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Ben Burry

David Rasho graduated from Illinois Wesleyan in 2001 with a double major in Economics and Business Administration. Since graduation he has found employment at Analytic Innovations, a consulting firm seeking to find marketing solutions for companies with large customer portfolios and complex databases. Among AI's clientele are banks, retailers, and entertainment service companies who employ AI to improve marketing return on investment, retain customer relationships, and improve overall profitability.

Recently, David was able to take a few moments away from his position as Senior Database Marketing Consultant to answer a few questions for *The Park Place Economist*:

Why did you choose to work at Analytic Innovations?

I wanted to work at a company where I could grow as fast as my skills would let me, and where I would gain exposure to lots of business issues and bright/driven people. I felt that AI provided me a rich learning environment that was fun and laid-back but intense and demanding at the same time.

What does Analytic Innovations do for its clients?

Basically we help our clients, typically large companies with lots of customers, understand and enhance their customer portfolio through data mining and predictive modeling.

How does your job fit in with the business model at Analytic Innovations?

I began as a data analyst, where I learned to program in SAS and Visual Basic and ran reports/analyses. After a little less than a year I moved into a client

services role and currently I manage two of our five biggest accounts. Basically I work to understand what our clients need, determine how to align our efforts internally to get the work done, and handle the communication of findings back to the client. I also have personnel management responsibility for several senior technical resources, which has been a uniquely challenging and rewarding experience. In addition, I spend a large amount of time working on business development initiatives both inside and outside of the accounts I manage.

What are the best and not so good aspects of your job?

I like most everything about my job. The people are diverse and kind, the work is interesting, the environment is fun, and I have a high degree of independence. Consulting is great in some respects because you get to learn a lot about how big companies operate without having to deal with the red tape that they face. On the other hand, when you're a consultant sometimes the hours are rough, you don't have final say on how projects are prioritized, and a lot of your time is spent trying to make other people look good.

How has your IWU education helped you in your occupation?

To be honest, I think that playing football and being president of Sigma Chi were at least as helpful to me as all of the coursework. For the most part, to be successful at your job you need to be able to work hard (especially when things get difficult), manage your time, work well with others, effectively communicate with different types of people, and constantly challenge yourself to learn and do new things. Athletics and leadership roles within extra-curricular activities are great ways to develop those skills. In terms of coursework, I

think the liberal arts education helped me be more well-rounded and intellectually curious. My Econ classes were particularly helpful given the type of work I do (although I wasn't particularly stellar in either Statistics or Econometrics), and I especially enjoyed doing an independent study on Mises'/Hayek's Business Cycle Theory with Dr. Chapman.

What do you miss most about IWU?

Free time. I have very little now.

Is there any advice you would offer to IWU economics majors pursuing employment upon graduation?

Above all else, look for an environment where you think you'll flourish and be rewarded. And pay way more attention to the long-term opportunities you will have rather than to your starting salary. Personally I recommend an environment that provides broad as well as deep experiences—something smaller consulting firms are particularly well-suited for. It's very unlikely that you will stay on the same career path for your entire life—at least if you go into business—so it pays not to be too narrow. And when you do start your job, be aggressive about learning and taking on more responsibility. That might mean putting in extra hours and being more serious about your job than some of your peers, but you'll be amazed at how quickly that extra initiative will separate you from the pack and start providing you with big opportunities—at least if you're working at the right place.

What is the most important economic issue facing the world today?

I think the most important issue we face is whether we move toward or away from economic freedom and free trade in particular. Enormous changes are already underway as a result of the coming of age of hugely populated, previously undeveloped (or at least underdeveloped) economies and the changes are only going to get bigger and come faster. And they're going to occur no matter what

the politicians spouting protectionist nonsense want—I really wish they would at least read “That Which is Seen and That Which is Not Seen” by Bastiat. If America is to remain the leader of the world economy we need to fully embrace and prepare for the future, not hide from or futilely fight it. And America needs to admit that we cannot consume more than we produce indefinitely without major consequences. That goes for the ridiculously bloated and inefficient public sector and the dangerously over-leveraged consumer.