

Lana Fried ([00:20](#)):

My name's Lana and I'm the host of Get Hungry. I was born and grew up on Boonwurrung country and also have a very personal connection to my own Jewish culture and heritage. On behalf of the team producing this podcast, we pay our respects to the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, the traditional owners of the land the Australian Swinburne campuses are located on, and where this podcast was recorded. We also pay respect to elders past, present, and emerging for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and aspirations of Aboriginal Australia. We must remember that under the concrete and the asphalt, this land is, was and always will be traditional Aboriginal land. The rich storytelling history of the world's oldest living culture is what we proudly pay homage to when we share stories on this podcast.

([00:51](#)):

This is Get Hungry, a show where we give you a taste of what career success looks like by talking to some of the most successful people in different industries and learn how they got to where they are today. I'm your host Lana Fried, and I'm a psych student at Swinburne University of Technology. And like a lot of you, I often wonder what it is that makes a person successful. In this show, I'm going to talk to people from different industries who've asked themselves the same questions as you and I. Where am I going and how do I get there? We'll grab a bite of food or even a coffee from somewhere near Swinburne. Then we'll find a spot on campus to have a chat. We'll talk about everything. We'll explore the successes that they've had, and just as important, the mistakes and missteps that they've learned from. So let's get into it.

([01:41](#)):

Today, I'm catching up with David Banger. He's a senior managing partner at APAC for Info-Tech, and he's had such an impressive career. He studied business and analytics at Swinburne, and built his career overseas, working for companies like Microsoft before coming back to Melbourne. In a real full-circle moment, he even lectures at Swinburne. In today's chat, you'll hear how setting goals early can really help you succeed. David will talk about how he worked towards his goal of living and working overseas. He'll explain why he believes he should talk about ideas, not people. And David will share how he went from being a guy who didn't finish school to managing a team at Microsoft.

([02:19](#)):

We're meeting at a cafe called Short Straw, which is just down the road from Swinburne. We're going to grab a coffee and have a chat. Let's go.

([02:41](#)):

I am here at Short Straw Cafe today, just off of Glenferrie Road. It's quite a cool little rustic cafe. It's playing some vibey music inside, so why don't we head on in and meet our special guest. David?

David Banger ([02:55](#)):

Hi.

Lana Fried ([02:58](#)):

Hi, I'm Lana.

David Banger ([02:59](#)):

Nice to meet you.

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Lana Fried ([03:00](#)):

Lovely to meet you. Why don't we get into it?

David Banger ([03:03](#)):

Sounds good.

Lana Fried ([03:08](#)):

I always have a latte.

David Banger ([03:09](#)):

I'm going to have a long black, because my good friend in Italy, Marcello, one of my former Microsoft colleagues, when I was in Milano with him, took me to lunch and he said, "I'm going to buy your coffee, David, but you cannot have any milk in your coffee-

Lana Fried ([03:23](#)):

Oh, god. I would not [inaudible 00:03:24].

David Banger ([03:24](#)):

... after lunchtime."

Lana Fried ([03:24](#)):

Is it because the milk makes you feel heavy?

David Banger ([03:27](#)):

I think it's an Italian thing.

Lana Fried ([03:29](#)):

Interesting.

David Banger ([03:29](#)):

If you order a latte in Italy, it's just milk.

Lana Fried ([03:33](#)):

Yeah. My mom ordered a mocha in America and was given milk, but I don't think that makes sense. I just don't think they knew what she was asking. All right. Now that we've got our coffees in hand, why don't we head on back to campus?

David Banger ([03:45](#)):

That's great.

Lana Fried ([03:50](#)):

I was excited to talk to David about his experience both working and travelling around the world. For our chat, we made our way across campus towards the EN Building. Now, the EN Building is kind of iconic,

and David is a former Swinburne student. To kick off our conversation, I asked David if he had any memories from his time there.

