

“You might have gone through a first stage of loss [of talent] from the soil. Then a second phase – some connectivity and some resentment, ‘Why would they come back and tell us what to do?’ And this third phase: we’re in the early stages of ‘the power of one’, where each individual is a data centre and hopefully over time a knowledge centre. The connectivity [becomes] somewhat independent of their physical environment ... It is about the flow of ideas and a cultural affinity.”

Advance opened in Hong Kong in 2008 and now has chapters in China and India. It also collaborates with other alumni networks, such as Asialink.

Aside from hosting thought leadership summits and bringing established and emerging leaders together to discuss and swap ideas, collaboration and mentoring are also central to Advance’s approach.

One of its programs is designed to help Australians innovate and commercialise. The 50 for the future plan connects Australian start-ups with Silicon Valley veterans. Participants get to pitch to top venture capitalists and angel investors and are mentored by Australian entrepreneurs.

“If we are going to make progress in Australia, the first step is to know you have people working in those areas in the most sophisticated economies,” Ken Allen says. “The next is to connect them.”

And there is definitely something energising about looking in from outside. Seeing Australia’s opportunity breeds a desire to shake the ‘she’ll be right’ mentality.

Adrian Turner, co-founder and CEO of California-based internet security company Mocana Corporation sounds an alarm in his recent book and policy manifesto, *Blue Sky Mining*, on how we should use our resource wealth to build Australia’s next billion-dollar industries.

“Australia’s services industries, which employ 85 per cent of the population and contribute 70 per cent of GDP, are being disrupted,” Turner writes. “These are technology-driven tectonic shifts that mean global entrants will marginalise these Australian industries if they don’t innovate ... The genie is out of the bottle.”

“There are extraordinary people living overseas. We want to tap into their knowledge, their network, their influence ... as a brain resource.”

SERAFINA MAIORANO
CEO, ADVANCE



DAVID DROGA FOUNDER AND CREATIVE CHAIRMAN, DROGA5

- Area of expertise: advertising
- Lives: Manhattan, New York
- Abroad: 14 years
- Has lived: Sydney, Singapore, London, New York
- Relishes: the access to bigger markets
- Misses: a Tamarama beach run before work

David Droga was raised in Kosciuszko National Park near Cooma, NSW. His mother, Vibeke, a Danish citizen, instilled in her six children the importance of experiencing different cultures. “My mother was born in Denmark, went to school in Sweden, and moved to the US and then New Zealand,” Droga says.

He recalls that when his boss called his mother to apologise for sending her son offshore, she said: ‘It’s OK. I’ve got five other children.’

At 22, Droga was creative director and partner at OMON advertising agency in Sydney. When the opportunity arose for him to lead Saatchi & Saatchi Asia from Singapore in 1996, he jumped at the chance, finishing at OMON on a Friday and starting work in Singapore on the Monday.

In Singapore, Droga loved “the chaos, the excitement, the culture”. But more than that, working abroad provided access to a larger talent pool.

At 29, he was promoted to executive creative director in London. In 2002, his firm won Agency of the Year at the Cannes International Advertising Festival.

He worked for the Publicis Network for three years before

opening his own ad agency, Droga5, in 2006, in Manhattan. Droga5 has a list of blue-chip clients but is known as much for its social awareness campaigns as its edgy work. Droga is looking to expand into Britain and Asia.

Droga says the biggest difference working abroad is scale but adds that Aussies are flexible by nature, so foreign markets shouldn’t be intimidating.

Old habits die hard and Droga begins each day with vegemite toast and a scan of Australia’s online news sites. He returns home often and does have one critique of the local mindset.

“I would like to see less of the crab mentality,” he says. “It’s unnecessary and shows insecurity.”

He says he’s “consistently slack” contacting friends and family and still checks his



watch daily to work out the time difference.

What he shares with “the Australian mafia”, is a desire to achieve. “I don’t have the alibi of saying, ‘Well I didn’t have the opportunities,’” he says. “I have the pressures and opportunities [that come with] throwing yourself in the deepest and biggest markets. You take out the excuses and it’s down to your abilities.”

Hannah Tattersall

JANE SLOANE VICE-PRESIDENT OF DEVELOPMENT, WOMEN’S WORLD BANKING

- Area of expertise: financial services
- Lives in: Manhattan (since 2011)
- Relishes: the sense of community she’s found in New York, despite its size
- Misses: friends and family

Jane Sloane arrived in New York in July 2011 in a wheelchair, one foot dislocated after a fall in Indonesia. By no means did it slow her down.

It was quite the entrance for the former executive director of the International Women’s Development Agency, now vice-president of

development for Women’s World Banking.

“Even arriving with my foot in plaster, I had to create a strategic plan within four weeks, recruit new staff, present to the board,” Sloane says. “There’s no let up in what’s expected of you.”

Sloane’s partner lives in New York, which helped with her transition, but she was also warmed by the friendly, open community she found in Manhattan’s West Village.

“You’re doing everything on foot, you get to speak to more people. That makes you really feel connected,” she says.

Sloane’s blog, janeintheworld.com, allows friends and family to keep up with her, and lets her reflect on work and extraordinary people she meets.

Women’s World Banking is a global micro-finance network. It has served 26 million people, 80 per

cent of whom have been women. It provides micro-finance, health insurance and leadership support to help people escape poverty.

“I had time with Nelson Mandela [when he was in Sydney for the What Makes a Champion event in 2000] who said, ‘Jane, if you really want to make a difference in the world, you should focus on conflict resolution’,” Sloane says. “I feel like I’m now living that life here.”

She has been able to bring Australian systems and ideas to the US. “In Australia, I was used to having a risk and audit committee associated with the board and I was used to doing risk management plans – that’s not the norm in a lot of NGOs in New York.

Sloane, who counts Malcolm Fraser and the late indigenous poet Roberta Sykes among her mentors over the years, now leans on Australia’s alumni for support. “I feel like I have a community around me. I can reach out and say, ‘How would you deal with this situation?’”

Working abroad provides access to new opportunities, too. In March, Sloane heard Madeleine Albright and Hillary Clinton speak at the Women in the World Forum. She encourages other women to aim tall and would love to see Clinton’s Women in Public Service program brought to Australia. “It gives younger women the opportunity to understand from older women what public service and leadership mean in practice. You can see opportunities for extending great projects and initiatives in this country to Australia.”

“Globalism is as much about how you see yourself in the world as any tangible product or opportunity.”
Hannah Tattersall

