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Since I graduated from the PhD program, I returned briefly to my home in Hong Kong. After failing to find anything exciting in either the industry or the academic world, I started working in the financial industry (mainly because of my mathematical, quantitative and computer modelling skills). I joined HSBC Asset Management in 1994 as a risk manager, and the firm transferred me back to London in 1996 when I became a derivatives fund manager and a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA). In 2003 I joined American Express Bank, in charge of business development for all structured products in their private bank globally. The bank was sold to Standard Chartered Bank in 2007, and after spending a brief time there, I started my own specialist investment boutique Blue Sky Asset Management with my ex-colleagues from HSBC in 2008. The firm was sold to Incapital in 2010 and I am now one of the MDs running the company's business outside US.

What is the best thing about what you are doing now?
Facing intellectual challenges on a day to day basis but doing it in a real-life and commercial environment. So I need to combine business acumen with the clear, logical and analytical mind-set I have developed through my PhD programme.

What was the best thing about your time as a PhD student here?
In fact, it was the challenge of having a problem and trying to crack it in a systematic and thorough manner. This enhanced my ability to learn new things and solve new problems quickly in later years.

In what way did living and studying in Birmingham live up to your expectations?
The facilities are good, especially the library. When I was studying the Midlands was facing the biggest recession in the manufacturing sector. This obviously affected sentiment, but the strong academic and intellectual culture kept me going.

What advice would you give to current PhD students?
As I said above – learn how to solve a problem. It's more than just your thesis: I am one of the rare PhD graduates whose thesis is completely not applicable to my later career development, but yet the analytical process and a mind to keep coming up with solutions to work around hurdles during the research (which there were quite a lot) have been invaluable for my day to day work even now.

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