David Banger ([04:10](#)):

The EN Building, it's a rite of passage of any Swinburne student I think. I can remember being here in the late '90s, I'd say, doing a project management course on the channel, which is the tunnel between London and Paris. And then, we moved to another building called the AGSE in the programme I was doing.

Lana Fried ([04:29](#)):

David, pretty early on in your career, you went to work overseas. How did that opportunity come about for you?

David Banger ([04:35](#)):

It's really interesting when I reflect back on my life and I reflect back on other people that I know. At the time, I thought I was late going overseas, I think I was 29 or 30. I arrived in London on September 24 after the sad events of September 11. That was an interesting time to arrive with somebody who'd just finished their master's or just graduated from Swinburne. I was told pretty much you've got a large level of financial services experience, but it's predominantly retail and call centre, and it's going to be tricky to get a job. This is the worst the market we've seen.

([05:10](#)):

But my wife, and we'd just been recently married six months earlier, my wife was a nurse and she was able to obtain a lot of work quite quickly. I just stuck it out and I was really lucky to land a job at a great organisation called Prudential, and I went into their headquarters in London and had a role that allowed me to do some things within that organisation, measured their culture and how effective they were in delivering some change programmes, and that really set me in good stead.

Lana Fried ([05:38](#)):

Once you went overseas, you spent a long time away. Could you talk a little bit about what that time overseas was like for you?

David Banger ([05:45](#)):

My wife and I said we'll do two to three years. My dad, when he saw me off at the airport, my cousin who's 15 years older than me, he'd been away at that stage for probably 20 years, and my dad said, "We'll see you in about 10." My wife and I laughed, but we went to London and I really began enjoying actually just not only the work experience but actually living in London. We made some great friends. My wife and I deliberately tried to avoid the expat Australian scene, so we tried to immerse ourselves within London, within the British culture. I have to say I really, really enjoyed that and I have some really close lifelong friends. One of my best buddies in London, his dad's from India, his mom's from Malta, but he sounds very North London. Another lady is a psychoanalyst and is from Canada originally, but now has been living in London for a long time. So, it was just such a great experience, and two years turned into 10 very quickly.

Lana Fried ([06:42](#)):

David, the time you spent overseas, was that a goal for you and what did you do to work towards getting over there?

David Banger ([06:48](#)):

A couple of things. I think many of us have dreams, so it was a dream initially. I didn't know whether it'd actually be possible. I mentioned earlier my cousin and the family connection here, and my cousin is 15 years older than me and my dad sort of served as a bit of a mentor to him. They both have the same name as John. My cousin was living overseas, and every time he'd fly back in, every [inaudible 00:07:12] months, he'd check in on me. It was such a strong family connection. He said, "Look, you're going to have dreams, but your dreams don't become a reality unless you take steps and break them out into goals."

[\(07:23\)](#):

For me, when I met my wife, it was a mutual attraction. In fact, we had some shared goals. We wanted to live overseas, but I also knew that if I wanted to have a meaningful career overseas, I'd need to get myself educated. The first step was actually undertaking the education and just being persistent and consistent with that effort to actually move towards that goal. There's always hurdles, there's always a barrier to something, and it's about being somewhat resilient and allowing you to build your resilience when those setbacks happen.

[\(07:55\)](#):

September 24, after September 11, that was a setback. There was other things that had happened. If I think about where my wife was nursing initially in London, it was South London. It was tough, right? Some of those hospitals are tough environments to work in, but we remain committed to achieving some of these things. I look back on tough things and you sort of remember them less, you remember the good times more. I'm really grateful for the experience, and so grateful for everybody that has helped me and guided me along the way. There's so many people that I can think of, and I get visuals of them when I think about my time overseas, and since I've come back to Australia as well.

Lana Fried ([08:32](#)):

With all of that going on, what was it that actually drew you back to Australia?

