



**“A Hinrich scholar comes out of his comfort zone and keeps learning and sharing.”**

**Matt Haldane**, Production Editor  
AbacusNews.com – South China Morning Post  
Tsinghua University, MA in Global Business Journalism ‘15

**On the way to success**

“Success for me is meeting professional and personal goals, and always moving forward.” A keen follower of the technology evolution, Matt Haldane believes personal and professional evolution happens by always moving forward.

**Technology as a stepping-stone**

Matt was born to engage with technology. From assembling his own computer in high school, to being stationed in Japan and South Korea as an Information Systems technician for the US Navy, his love for technology has grown with time.

Matt’s adult life in the US has mostly been limited to the three and a half years he spent in college after the Navy. He is proud of his service but knew that leaving Navy was always on the cards for him.

“I loved the free travel, and I had one of the better jobs,” he said. “As an IT professional, I primarily supported the guys on the ground from the back end. But I knew I always wanted to get out and complete my education.”

He took some courses online to collect credits while on active duty. Thanks to the G.I. Bill, which covers full in-state tuition for veterans, he enrolled at Arizona State University (ASU) in January 2010.

“My dad emphasized how to think, how to learn and how to ask the right questions,” Matt said. “Given my background, it was clear that technology would always remain a big part of my life, and it was not until later realized I wanted to explore journalism. Although I was facing a pay cut when I left the Navy in December 2009, I knew that I wanted to go back to school.”

Matt holds a Bachelor of Science in Economics and a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from ASU. His economics degree focused on macro issues in Europe and Asia. While at ASU, he interned for the Phoenix Business Journal and

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Arizona Republic and then for Reuters after graduation. Between this work and stories he wrote while freelancing, his articles have been published with several news organizations.

Unknown to him at the time, it was the Navy that planted the seeds for what would become another great preoccupation of his life. Matt's first visit to China was a 2006 trip to Beijing while he was still stationed in South Korea. "I was curious about the fact that many of the dynamics in the Pacific were determined by China. At that point I knew I wanted the chance to explore China more."



*Matt (far left) bonds with Hinrich Foundation Alumni Association China chapter alumni (L-R) Phoebe Lu, Michael Wen, Anna Tong, Chandler Shan, Mickey Yang, James Gong and Roger Li in an alumni dinner gathering*

### Hinrich scholarship offer

The opportunity presented itself to Matt in the form of the Hinrich Foundation Global Trade Scholarship to study Global Business Journalism at Tsinghua University in Beijing. The scholarship gave him a chance to closely observe China's media and business landscapes.

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"China has been an important trading partner throughout history, and its recent economic rise has made this truer than at any other time," he said. "I was fortunate that I was in Arizona when Hinrich Foundation set up this scholarship and was looking for US scholars at ASU. I recognized that to be able to live and study in China was a great opportunity. I had done one class of very basic Chinese in college, so I mostly relied on technology to find my way around."

Matt received his Master of Arts in Global Business Journalism from Tsinghua in 2015. His love for technology, journalism and China amalgamated into him working as a content officer at Global Sources in Shenzhen. Global Sources is a Business to business (B2B) international trade platform.

For three and a half years, he wrote about technology, did content marketing, freelanced for tech publications and honed his knowledge of the Chinese tech market.

In March 2019, Matt returned to journalism full time. He is now based in Hong Kong where he works as Production Editor for AbacusNews.com, South China Morning Post's international-facing tech news site.

Living overseas has become normal for him, as it has been six years since he left the US. But being in Hong Kong, Asia's financial and shipping hub, he believes he has box seats to the intricacies of China's transformations as they happen.

### **China & consumer tech**

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*Matt (far right) with the Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Manila editorial & copywriting teams at the Global Sources Exhibition media center*

As Production Editor for Abacus news, Matt is in a key position to 'unbox' China for the rest of the world. Armed with a unique skillset and perspective on China, Matt finds it easy to delve into complex topics with the depth and detail they deserve. This could be writing and editing stories about consumer tech products such as smartphones, drones and action cameras, or researching concerns about cybersecurity and artificial intelligence.

"China has recently become a big producer of video games, and is now the second largest gaming market in the world after the US. I can compare the two big gaming markets as I edit reviews. Much of our readership is in the US, but we find traffic from all over. At Abacus, we try to give the stories a unique point of view and go beyond the obvious headlines."

