I really believed the SK Group, Vice President of Human Resources, my peer, who ought to be the representative of SK in this professional human resources group, not me. So in my generosity when I asked that group to consider making the exchange and putting him in my place, I was very surprised that the SK Vice President of Human Resources viewed this group as unworthy of his time because he perceived SK as being superior to the global companies.

Nevertheless, inside SK, I developed the respect of other executives outside of the corporate culture department. We were all attendees at many of the festive events that marked progress at SK in the Seoul business community, so I was able to see executives regularly and I was able to speak with most of them in English and explain to them what I was learning about Korean culture and the many places within the country that I was visiting on weekends.

I also earned the respect of a lot of middle and lower-level employees who could see and hear through the grapevine that my work was supporting SK Group to join the global community. Finally, there were five Korean executive women across SK Group and my initiative brought the six of us together for dinner for the very first time ever.

Outside of SK, I had a great deal more freedom and support, enjoyment and reinforcement in the various expat business groups, at women's groups and at local community events in the area in which I lived.

Many thought that I was SK's best public relations effort, and I was also interviewed in the newspaper. One of the things that I most enjoyed was becoming a working member of President Lee Myung-bak's commission on nation branding, which was a group of foreign executives who helped the President's group of Koreans to help brand the nation of Korea to become better known and understood throughout the world.

So all my understanding helped me to help orientation programs for other foreigners, including Chinese people, who needed to understand the basics of how things worked in a Korean chaebol. The Koreans didn't necessarily see the need for this because they believed that Chinese and Korean cultures were so closely aligned, but the Chinese saw things a bit differently. It soon became apparent that additional material needed to be developed to address the nuances of Korean Americans, and their experiences within a Korean company and the challenges that they would face coming into a Korean chaebol.

Back inside of SK, I identified the need for a career website for SK Group, and I helped to design it. I think that I've already mentioned that my biggest accomplishment was designing a manual process to measure how well change and talent management was being sustained.

**Tom:** Let's talk about some of your later experiences. I understand that the first couple of years of general job satisfaction gave way to a lot of change later on. What brought that about?

**Dr. Myers:** What's very interesting about Korean chaebols is that every year between November and December, key Korean executive leadership is evaluated and reassigned. This creates a lot of uncertainty and upheaval, and for nearly the first quarter of the following year, if not the first half of every year, there is repositioning and relearning and re-jockeying for positional power.

I mentioned earlier that my boss, the Senior Vice President of Corporate Culture, whom I respected and cared about and who respected and cared about my welfare was reassigned to an operating company. That changed the dynamics of my support system within the corporate culture division, as well as my role. After that, very little was the same ever again.

**Tom:** So, with that in mind, tell us a little more about how the change in the upper Korean leadership at SK impacted you.

**Dr. Myers:** I think I pretty much explained the change in the upper Korean leadership impacted me adversely as it did in exactly the same ways to my two foreign colleagues who served at the same level as I did in two different operating companies.

As their primary sponsors were reassigned, they were also adversely impacted. Without a sponsor supporting our efforts, there really was not much further interest in the contribution that we were making and that we were able to continue to make had we had that support.

**Tom:** What are some of the things that you were able to achieve during this period in spite of the difficulties that you were facing?

**Dr. Myers:** One other significant achievement that I was able to accomplish was putting SK Group on the global map. What I mean by that is by visiting the highest ranking global MBA programs in France, in Spain, in the United Kingdom and the United States and in China, and by presenting SK Group in both story and picture form, I was able to open new channels for sourcing talent, which was exactly what my job entailed.

These visits were complimented by the creation of the SK Group career portal on the Internet, which I also mentioned, which conveys the SK brand and is now accessible to young people, old people, people all over the world through the Internet. SK Group now has visibility that it never had before.

**Tom:** Sounds like a neat accomplishment on your part for sure. Let's talk about some of the lessons. Korean firms talk a lot about globalization and the need to bring in foreign talent to executive positions. What are your reactions when you hear this?

**Dr. Myers:** Well, I have two reactions to this. One is skepticism and the other is cautious optimism. The skepticism arises because I've been listening to so many stories from foreigners who all repeat the same things about the challenges about working side by side with Koreans and their continued either, we don't know, maybe it's inability, maybe it's unwillingness, to utilize the talent foreigners bring to make real change.