David Banger ([08:36](#)):

Probably it was a really difficult decision to come back to Australia. I started at Prudential, then I did a couple of years management consulting, and then I moved into Microsoft. I was working in the international IT team at Microsoft. I think I mentioned sometimes you can't connect the dots looking forward, you can only connect them looking backwards, and that's very famous from a Steve Jobs graduation speech. But my experience at Swinburne with the international students really prepared me well for Microsoft when I was working as part of the international IT team.

[\(09:09\)](#):

At that stage, my wife and I discussed coming back to Australia and when my eldest daughter was about to start school in London, we made the really difficult decision to come back, and it was hard. It's hard repatriating because as my wife said at the time, we'd lived half our adult life in London at that time, and I very much felt part of London. I was there, we became British citizens at that time, went to Westminster Town Hall to do that, and you very much felt part of that community. To come back and repatriate, it took me quite a time to rebalance. And being part of the international team team at Microsoft as well and to step away from that and enter some things locally, it was different.

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Lana Fried ([09:48](#)):

You spoke about rebalancing when you came back to Australia. Do you have any examples of some of the challenges of coming back?

David Banger ([09:54](#)):

I remember when we were talking pre-interview, we were talking about life in 2023 and how different it is compared to 2019. But when I was working at Microsoft between 2005, '06 and 2010, I'd often work maybe two, three days a week out of my apartment in London and attend the office for maybe two or three days a week. When I came back to Australia, there was an expectation for you to be back in the office. I was managing a large group of people, like 200 odd people when I came back and I didn't have an office. I had a corner table and I had a lot of walkups at work.

([10:31](#)):

One of the things that I had to rebalance was actually how was I going to do the deep work, the work that I really need to think and immerse myself in outside of the transactional work, which is just as important, which is meeting and interactions with people and finding a quiet place to do that and finding the time to do that. That's something that I've always enjoyed in my work is solving those complex problems, looking at things from a different range of perspectives, and sharing that insight with some colleagues to really build out a broader perspective. I think I was part of it, international IT team, and one of the things that I'd say to every Australian is we are fantastic at our immigration. We have been fantastic, this country has been built on immigration, but sometimes, I think we lose and dilute the diversity of thought with that immigration.

([11:23](#)):

For me, diversity is not only representation of gender, representation of religious faith, sexual orientation. The real diversity is actually harnessing that community for their diversity of thought. For me, I still think, within Australia compared to some other locations I've worked across the world, there is a opportunity for us to actually look at leveraging the talent that we have within our community and embracing that level of diversity of thought.

([11:50](#)):

I'm just super grateful for the company I'm working for at the moment called Info-Tech. They really embody that, and I feel so privileged to be part of a global community. As I said, I start my mornings really early, and I think about my morning this morning. I was talking to people in North America, Canada and other parts of the world and we were really embracing that diversity of thought. If there's one thing that I think I need to recalibrate was to actually just be patient in growing that understanding within our community.

Lana Fried ([12:18](#)):

I guess in your personal life as well, it was a big change. Were there any smaller challenges that you faced moving back to Australia?

David Banger ([12:25](#)):

A little quirky challenge is my wife actually, for whatever reason, has a allergic reaction to Australian wine, and she's a very proud Australian. We just drank European red wine after she started to have these allergic reactions. That was a little quirky thing that we had to deal with. The other thing is when I left Australia in 2000, communication was a lot via email. When I came back, there was social media

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platforms and they've been phenomenal for me keeping connected with communities I've formed overseas, whether it's our family and friends in Europe, and in London in particular, or whether it's my ex-colleagues at Microsoft. We're all on platforms and we remained very much connected, involved in one another's lives. For me, that was a real benefit when I came back.

Lana Fried ([13:08](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. I can imagine. And then, how did things unfold for you from there on?

