

Olivo Shares International and Networking Insights



LAURA and **JERRY OLIVO** '83 Finance
Citigroup Global Transaction Services

Jerry Olivo looks for opportunities to return to the ASU campus.

A 1983 graduate in finance, Olivo has excelled professionally, currently working at Citigroup as managing director, head of Liquidity & Investment Product Management - Global Transaction Services. But he hasn't forgotten his roots in Tempe, where he conducts the ASU recruiting program he started two years ago for Citigroup.

"I really enjoy being reconnected with W. P. Carey and the finance faculty," he says, "I find it energizing just to be on campus."

In 1983, Olivo transferred from a community college in Randolph, N.J., to ASU, hoping to meet people in the Southwest from diverse backgrounds in contrast to his upbringing in New Jersey.

"That was part of my objective, to have something of a culture shock," Olivo says.

What he found was that many of his new classmates were from New York, New Jersey and Chicago. So much for culture shock.

But he appreciated the quality of his education in the finance program that "prepared me well to go into the marketplace and ultimately to earn an MBA," which he completed at New York University in 1988.

After finishing his MBA, Olivo went to work at Bankers Trust Company, now Deutsche Bank, as a financial analyst. During his tenure there, he built an acquisition model that was used for years after. He also developed a tender offer system to evaluate investors redeeming bonds from public utilities.

While always based in New York City, Olivo had the opportunity at Bankers Trust for frequent travel to Europe and Asia, at one time virtually commuting between Europe and the U.S. When Europe adopted the euro, he helped restructure Bankers Trust in Germany.

"It was enjoyable," he says. "I'm in transactions services in the banking industry. Our customer base resides all over the world."

Traveling to see how those customers live and work has been rewarding, he says. And sometimes surprising. When he took his first trip to Bangkok, which he considered an exotic destination, the first sign he saw in the airport was for Pizza Hut.

That's simply the nature of a shrinking world, Olivo says. Citigroup, the company he joined in 2004, has a presence in more than 100 countries. Dealing with customers from other cultures requires an awareness of local sensibilities, he says. In Japan, for instance, business cards are not simply handed out but must be presented.

On short trips, he's able to tap into Citigroup colleagues working in the region for advice on business etiquette or attend formal training to avoid gaffes in protocol.

Olivo warns that too often American business leaders go into the global community and expect everyone to speak English. While in the financial industry most do, he says, the mistake is in using too many American idioms that don't translate.

Citigroup's GTS business has weathered the economic downturn well, Olivo says. When customers abroad needed help in their own dealings, they turned to Citigroup.

"What we do is provide multinational corporations, governments and financial institutions with cash management and liquidity solutions, allowing them to more effectively manage cash holdings," he says. "We've continued to do well even in this economic crisis."

Now Olivo shares his two decades of knowledge and experience with finance faculty and staff and with job candidates from ASU. Olivo serves on the Department of Finance Advisory Board, working with other prominent members of the business community to assist the department and the W. P. Carey School of Business. In addition, through his efforts, he has convinced Citigroup to look beyond their usual roster of business schools from which to draw recruits. "They saw ASU can deliver quality students," he says.

When he arrives on campus, Olivo is looking for students to fill rigorous 10-week internships that can turn into full-time jobs. He describes how his own career path developed, primarily through networking that helped him move forward.

Today's young people already have that foundation, he says, because of their embrace of such social networking systems as Facebook and Twitter. Those same skills can be used to build a professional network.

While students know the value of developing technical skills, they also should be expanding their contact base, Olivo says. That leads to jobs and advancement.

Students can make a positive impression by doing their homework prior to meeting with company representatives and by noting how they can add value to the firm.

"Present yourself as confident, but be realistic about where you can add value," Olivo says.