Some of these foreigners have continued to live in Korea for 15, 20 and 30 years, but they work on the periphery of Korean firms. Others worked in Korea many years ago and then they left, but still others have just short-term experiences in Korea. Regardless of the amount of time they spent in Korea, their stories really don't differ very much.

Today, the most significant integration of foreigners is visible at LG Electronics where highly talented foreign executives have been brought in to work at the C-level, which is the head of a functional group. So they're a chief financial officer, a chief marketing officer, chief distribution officer, chief human resources officer and so forth.

People within LG, as well as outside of LG, who are able to witness what's occurring at LG and who are willing to be honest will report that there are small and important changes being made at LG. But they've been wanted at pretty high costs and have been very slow and painful to achieve.

So here, my conclusion would be that Korean firms have been attempting to globalize for so long without much real change over the years, and maybe they're paying lip service to the concept, inviting professionals in, using their talents as they wish and then disinviting them when they do what they were brought to Korea to do, which is to help execute real change.

When I think about it, this might be because Koreans are still pretty isolated socially and they so very much revere, and understandably, their Confucius traditions and customs that it isn't possible for them to truly integrate their companies and become world-class because that would require bringing in a critical mass of diverse talent, which could run the risk of diluting much of who they are and how they behave and what's most important to them. So perhaps it is they go through the motions of globalizing.

On the other hand and on the more positive hand, my cautious optimism comes from the fact that this year, 2010, is the year that South Korea is hosting the G20, and that means inviting the world to come to its shores. It's working exceedingly hard and it's using a great deal of foreign talent to help it make sure that the way that it brings foreigners to Korea for these meetings in November are first class and are at the global standard.

So this cautious optimism leads me to hope that this may just be the critical moment when Korea begins to open itself up to the possibility of greater change that could actually be real and sustainable. But only time will tell.

**Tom:** Looking back, what needs to be different in order for firms like SK to truly embrace globalization and change?

**Dr. Myers:** Well, I think there are a couple of things. First, what needs to be different is a clarification of the law under which Korean companies are permitted to bring highly skilled foreigners into critical and highly visible roles as contracted employees with the easy ability to let them go after two years. This law already applies to Koreans and it's just as counterproductive for contracted Koreans as it is for contracted foreign employees for at least a half a dozen reasons.

First, when contracted employees with two years of company knowledge are separated, that company has to retrain new employees all over again. Organizational learning is lost, and that's very valuable. They waste two years of financial investment in talented employees. It loses competitive advantage for that company. It compromises employees' career development. It jeopardizes their employability. It also harms the branding reputation of that company.

Korean companies have hired foreigners this way for about a decade without telling them that their tenure could very easily be limited. I don't know many foreigners who had known we work for a company in which there's a career dead end because western business is based on competitiveness and meritocracy. Any foreigner would expect to work extremely hard and be rewarded for their efforts, so that when Korean companies fail to mention this during the hiring process, it really puts the foreigner at a disadvantage.

Second, Korean companies need to know what they expect from foreign employees before they bring them to Korea. It takes a lot of money and a lot of effort on both parts to bring foreigners to Korea. I think that Korean companies need to think through more carefully what these employees are expected to do and how to measure what they do.

What I learned very late in my tenure is that in Korean companies, employees are expected to propose themselves what they will do for the company and then execute it. If they fail, then they're separated. No foreigner knows this when they arrive in a Korean company.

Lastly, if Korean companies are still committed to globalization, and believe this can be accomplished by hiring foreigners, then the foreigners need clear and measurable objectives for change that are supported and made accountable at the highest ranks of the organization.

This includes providing every foreigner with a mentor, rewarding those mentors, Korean mentors, for their part in the partnership for establishing change, and again, for sustaining it using measurable criteria.

In addition, it would really help if there were a clearly established career path for both foreigners and Koreans, which there is not now, that allows for the development of global talent and skills that drive the business forward.

**Tom:** It sounds like there is tremendous room for improvement in all of these areas that you're talking about.

**Dr. Myers:** There is.

**Tom:** [laughs] Let's look at the large Korean companies as a whole. Do you agree that they've been remarkably successful? If so, what are they doing right?

**Dr. Myers:** I would certainly agree that Korean companies have been remarkably successful in building up their country since the end of the Korean War with the support of its government, which has enabled a closed economy and labor market.

After the Korean War, Korea was among if not the poorest country in the world, and through the extraordinarily focused and hard work of the Korean people led by some very visionary presidents, the country picked itself up by its bootstraps and is now the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup>, depending on the rankings, largest economy in the world. That is certainly remarkable.