David Banger ([13:13](#)):

My wife and I had a plan, and we always wanted to restore an old house, so we had an old house. When I came back from London, I spent three or four months ripping things out of the house and trying to repair them and then getting the professional trades in to help me. But it was great fun, because we'd sort of always wanted to do that and we'd sort of immersed ourselves in shows like Grand Designs, and it's been a great family home. For me, I took three or four months to do that and to sort of reconnect with family and friends here, which was important, because we'd been away for a long time, and to refamiliarize myself with the Australian culture and just sort of socialise a little bit.

([13:50](#)):

And then, I was very fortunate enough to land a job at KPMG. I managed a team of a couple of hundred people and I looked after their internal IT function and some external partners client facing involve me in some client work. I leveraged a lot of the skills I picked up at Prudential University and at Microsoft around keynoting and presenting externally. Again, that was another dot that I couldn't see that I would join from that experience. One day, I received a phone call from somebody and said, "Look, there's a CIO role going at John Holland," which was a construction and engineering-based business headquartered in Melbourne, at that time between Melbourne and Sydney. "We think you should really apply for it."

([14:30](#)):

I applied for the job. Having never worked in construction, I was really fortunate to be awarded the job and that sort of gave me a whole different perspective, and I really enjoyed the two roles I've had in my career have been my time at Microsoft and at John Holland with strong founder-led cultures and great communities within them. That was a really good time in my career.

Lana Fried ([14:52](#)):

You had a couple of things that happened to you in your life that were a bit unorthodox. You lost your mother at the age of six, and then spent a lot of time with your dad, who was a travelling salesman. What was it like going through that?

David Banger ([15:04](#)):

Everybody has their own story. I feel really fortunate that I've had great people around me during my life. My mom was born about two and a half blocks from here, in Hawthorn, so in Manningtree Road. My parents danced at the Hawthorn Town Hall. Once, I think it was in this lecture or very similar in the EN building, my dad came and saw me pro bono lecture here at Swinburne. It's quite a special place this precinct, and my family were avid Hawthorn Football Club supporters and used to go and watch Hawthorn at Glenferrie Oval. I've got quite a strong affinity here.

([15:42](#)):

But that said, there's events in your life that are just character building, and as I said, everybody has their own story. My dad, we were very fortunate. He remarried after my mother passed away, and I was fortunate, I had a reasonable education. We travelled a lot, and I think I went to eight different schools over 10 years, and that helps you build some resilience. I'm quite good at meeting people, building connections, even though I'm actually an introvert, but my work has required me to express my thoughts.

[\(16:13\)](#):

The school experience was probably developed one of my few superpowers. I think everybody has a superpower, and I'm able to elicit thoughts from people. I can pick on nonverbal nuances in the room as well. That's something that I think I developed over that period.

Lana Fried [\(16:28\)](#):

I mean, you've sort of touched on this, but looking back on your childhood, spending all that time with your dad, do you think it had quite an impact on you growing up?

David Banger [\(16:36\)](#):

You don't realise until certain things happen. My dad passed away just over 12 months ago. I wrote a blog at the time about sort of the 10 life lessons that I had from my dad, and he was very old fashioned but contemporary in his thinking. He'd always sort of encouraged myself and my sister to really not talk about people that much, but talk about events and ideas. I think that really shaped me. He would never actually laugh at anybody. He would always laugh at a situation but not make fun of somebody. That was also something that my sister and I take forward in our lives.

[\(17:11\)](#):

He was probably somebody, if he had conflict, he actually wouldn't go out and have conflicts directly with them. He would speak quietly to them if he needed to. I always laugh, and I ended the eulogy and I ended the blog with, if it's important, put it in writing, and I'm really living up to that aspect within my life, having written a couple of books.

Lana Fried [\(17:31\)](#):

He sounds like an amazing man. Due to a range of different events, you never finished high school, and then you came to study at Swinburne as a mature age student. Why did you choose Swinburne in particular?

