



FedEx Express / JA
International Trade Challenge
2019 Asia Pacific Finals

Feature interview with Seungwon Lee, member from Korea of Team Ratoon 1st place winner of 2018 ITC Asia Pacific Finals



2018 ITC 1st Place:# winner Team Ratoon. From L to R: Seungwon Lee (Korea)
Duong Ha Anh (Vietnam)

1. Please introduce yourself.

Hello. My name is Seungwon Lee, and I am in my third year at Korean Minjok Leadership Academy. As a student in the international track, I'm currently preparing to study abroad. Winning this award is especially significant for me because the FedEx/Junior Achievement International Trade Competition (FedEx/JA ITC) was my last competition as a high school student.

2. Are you interested in trade or business start-up?

It's a little embarrassing, but I've only had general interest in trade and start-up business. My school does not offer business classes, so I had never studied this field properly. Most of my family works in medicine, and start-ups and business were areas I chose in order to try my hands at something different. I never thought that a good opportunity like this would come so soon.

3. What made you participate in the FedEx/JA ITC?

I wanted to test myself. Before this competition, I didn't have a lot of confidence in myself. I had performed well at other similar competitions, but I always attributed the positive results to my teammates' efforts and luck. By entering a competition in a field to which I was totally new to, I wanted to actualize my abstract interest in start-up and business and test my limits. I remember submitting my application feeling like I was jumping in at the deep end, but I'm so glad that I decided to try it out because I've gained a lot more than I expected from this experience.

4. Explain about the idea that you won this time.

The item that my partner and I developed is 'iBalance,' a device designed to predict and prevent falls in the elderly. The existing "fall prevention" devices in the market lacked the adequate mechanisms to prevent falls in the elderly, to the point where I don't think they can be called "fall prevention" devices. They were rather systems that recognize a fall after it happens and automatically call for help—thus, they did not "prevent" the falls. To address this need, we designed a device that uses accelerometer to monitor balance, predict a potential fall and prevent it from happening in the first place.



5. Describe how you came up with the idea.

The topic of this competition was "Developing Products for Elderly Social Care in France." Because "Elderly social care" is such an abstract and extensive topic, we began by narrowing our focus to something more specific. We excluded elderly mental health and loneliness issues, which we thought would be difficult to resolve with a single physical product, as well as issues that require complex user learning, since the target population is likely to have difficulties with using brand-new technology. As we thought about an existing need that could have an easy-to-use solution, I remembered my grandmother who battled Parkinson's Disease. She experienced mobility issues for a very long time because of Parkinson's, and there were a few dangerous accidents where she would suddenly fall backwards while walking. Because I had witnessed these kinds of incidents first-hand, I knew that a single fall could lead to terrible injuries in an elderly person. Thus, I came to view falls in elderly as an underestimated problem that deserves more attention and decided to focus on this particular issue.



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6. What do you think is the secret of winning the FedEx/JA ITC Asia Pacific finals?

I think that continuously trying to persuade myself of this product's use was a helpful approach to take. Throughout the product development process, I always tried to view the product from the consumers' perspective by constantly asking myself the reasons why this product was needed and, on the flip side, why it could be inconvenient to use. This approach was actually very helpful and led us to change our product concept from the initial idea over five times, all of which was part of our constant efforts to improve our product and marketing strategy.



7. What did you learn and what did you find helpful in participating in the competition?

Because I didn't know anything about this field when I joined the challenge, it wouldn't be an exaggeration for me to say that I learned everything I know about this field from this experience alone. I've participated in many competitions in high school, but there hasn't been a competition where I learned as much during such a short period of time and had as many opportunities for growth as I did here. The jury and the FedEx mentors who helped facilitate the challenge played a very important role; for example, a FedEx mentor who currently works in marketing would offer warm advice and ask sharp questions, all of which helped each team to view the question at hand from a new perspective. Like the saying "give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime," the FedEx mentors helped the students to develop independent critical thinking skills. Thanks to these mentors, all the participants, including myself, were able to grow from this experience.

8. Is there anything you want to say to the students who are participating in the competition next time?

I want to tell the future participants that they should enjoy the experience. I remember when I first started the challenge within the Korea competition, I was intimidated by the competition's size. But after I went to Singapore for the Asia Pacific Regional Finals, I realized that there was nothing to be afraid of. I hope the future participants wouldn't hesitate to enter just because they feel like they don't have as much knowledge or experience in this field as other participants might. Instead, they should just go ahead and give it a try. I had a much more memorable experience at the Asia Pacific Regional Finals, where I just let go and tried to enjoy the experience, than at the Korea competition, where I was experiencing a lot of internal conflicts because I didn't have as much confidence in myself. I think that, when you truly enjoy the experience that an opportunity offers, your efforts will pay off in some shape or form.



9. Tell me about your dream or future goal.

Right now, I would like to be an environmental scientist. I will have to figure out how to apply an environmental science major to a career once I get to college, but for now, I want to contribute to effecting long-term improvements in global health through better environmental policies. One personal aspiration I have is becoming an 'appropriately sensitive person.' It might be natural for everyone to pay less attention to the people around them as they get busier in life. But I don't want to legitimize my tendency to do that with excuses of being busy; instead, in a world where we don't pay a lot of attention to those who fall behind, I want to become a person who possesses the sensitivity needed to respond warmly to the voices of the disadvantaged.

10. If you have anything to say, please feel free to share it.

Because the topic of this FedEx/JA ITC challenge was about the elderly, who are disadvantaged in society, I was able to think about issues beyond business and management and have the time to self-reflect. In that sense, this challenge impacted me in ways that reach beyond the end of the competition, as though a small splash of water returned as a big wave. I would like to recommend this experience to other students who want to have a meaningful summer break.

11. What do you think about FedEx in general? What is the image of FedEx to you?

I first became familiar with FedEx when I went to study abroad in the U.S. for two years in 5th grade. I recently became aware that FedEx offers a lot of support for small- and medium-sized enterprises. Through this challenge, I also learned that the company supports youth in diverse ways, and I would like to thank FedEx for making this opportunity available. Additionally, realizing the hidden meaning behind the FedEx logo (the hidden arrow between E and x) led me to perceive FedEx as a company that is attentive to details.



12. You have formed a team with Vietnam and did well. How did you work together with another person you just met for the competition?

I remember Duong Ha Anh, my Vietnamese teammate, and we learned to adapt to one another to find the best way to work together because of our different sleep patterns. I study late into the night like a typical Korean high school student, whereas she likes to sleep at around 11pm and wake up early in the morning. We struggled over whether I should wake her up late at night or she should check multiple times if I had woken up in the morning. But in retrospect, I realized that because we had less time to work together in the early mornings and late nights compared to the other teams, we were more motivated to work efficiently during the daytime we had together.