Korea, itself, has given itself the nickname the "Miracle on the Han, the Han being the Han River that bisects the city. I would wholeheartedly agree with that and applaud what the Koreans have done.

On the other hand, if you look at the United States, it's a country in which anyone from anywhere in the world can begin a business and become successful. Immigrants have been doing that for 200 years. But in Korea, I have not yet seen, maybe I have not looked enough or maybe

not looked in the right places, but I've seen no examples of significant independent foreigner success in Korea because success is really enabled by the Koreans only within the boundaries of Korean regulation. That would be the caveat that I would offer to the great success that the Koreans have actually achieved.

**Tom:** What do you suggest that the Korean companies do to properly compete on the world stage?

**Dr. Myers:** I think that one thing that the Koreans can do is to practice competing on the same playing field with the rest of the world and remove the barriers that they've put up to outsiders. Two small examples are easily explained. For example, you cannot bring an iPhone into Korea and use it freely as you could if you went from the United States to France or the United States to Argentina.

When you go to Korea with your iPhone, you've got to first pay the equivalent of 100 US dollars to have the equipment inspected and adjusted to work within the Korean system. Another example is that every Korean has a six-digit ID number that allows them to buy items on the internet; for example, like movie tickets. Well, foreigners can't do that because their IDs are coded differently and they identify them as outsiders who don't have the same privileges or opportunities as Koreans.

At the big business level, the stakes are much higher and the regulations are a lot more stringent. So I think that a better balance between protectionism and entrepreneurialism can really further the goals that will enable Korea to establish a foothold on the world stage.

**Tom:** Let's talk about the future. Looking at where SK is going, where do you see them going over the next, say, five to ten years, and what strengths and weaknesses do they have which support your opinions?

**Dr. Myers:** I think that SK Group has a lot of strengths that have enabled it to sustain itself as a large conglomerate as one of the top three conglomerates over these many years, these 60-plus years.

However, the businesses that comprise the SK Group are quite different than the businesses of Samsung, LG and Hyundai because they're not consumer products businesses per se. This makes it a lot harder for SK Group to compete on a global level in its industries, which are highly regulated across the globe and don't really appeal to the masses of consumers.

An example would be that several years ago, SK Telecom, one of those 12 or 13 companies in the group, did foray into the U.S. market with a really novel double slider cell phone. They hired the founder of EarthLink to run the business.

Initially, under the American's leadership, the business began to make a mark. It was still early in the game, however, and once the Korean operating officer took over the reins, the business

then began to focus more on using the telephone system as a means for Koreans to call home. The Americans who could potentially have benefitted from that double slider and the telephony system were really not focused on.

So I think customer focus and understanding the distribution system of such equipment in the United States would have been one way that could have helped this particular venture to succeed. At the end of the day, the business was sold off to a U.S. company and that company enabled the business to earn money. I think there are some lessons that the Koreans can learn there.

That aside, SK Group can continue to market its businesses in Asia as well as in Eastern Europe by better understanding its customers and meeting their needs in the industries in which it plays best. Right now, SK Group is heavily invested in China, and the coming year will be the one in which SK can really show what it can do there.

**Tom:** As a whole, what are the top three issues you believe Korean corporations must deal with to be prepared for the era of globalization?

**Dr. Myers:** I think I've mentioned some of these issues throughout our talk today, but I would underscore marketing as one of the most important issues that the Korean chaebols must address. As an example, I was at a dinner party last night, it was a sizable dinner party, and 50% of the attendees did not know that Samsung was a Korean company. They thought for sure it was Japanese. You can see that SK Group would have an even harder time marketing itself.

Two of the other issues are people issues. Just a little background, during my time with SK Group, I made several connections and opportunities available to individuals and to the company within Seoul as well as outside of Korea that members of the human resources group chose not to take advantage of. This, unfortunately, limited their exposure and continued their isolation from the global human resources community, which I think is important for them to try and overcome in order to become more of a global participating group within a very significant company.

This also leads to a need, in my opinion, for Korean chaebols to encourage and reward their employees to share knowledge across the company so that more individuals can be exposed to what's occurring outside their own operating company, maybe even their own departments.

An example of this is I learned in my role at the holding company, after I was promoted from telecom to the holding company, that one of the other operating companies at SK was attempting to recruit a fairly senior foreigner, but didn't come to tell me about it and wouldn't introduce that foreign candidate to me to help me support that person's understanding of SK and the job that he was being recruited for.

