

Russia is not a very comfortable place in which to live. Over the last decade or so, class divisions, financial instability, corruption, and the philosophical/social revolution from Communism to Capitalism have left my homeland's economy and culture in tatters. Having survived the transition from a Communist bureaucracy to a free market society, I experienced firsthand that which most people envision only in nightmares or from the screens of movies (e.g., poverty, civil war, and the lack of individual choice). From the contexts of such a national legacy, I chose not only to survive and transcend its grim circumstances, but to prosper, as well. However, the latter is due to a myriad of positive qualities that I honed from a very early age. These attributes, which I would bring to the Marshall Class of 2004, include: enthusiasm, diversity, a multi-lingual and cultural perspective, dedication, an analytical yet balanced mind, a desire for excellence, and an infectious sense of humor.

Following the collapse of the former Soviet Union, Russians could be categorized into two distinct groups: the rich and well connected, and everyone else. I fell into the category of 'everyone else,' and life, therefore, was far from easy. In Russia, bribery was commonplace; therefore, education was not provided solely on merit, but rather, on how much a family could pay. Admission to the best schools could be bought just as readily as the best grades could. The privileged class received the finest education, jobs, and advancements. Everyone else struggled. Even though I was the Valedictorian of my graduating high school class, without financial resources or familial connections, I did not stand a chance to attend the prestigious Moscow University School of International Affairs. Alternative opportunities for the bright and ambitious were in the fields of medicine, law, engineering, military, and teaching. Thus, after having graduated from The Pedagogical State University of Volgograd, I became a teacher of Russian language and literature.

In the meanwhile, after the era of Perestroika, times were growing more difficult for the majority of the Russian population. The government was growing increasingly unable to support the efforts of research programs. I, like most of the Russian intelligentsia, faced either unemployment or an unreliable paycheck. In order to survive those radical changes, it became increasingly necessary to adapt to the new wave of commerce. Due to my persistence and abilities, I was employed by three large Western corporations, which afforded me the opportunity to understand firsthand how international business was conducted.

Unfortunately, due to the volatile business climate, these companies withdrew from Russia. Finally, I obtained stable employment within a British Cosmetic firm, which allowed me to exhibit my abilities of initiative, social prowess, diligence, dedication, enthusiasm, and steadfast work ethic. Due to my adroitness at solving problems and handling people, my duties within the firm included meeting seemingly impossible project deadlines, calming and mediating disgruntled employees, and create a positive, corporate image for the public. One of my projects included obtaining quality certificates for imported goods, usually a long and drawn out, bureaucratic process that dramatically slowed down the introduction of imported products to the Russian market. My talents of persuasion and positive communication were cited as instrumental in having sped up the process. Because our company presented its merchandise to consumers earlier than its competitors, numerous new wholesale customers were acquired.

Furthermore, my capacity to understand five languages - Russian, Belo Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, and English - and multicultural knowledge gleaned from international trips, earned my employer and colleagues' further respect. Working under the perpetual pressures accrued from supervisors and competitors neither quenched my individuality nor diminished my sense of self. Rather, the former chiseled me into the still-evolving leader I am today, who appreciates and practices the virtues of diplomacy, consistency, and perseverance. Furthermore, my sense of humor has served as a bridge to establishing rapport with different people. I have always adopted as my personal credo the sage words of an old Russian song, "Share your smile, and it will come back to you. Smiles take stress away, and bring people together."

As a scholar and survivor, who used the soils of Russian circumstances to cultivate the fertile harvest within myself, I would be honored to become a student at The Marshall School of Business. I believe my peers at the Marshall School, who are interested in international business, would welcome the complete package of which I'm comprised. Furthermore, speaking as an individual who never allowed the words failure, despair, and futility to be included in her lexicon, I'm certain that your committee would be proud to espouse me as one of its future graduates.