



Thriving Abroad Podcast – Creating Professional Success Abroad for Expat Partners

#38 LAURA SHEEHAN CHEAT SHEET

Laura Sheehan is a US lawyer and Experienced Expat Career Strategist. Laura has lived in seven countries over the last 15 years and uses that experience to assist other expatriates in their quest to launch a new career, redefine their professional goals or establish a portable professional identity.

Here are my takeaways from my conversation with Laura:

- There are extreme highs and lows to expat life. It is helpful to know and expect this from the outset.
- While relocation as an expat partner can lead to the opportunity of a welcome career break, there often is a desire to 'get back to work' – especially when undertaking serial assignments and international moves.
- It can be difficult, if not impossible to find work abroad that replicates your pre-relocation role or career and as a result it can be challenging, though definitely not impossible, to find professional fulfilment.
- Laura shares her experience here:

"I have tried every form of employment available to accompanying spouses in the diplomatic corp. I have worked inside the Embassy, and in the local economy. I have launched my own business. I have worked remotely. I have obtained additional degrees and certifications through long-distance learning. I was always busy, but I was never fulfilled. I was sad. I was angry. I felt I had not lived up to my potential." Laura Sheehan

- It is easy to compare yourself and career trajectory to friends and colleagues back home. This is not helpful as their circumstances are so different from your own.
- It is important to shift perspective and lose the 'should have, would have and could have been(s)'.
 - Laura says she finds partners come to her with two core questions:
 - a) What is my value?
 - b) How can I find meaningful work?
 - This speaks to the impact of international relocation on the partners sense of professional identity. Over time, when not working professionally there can be a loss of confidence or perceived lack of accomplishment and professional worth:

*"It is this almost debilitating internal struggle that plagues us most. We attach a salary figure, a specific title, or set of responsibilities to our professional worth...and when we don't (because we can't) meet those expectations of ourselves, we feel we have failed. That we've **done** nothing and so we **are** nothing."* Laura Sheehan.

This is never true, 'dig into your experiences and highlight valuable and transferable skills acquired and honed through your relocation experience'.

- Consider building a professional portfolio. Jeff Goins concept in his book 'The Art of Work' offers a great insight into what this might be.' View all professional



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experiences as unique pieces of work, all of which contribute to our growing professional portfolio:

“Anything and everything we do is meaningful and is taking us one step closer towards a longer-term goal.” Laura Sheehan.

- It is worth investing time and considering what a professional aspect to life means to you – and how to approach and develop your desired professional outcomes. Success breeds - success.. and the joy of that success spills over into other aspects of life as an accompanying partner.
- Consider the value of coaching support. The provision of a safe place to voice concerns, frustrations, dreams and support transformations.
- Finally, Laura talks about her two local initiatives in Asia, Empowering Perspectives and Network of Expat Talent.

Want to learn more:

You can connect with Laura Sheehan on LinkedIn [HERE](#)

To learn more about the **THRIVE** programme of support for partners of international assignees/expats – you can download more details about the programme from [HERE](#) and/or contact Louise@thrivingabroad.com for more information.

Resources mentioned in the interview:

- The Art of Work, Jeff Goins
- The Age of Reason, Charles Handy
- THRIVING ABROAD: The definitive guide to professional and personal relocation success