That disconnect was a disservice that was made to the candidate because he then didn't understand why an American in a significantly high talent management role was not being made available to him to help him be recruited into that operating company, and he was really too

afraid to take the job regardless of how much money was offered to him. So I think that sharing knowledge and making activities more open is another one of the issues that will help the Korean chaebol to be prepared for the era of globalization.

I think the last one is to find ways to establish programs to reward employees for taking the initiative. I think that it's only initiative is directed by senior executives down the chain of command, then only they are able to introduce new and novel ideas to circulate within the chaebol. That stymies the much more globally aware youth of Korea who are very well hooked in and who could be a very important catalyst to helping Korean chaebols enter and sustain themselves in the era of globalization.

**Tom:** What are your plans now that you're back in the United States? Are you maybe going to take a break, take a vacation, or will you jump right in to your next challenge?

**Dr. Myers:** Well, I don't think I'm going to do any of those things, but I will tell you what I am doing. I was really fortunate to be able to be back in the United States to care for my mother as she was living her last days on Earth, so part of my time is now spent healing from her passing and from my loss.

But as I do so, what is really helpful is that Harvard Business Review is writing an article about my time in Korea that is scheduled for publication in January 2011. My role in that is to provide some of the background information and to make introductions for interviews between people in Seoul, people who knew the work that I did and the editor who will need to be writing this article based on that information, and hopefully, she'll get a hold of some of what we've been talking about tonight and that will inform her writing as well.

Because the content of that particular article in the Harvard Business Review will compete with a lot of other articles, it will be too brief for me to address in more depth some of the other issues that we've covered today. For this reason, I'm in the midst of writing a Harvard Business School case study with some of the support of the expat business communities still in Seoul, and that case study will be geared toward MBAs who have a great interest in the Asia-Pacific region and who may also one day may be offered the opportunity to work there.

SK Group has had a summer internship program and through that internship program, it has invited first year MBAs to come. But I think that those first year students have their own channels to communicate their experiences. I think that the case study that I'll be preparing is another critical way to provide young people with a very clear overview of what they can expect in a South Korean business environment so that they can make their own educated decisions about accepting work offers and knowing the potential impact of accepting those offers on their careers for both the short and the long-term.

Finally, there are a couple of executive recruiters out there who have been contacted me with interesting new global executive opportunities. But until the right fit presents itself, I'm going to continue to consult as the global partner of Worldwide, which is a human capital consulting

business that was founded in 2002, and which continues to support global companies around the world. So, there are options.

**Tom:** Well that's certainly good to hear. Linda, thanks so much for those very insightful thoughts and comments and information. Are there any other further thoughts that you would like to leave with the members of KBC before we end our session today?

**Dr. Myers:** I actually would like to make one last point, Tom. It is really important for me to convey my very, very deepest thanks and appreciation to all the Koreans who befriended me and who taught me all the many, many important lessons that I learned during my years in Seoul. Those people were, I would say, primarily English speaking Korean professionals whose lives have included time outside South Korea or Koreans who work for non-Korean global companies.

They were the ones who were really best able to help me bridge the gap between Eastern and Western culture and language. They shared insights and observations. They made suggestions to me. They even provided me with cautionary tales. All of these elevated my understanding and appreciation for everything that I was privileged to witness as well as to enjoy. I will never forget them, and I will never forget the time and the pleasures that I enjoyed in Seoul, South Korea with SK Group.

**Tom:** Well, Linda, it certainly was a pleasure visiting with you today and hearing about your experiences and learning from those experiences. It was a real treat and a real pleasure, and I thank you for that.

**Dr. Myers:** I just wanted to thank you Tom and I wanted to thank Korea Business Central for enabling me to share this time with you on the Korea business interview series. It's a wonderful way to communicate learning to those people who listen, and I wish you and KBC all the continued success in the world.

**Tom:** Well, terrific. We appreciate that, and I know our members do as well. Our guest today has been Dr. Linda Myers who is the first foreign female to have ever worked in South Korea at the executive level as the Vice President of Talent Management for SK Group.

This has been the latest in our ongoing Korea business interview series. I'm your host, Tom Tucker, inviting you to improve your business results in Korea by joining [KoreaBusinessCentral.com](http://KoreaBusinessCentral.com) today. Thanks for listening and have a great day.