

TRANSCRIPT: CHRISTOPHER R. NARAYANAN INTERVIEW

Christopher R. Narayanan · President and CEO, GA Capital

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An interview with Christopher R. Narayanan, the President and Chief Executive Officer of GA Capital. Narayanan is a 1996 graduate from Texas A&M and an inducted member of the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry.

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Mr. Christopher R. Narayanan | Transcript
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Could you please introduce yourself and tell us about your career?

My name is Christopher Narayanan, Class of '96. After the Marine Corps, I started working in agriculture consulting, moved on to John Deere, and then started working on Wall Street and worked for a couple hedge funds, investment banks, and private equity firms.

What do you value most about your experiences at Texas A&M?

I think it was the combination of comradery and tradition. You always felt like you had a family around you. People you didn't even know would come say hi, and it wasn't just your fellow students, but you might be at an event and you have a former student come up to you and introduce themselves, take a genuine interest in who you are and where you were going to go.

Besides hard work, what is needed to be a successful entrepreneur?

Patience and knowledge. And so, sometimes, you know, you think you come out of college and you've got everything you need to go, and you can hit the ground running. In some cases, you can; however, you will find out overtime that the longer you work at it, the, the less you know. And so, I think when you, when you look at starting off on your own, making sure you did all your due diligence, talk to as many people as possible, especially ones that have tried before, especially ones that have failed at it before and see where they went wrong. And the more information you have, the good, bad, and the ugly, the more chances you have to be successful.

Do you have any advice for Agricultural Economics students who are about to graduate and start their careers?

Take charge of your career early. And what I mean by that is make sure that, you know, whatever jobs you have will put you on that, or keep you on the path where you want to be. Take everything that you can, check your ego at the door, learn as much as you can – you can possibly learn at any given time, and as you progress through your career, draw upon those lessons and then use that to apply to new chapters. And that way, you continue to move forward.

What has been the biggest challenge in your career, and how have you faced it?

I think the biggest challenge, contrary to my earlier statements, has been my being impatient and not checking my ego at the door. There have been times where I knew for sure that I had a better way of doing things and maybe I didn't, maybe I did, but sometimes you have to kind of step back and think about how you're presenting yourself. So, I think the biggest challenge for me was recognizing my own limitations, and also my own demeanor and that being able to present my own way in a more professional manner.

What is your proudest accomplishment within your career?

I think it was my most recent job before I started GA Capital was at Societe Generale, it's a French investment bank. And when I took the helm of the ag research over there, we were ranked #5 around the world. When I, I brought them over the course of two years to #1, and I just recently found out, a year after I left the bank, they're still #1. So, being able to take something where I was able to improve it and leave it at a much better spot, and then seeing it continue after I left.

What kind of goals do you continue to set? How do these help you to grow?

I think my number one goal is always continue to learn. And that can mean anything, whether it's career related, personal development, any aspect of my life. As long as I wake up every morning and I learn something new, I think that I have, I continue to stay on that path to be successful. Being able to never get complacent and always realizing that there's always one more thing that you can do.

How do you manage time between your career and your personal life?

Well, you know, time management, I always laugh at it because time isn't something you can really manage. You have 24 hours in a day, no more, no less. And so, really, it's prioritizing your time. And I think for me it's moving with a sense of purpose. Being a Marine really helped instill that in me, and so no matter what you do, you do it with a purpose. And so, when it comes down to it, you know, I have two hours and I – that I can use right now to read this article and comment on it right away, or something like that. Fine, two hours, phone is off, nothing else, this is what I'm working on. Or, you know what, I've got a date, you know, with my better half and we've got, you know, this four-hour deal. Alright, so that means I have to make sure that everything that I need to get done that's absolutely pressing is going to be done prior to that, that way I'm not interrupting our time by attending to emails or phone calls or anything like that. So, it's easier said than done, especially early on in your career when everybody is competing for your attention, but if you really start carving out a schedule for yourself and saying okay, this is the time I'm going to use to read emails, this is the time I'm going to use for phone calls, this is the time I'm going to use to work out, all of that, you know. Start blocking off times and all the sudden, as many tasks as you have becomes a lot more manageable because now you've prioritized, and you've allocated time.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I would say the Aggie Spirit is alive and well. I know as students, myself included, it sounds a little cliché sometimes, and you don't fully appreciate it. But I know in my career I have been, I've had the great opportunity to move around the country and around the world. And meeting Aggies no matter where I go, whether I'm in New York City or London, has just been such a great experience because you really learn to appreciate how big our network is. And I've had so many former students reach out, help me out at times, give me some great advice. And I'm

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happy to be able to be, you know, to do that too. And I know it meant a lot to me when I was in undergrad, to have industry experts coming in, and I guess now I'm the Ol' Ag coming back. But it's, it's a really cool feeling to be on both sides of that and not only reap the benefits about being an Aggie but then keeping it moving forward by now paying it forward and saying it is my turn, I need to step up. So, remember that in the careers, as you get older that there's going to be Aggies that are willing to help you and there's going to be time when you need to be helping Aggies because they're going to need you.

Thanks for watching, and congratulations, Chris!

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