Interview with Aicha Laraki, March 8, 2011

Where do you work?

I work at The Hub Madrid, an open workspace for social entrepreneurs and social innovation.

What do you do?

I coordinate the Communication and Attraction Team for The Hub. Part of my job is to manage communication with the press; the other is to attract new members to both The Hub and the world of social entrepreneurship.

You have been on the job for a few months. What have you learned thus far?

I have been working at The Hub for five months. Every single day I learn a great deal about my area, about humanity and even about me. The Hub encourages personal growth as well as professional development. It keeps us accountable through various tools, such as our weekly priorities, where we have to mention two work priorities and one personal one. This tool makes sure that we keep a balance between work and life.

How did your education at Saint Louis University Madrid help prepare you for this position?

My education at Saint Louis University Madrid literally changed my life. I went from being too cool for school to passionate about learning and growing. I fell in love with the academic world, and the professors have all been a true inspiration to me. After graduating from Saint Louis University Madrid, I went on to get a Masters Degree in Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility at the Escuela de Organizacion Industrial. A month after the program started, I just had to contact Professor Daniel Chornet-Roses to tell him how well he and other professors at SLU Madrid prepared me for this program. I am not sure if this was thanks to the critical analysis and questioning we were taught to do, or just the ease I had getting up in front of people to present
coherently on any topic. At The Hub Madrid, my SLU Madrid experience still proves extremely valuable in my day-to-day duties of critical analysis of situations, project organization and public speaking.

**How did you land this job?**

Two of my professors at the EOI happened to be among the eight founding members of The Hub Madrid. Professor Anita Seidler presented a lecture on *The Bottom of the Pyramid*, which refers to the 60% of the world population which lives on less than $2 a day and the social entrepreneurs who are dedicated to creating businesses which improve their lives. Professor Daniel Truran presented on Social Entrepreneurship. This is where my love affair with Social Entrepreneurship began, and I became convinced that one can do good while doing well financially. Daniel later happened to be my tutor for the Masters final project, and I starting coming to The Hub quite often. I then began as an intern, and a few months into the internship I was offered the opportunity to coordinate The Hub’s Communication and Attraction. I would say it is a combination of passion and faith that landed me this job. I always knew I would not settle for a job that did not make me feel happy and fulfilled. And I HAVE THAT HERE!

**What do you like best about your job?**

The list of what I like best about my job is endless. However, to summarize, it is precisely the importance given to leading a balanced and fulfilling life. The beauty of all the people I work with really makes every day a new and important adventure. Each and every encounter I have here, whether it is through my co-workers or our members, has a great impact on my present and future. I love that every day is a new adventure. I love that people around me are always taking care of each other. I love that right after my studies I landed a job where I am truly fulfilled. I do not call this a luck factor, I call it determination and clear vision of what you want and don’t want in your life. I also call it courage. Do something out of passion and the rest magically unfolds.

**What are some of the challenges you face in the workplace?**

The challenge I face at work is that The Hub Madrid is barely a year old, and we strive for improvement every day, which means a lot of work. I would not call it a true challenge because every new member, every news article and every happy participant brings us huge personal and professional satisfaction. However, in the field of Social Entrepreneurship the
greatest challenge is narrowing great ideas to tangible results. The field needs a greater collaboration with intra-preneurs, or people within large corporations who take direct responsibility for turning an idea into a profitable finished product through assertive risk-taking and innovation.

What advice do you have for other students as they make the transition to working professionals?

My advice is
1. Don’t settle for a salary.
2. Have a clear set priorities.
3. Whatever project you embark on, do it out of pure passion. That is the only way you can ensure a good work/life balance.
4. Don’t be afraid of failure.
5. Be willing to take risks.
6. And finally have faith.

Anything you'd like to add?

Take advantage of every opportunity to learn. SLU Madrid has all the tools to make you a well-rounded person. Take advantage of that!