### **Renewed focus on journalism**

"Receiving the Hinrich scholarship and living and studying in China has led to my success. I wanted to get back into journalism, so working for Abacus and South China Morning Post was something I sought after and achieved. I wanted to focus on editorial – to be an editor with a news organization – and I have found a sense of achievement with this role."

According to Matt, his unique skillset has found a perfect fit at Abacus, where he is able to bond with his team over technology and pop culture.

### Understanding China

Matt attributes his understanding of the China market to his three-year stint with Global Sources in Shenzhen. His employment with Global Sources was part of the global trade leader scholarship opportunity.

As a content officer there, he wrote many articles for the Global Sources website, networked with external sources, and researched and read about global trade – always with an eye out for the China angle.

His challenge was to consistently write original content to attract readership. Working with Startup Launchpad, he analyzed and curated new information that would be helpful for startups, writing tips and generating new reports that would garner interest.

“This role certainly made me look at the ‘sourcing’ side of business,” he said, “and build valuable connections. It was great learning for me to see the divide or interplay between established players and startups in the market. I could witness how startups were unfamiliar with political upheavals and alliances and predict their trajectory. This kind of first-hand knowledge helped me learn more about the China market.”

### Building rapport

Matt has worked with multiple diverse teams, starting with his time in the Navy. “Diversity in the military is a huge asset, and I’ve enjoyed working with many different teams and people over the years. I’ve found the most important thing is having a good rapport within teams, as it always makes working together easier,” he says.

For Matt, the most successful teams share goals and have a close rapport. He finds his team at Abacus to be small but effective because it is a niche publication. The employees share common interests, and each has something unique to add to the tech conversation. Ever the technology advocate,

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Matt (left most) celebrates Christmas at the Global Sources office in Shenzhen. Included are his co-alumni. Next to him is Amy Wu (China, HKBU BBA '16) and second from right, Linda Ma (China, HK Poly U CBS '18)

Matt believes technology can also improve team productivity, at least to a certain extent.

"I can access all my work from anywhere and it works on any platform, so it does make it easier for teams to be on the same page," he said. "Although, as much as I love technology, I do prefer face-to-face contact when working with my team. Sometimes communication is easier and faster when gestures, expressions and body language are involved and when the team is well-acquainted with each other."

### Freedom to figure things

Matt attributes a great part of his success to his father.

"My dad never pressured me into anything while I was growing up. My upbringing gave me the freedom to experiment and figure out my choices. I was given space and I grew up having a lot of dinner table conversations."

His father focused more on the importance of how to think, learn and ask the right questions rather than focus on specific skills. "And now I ask questions for a living," Matt said with a laugh.

Matt says has been fortunate enough to receive opportunities from unexpected quarters like the Hinrich Foundation and a chance to work in Asia with Global Sources.

### Learning the language

A few years down the line, Matt hopes to learn more Mandarin and possibly be in a higher editing position.

"So much of my journey has been unpredictable – the Navy, China and now Hong Kong. So I'd say I wish to keep proving myself and eventually be in a position to help guide editorial practices within the news industry."

He feels that adding Chinese language skills to his repertoire can help him add value to his role as an editor.

### Open to opportunities

Matt's sagacious advice to future Hinrich scholars is to keep their eyes open for unexpected opportunities and keep their imagination flexible to infinite possibilities.

"The best opportunities in my life have come from places that I didn't expect. A lot of us don't end up where we pictured ourselves to begin with, so stay open to something good, something unexpected that may come your way."

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*"I am a soldier who helps drive positive change in the industry to improve work environment."*

**Ramzan Miah**  
Plant Engineer,  
VF Asia Limited,  
Bangladesh

Hinrich Foundation alumnus  
Hong Kong Baptist University  
MS in Manufacturing  
Systems Engineering '15



*"It is my responsibility to improve my circumstances and myself, and then support family, society and community to improve their circumstances."*

**Roger Li**  
Gadget Labs,  
Founder

Hinrich Foundation alumnus  
Thunderbird School of Global  
Management, MBA '11



*"Success for me is following the passion I've always had, doing the kind of work that has never been done before, and breaking new grounds!"*

**Juliet Shwe Gaung**  
Myanmar Private Equity  
And Venture Capital  
Association (MPE&VCA),  
Project Manager

Hinrich Foundation alumna  
Hong Kong Baptist University  
Masters in International  
Journalism Studies, 2012



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