

## **Northern European Studies – and then what?**

### **A video series on career prospects by j o l n e s**

#### **Transcription Episode 5: Communication Advisor**

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Hello, my name is Tim Kötting. I studied Scandinavian Studies, Medieval and Modern History as well as European Law at the University of Cologne, where I received my Magister degree in 2009.

#### **HOW DID HAPPEN THAT YOU STUDIED SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES?**

Towards the end of my time at school, I did not yet have a clear idea of where my education should actually go. However, I had two big interests at that time. One was learning languages; the second was Scandinavia, especially Sweden as a travel destination and as a cultural country. I did not know that there would indeed be an academic curriculum that connected all of this until an acquaintance of mine, who in fact studied at the University of Cologne, gave me the hint that Scandinavian Studies existed as a subject there.

#### **HOW DID YOU GET THE JOB?**

During my studies, I did an internship at the European Parliament, working for a member of parliament. He already had contacts to my current boss at that time. At the end of my studies, my current company was looking for an intern with a certain perspective and interest in Scandinavia, and this Member of Parliament forwarded my contact details to him. That is how we found each other. I started my internship shortly before the end of my studies and since then my company has not been able to get rid of me.

#### **WHICH TASKS DOMINATE THE EVERYDAY WORK OF A COMMUNICATION ADVISOR?**

I work at EHRENBORG SØRENSEN Kommunikation. EHRENBORG SØRENSEN Kommunikation is an agency based in Hamburg, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Malmö. Our services consist of brand PR, public affairs and strategic communications advisory. In my job, I have an administrative focus on one hand. I am responsible for the business of the German location, i.e. both in terms of content and methodology, as well as in terms of staff and last but not least in terms of budget.

There is also a very strong operational part, where it is important to set up and convey communication guidelines and messages, especially to politicians, but also to the public, to seek contact with the media and political decision-makers in order to improve the conditions in which our clients operate as a company. In concrete terms, this means, for example, that press inquiries and political questions are answered with the corresponding predefined text blocks and messages. There is also a strong content-related, analytical part, in which the challenges and current developments in the customer's environment are dealt with in particular. This means that, of course, you first have to understand where our customers operate, what their challenges are and how the whole thing is to be embedded in the political or media environment. You also learn much about what the customers actually do, and that is necessary, because in the end you should only talk about what you have understood.

**ARE THERE SCANDINAVIAN REFERENCES IN YOUR WORK?**

Yes, there are many Scandinavian references in my work. On the one hand, this is of course determined by the various company locations that we have. I have already mentioned them: Hamburg, Copenhagen, Stockholm and Malmö as locations of our agency. The second point is that 85 percent of the companies we represent are located in Scandinavia and the remaining 15 percent have something to do with Scandinavia. Let me take the Baltic Sea ports as an example, from where many ferries go to Scandinavia, to Sweden, Norway and Denmark. In daily practice, this means that you have a lot to do with Scandinavians themselves and you communicate with them in Inter-Scandinavian, as we like to call it. Whether it is Danish, Swedish or Norwegian only plays a minor role in the end. You understand each other somehow, even the Danes. What is also important is that I was able to experience a Scandinavian working culture from the very beginning. What is now becoming commonplace in Corona times in German companies (home office, flexible working, more result-oriented than presence-oriented) is actually something that I have been doing in my job for more than ten years, and I believe that this is naturally also related to the Scandinavian character of the agency.

**WHICH CONTENTS FROM YOUR STUDIES HELP IN YOUR WORK?**

Especially in the main courses, it became clear that in Scandinavian Studies you do not only have to deal with literary texts or old sagas. I really liked that at that time that a somewhat stronger connection to reality was established, that recent history was taken into account, that sociological and political developments were also more strongly conveyed. In fact, I benefit from this to the extent that the differences that can be observed historically, sociologically or politically in the individual countries are clearly to my advantage, because communication is always about details. It is all about small nuances. If you have a feeling that your counterpart is not only Scandinavian, but also Danish, Swedish or Norwegian, then you

can adapt your interaction accordingly. I think that also helps you to communicate successfully.

#### **WHICH TIPS WOULD YOU LIKE TO GIVE TO STUDENTS?**

I am a little bit torn. During my studies, I never liked to hear that internships are absolutely necessary and that you should do as many of them as possible before you can start a career. Now I see things a bit differently because I am allowed to take responsibility for my own employees. I find that those candidates are much more interesting for me who have looked a little to the left and to the right, who have tested themselves a little in the media and the political environment, who have perhaps already tested their skills in companies, who know a little bit about how companies work. If you manage or have the opportunity to broaden your horizons during your studies, for example in economics or law, that is something, I would also say that this could only be an advantage, especially in political communication.

#### **WHAT DO I DO WITH SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES?**

What I would like to convey, and you can see that quite well in this video series, is that there are also opportunities for graduates of Scandinavian Studies. Stay open, look around and perhaps not close your mind, do not think about the one career path that you absolutely have to reach. I think that when you show flexibility and don't let yourself be driven crazy by all those people asking what the hell you are doing with Scandinavian Studies, then we have enough examples to show that it is possible to have professional success and have a career based on it.

#### **WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF STUDYING A RARE SUBJECT LIKE SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES?**

The advantage of rare subjects is that you get an insight into topics that are not so open to the public, and you may develop a love for dealing with details and maintaining your openness. This is certainly something that Scandinavian Studies can achieve that other rare subjects can also achieve. I also believe that when you study Scandinavian Studies, you show a certain courage. On the one hand, of course, towards the people who constantly ask you, well, good Scandinavian Studies: Don't you want to think about later and about making money and so on? On the other hand, for yourself, too, because if you manage to see this through and do what you would like to do, then I think it also strengthens your self-image and your self-confidence. From my point of view, this can only be positive. The last big advantage I would actually mention is that you always have a small talk topic. As soon as you get together with several people, in a professional context or in other contexts, and you ask each other about their backgrounds, you can score some points with Scandinavian Studies and explain a little bit, so exactly, what embarrassed you in the past is actually what gives

you the advantage now. In this respect, there are many good reasons to study Scandinavian Studies, so do something with it.

### **Credits**

The interview was conducted on September 08 2020 via Zoom.

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