David Banger [\(17:43\)](#):

I was employing a lot of people. I was working in the financial services sector at that time, and I was employing a lot of people within that sector who actually had degrees in the job that they were coming in, which is a real entry level role. I actually felt really uncomfortable that I didn't have a tertiary qualification. I think I was 24, 25 at the time, and I decided that I would go and obtain a tertiary qualification. Just given the fact that I had a friend attend Swinburne, and the organisation I was working with at the time had an affinity with Swinburne, I actually attended here. It was just a really nice symbolic sort of rounding if you think about my family's history and coming to Swinburne. Ironically, I tried to start at the Hawthorn campus, but I ended up at the Prahran campus. And then, I did my undergrad and then I came to the Hawthorn campus to do my postgrad. That's probably indirectly sort of spurred me on to do the postgrad so I could say I did something in the Hawthorn campus and be in this building.

Lana Fried ([18:41](#)):

Absolutely a full circle moment. David, you are a senior managing partner at APAC for Info-Tech. Could you start walking me through a day in your life as a senior managing partner?

David Banger ([18:51](#)):

My days are varied. If I'm not travelling, I probably spend a third to 40% of my time travelling domestically, several times internationally during the year. I start my mornings quite early. We were chatting earlier about the coffee, and the reason I'm up at 5:36 is because a lot of my meetings are from North America and they'll begin sometimes at 6:00, sometimes at 7:00 AM. My morning sort of begins with some global touch points, whether it's with our PR team, whether it's with some senior vice presidents that we're working on some strategies, or my colleague here in APAC who looks after our sales organisation and engage organisation. We'll meet with our global colleagues and look at where the business is at.

([19:31](#)):

And then, I'll move through the day either meeting with clients or actually meeting with some of my team. It's really about providing insight into that team based on my experience in the technology industry and being a business leader over the last 20 to 30 years, and really looking at bringing the most amount of value we can in that advisory-based business to our clients and our members.

Lana Fried ([19:51](#)):

I'd imagine that when you study business and analytics, there are a lot of different roles you can get into. If someone wants to be where you are one day, what type of roles would they be looking for?

David Banger ([20:01](#)):

When I was at Prudential, I met a great guy who's called Drew Watson. He said to me, "David, your 20s are for educating yourself, your 30s are for gaining experience, and your 40s are for harvesting that experience." We often, early in our lives, think in such short timeframes. I say, look, to people now when I'm in here lecturing potentially in a hall like this at Swinburne, I say, "Look, this is the great guidance I got, but you may not want to think about it in these timeframes, but think about it in those stages."

([20:27](#)):

For me, business and analytics and your qualification here at Swinburne is just a vehicle to enable you to be employed. When you're employed, to work out what you're really good at. I think you need to find an intersection around what you're great at and the problem or the value that you bring to an organisation. I wouldn't necessarily look at a technical discipline, but I'd actually look at discovering those things and using your paid employment as an opportunity to evolve and explore the topics that you're interested in.

Lana Fried ([20:58](#)):

What about those people who may be taking roles like this? What's a day in the life look like for a business and analytics graduate in their first job?

David Banger ([21:06](#)):

I think you end up, in today's organisation, you end up helping the organisation interpret data. If I look at my roles within the organisations I've worked in, it's not just crunching the numbers. It's actually



providing the commentary on the data to enable the business to make some form of decision. In the technology organisations that I've worked with and the business organisations that I support, one of the things that a former vice president that I worked for at Microsoft used to say, "There's some things that will keep you employed, but there's not some things that will enable you to be successful in your employment."

[\(21:43\)](#):

For me, I think there's a couple of things at this point in time, avoiding a large cyber event will keep you employed using insights and analytics and data within an organisation will actually make your employment successful. And so, for any graduate who is looking at business or analytics, really look at how you can interpret the data that's being provided to the organisation and provide some form of fresh level of insight. Ideally, if you can, help the organisation differentiate itself in its marketplace or what it's doing internally so it can accelerate some initiatives.

