

Department of Land Economy Mentoring Scheme



Andrew M Fox

CEO

Trifin Partners

I arrived at Pembroke College in 1982 to study Economics and Computer Science, following in the footsteps of my father and grandfather. Economics was quite dull but then Computer Sciences was incredibly difficult, so I moved to Land Economy after a couple of weeks. I felt at home in the Department, as I had always been interested in Geography, having done the admissions exams in 4th term from Bedales School even though I was also doing Economics A-level. While at Cambridge I was actively involved in (free market) politics, and in promoting MENSA. I graduated in 1985.

I had been awarded a place on the prestigious Price Waterhouse graduate scheme for after University but as the time got closer I realised this would be a mistake, I was too hungry to get on with getting the experience needed for a successful independent business career, particularly in the City which was just approaching the 'Big Bang', to sit on the side-lines learning for more years. A good but hard choice, and of course all the City graduate schemes had been filled so I had to go into a 'real job' as a Eurobond trader, on 2/3 the salary of my peers, at a small broking house Laurie Milbank, which was in the process of being swallowed by the Americans of Chase Manhattan. It was the hardest I ever worked, a very steep non-PC learning curve.

I moved in London to an Australian broker Wallmans and then to Sydney Australia to become a director of the parent company as a 25 year old with a \$180,000 salary in 1988 driving a borrowed Mercedes. I worked on arbitrage, options and treasury there until Wallmans folded (not my fault) and as part of the restructure I moved to the State Bank of Australia in Melbourne, when they folded I was inherited by Australia's biggest bank, the Commonwealth all in 1990-1. Since then I have not 'worked for' anyone, which is important to me.

My breakthrough was to dream very early of establishing a financial business in the Far East of Russia and although not speaking Russian and without any local contacts I made my first trip to Vladivostok for a month on a container ship arriving into that closed city in the dying days of the Soviet Union with rampant inflation on Halloween 1991. I made friends, collected ideas, and having returned home for Christmas I founded Pacific Gemini (70% of the 40 initial shareholders were Geminis!) which created leading investment company Tiger Securities which was active investing in hundreds of Russian companies in all different sectors through the incredible wild 1990's - and lived in Vladivostok from 1992 and still go there often. Indeed I have served there as British Honorary Consul since 1998.

A slowdown in the markets led me to spend more time in Australia from 2000 and then in Vietnam 2006-9 where I was a founder-director of a stock market fund manager, PXP. Then I moved my base to Barnes, London in 2009 where I am still based, working from home mostly, managing investments around the world often acting as Chairman. One example is a Chelmsford wholesale-telecommunications business I founded with a telco veteran friend in 2012 and which this year will

make £10m profit on £200m revenue. I am also actively involved in charity, chairing a number of them notably the Don Hanson Charitable Foundation, do visit.

What has this to do with being a suitable Land Economy mentor? I don't know for sure but my experience is extremely varied. I guess I have come across or been through most situations and am creative and always ready to consider new things. If I don't have good advice and experience, I usually know someone who does. I enjoyed Land Economy and indirectly I think it has been helpful in my life.