Lana Fried [\(22:19\)](#):

If there's anyone who's just starting their career and they want to be where you are someday, how would you suggest that they get there?

David Banger [\(22:25\)](#):

Wow. For me, I think you need to experiment. I've worked across a range of sectors, and I remember I go back to a conversation that I had with Drew one evening, maybe at Prudential University or somewhere else. He says, "The really successful people that I've seen within their careers have been able to take their experience and work across industries." If there's one thing that I would've liked to have done earlier is to probably work in different geographies internationally. I was really fortunate that I was in this international IT team at Microsoft, and organisations like Prudential gave me experiences across Europe, but I would encourage people to explore not only the roles but the geographies they work in and also really challenge the industries that they work in.

[\(23:08\)](#):

I love the construction industry. When I went out four or five years ago after leaving the financial services sector and set up my own advisory business and wrote a couple of books, a lot of my clients were from the construction industry, because I just formed this natural affinity with my colleagues, had moved on to other organisations. If somebody had to told me that five or six years earlier, I wouldn't have believed them and that would've been impossible. Really experiment within the industries you're working in, experiment within your geographies. I say this to everybody, remember my dad's mantra, "Look at events and think about ideas and talk very, very little about people."

Lana Fried [\(23:46\)](#):

That is amazing advice. I need to remember that for myself as well. Now, it's time for our quickfire round. I've got a few food related questions that I'm going to ask you in rapid succession. The rules are you have 10 seconds to answer each question and you have to answer with the first thing that comes to your mind.

David Banger [\(24:03\)](#):

That's frightening.

Lana Fried [\(24:04\)](#):

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All right, let's go. If business and analytics were a food, what would it be?

David Banger ([24:10](#)):

Potentially for some organisations, a watermelon. Green on the outside and red in the middle.

Lana Fried ([24:14](#)):

That is amazing. What is your favourite condiment?

David Banger ([24:18](#)):

Condiment. Mustard with a good steak, something spicy and hot.

Lana Fried ([24:23](#)):

What's the most unique or exotic dish you've ever tried, and did you like it?

David Banger ([24:27](#)):

I am thinking back. I think somewhere in Asia I was offered possibly monkey, but I declined.

Lana Fried ([24:36](#)):

Interesting. I wonder what that would taste like. What is the secret sauce to your success?

David Banger ([24:41](#)):

Persistence, and having a great partner. I think who you partner with is really important around you realising your potential.

Lana Fried ([24:48](#)):

And then, finally, does pineapple belong on pizza?

David Banger ([24:52](#)):

I would've said pre-25 and travelling to Europe, yes. But after living and working across Europe, no.

Lana Fried ([24:58](#)):

Correct answer. Yeah, finally.

David Banger ([24:59](#)):

I sat on the fences a little bit there though, didn't I?

Lana Fried ([25:03](#)):

Yeah, but you came to the right side by the end.

David Banger ([25:05](#)):

Great.

Lana Fried ([25:06](#)):

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Thank you so much for coming to talk to me today, David.

David Banger ([25:09](#)):

It's always a pleasure to come back to Swinburne, and I love this place. It's part of me, so thank you for having me.

Lana Fried ([25:14](#)):

You're so welcome. Thanks for listening to Get Hungry, a podcast from Swinburne University of Technology, where you get a taste of what career success looks like. If you like what you heard and you're keen to study at Swinburne, where you can get your own real industry experience, then head to the website, [swinburne.edu.au](http://swinburne.edu.au). To make sure you don't miss an episode of Get Hungry, be sure to subscribe to or follow the show in your podcast app. While you're there, leave us a five-star review. It really helps others to find the show.

([25:50](#)):

This show was recorded in and around the Swinburne campus in Hawthorne, on Wurundjeri land, featuring some of the great cafes and most interesting buildings. The show was produced with strategy and production support by Wavelength Creative. I'm your host, Lana Fried. And thanks for listening to Get Hungry.