

## Mastercard's Aileen Goh on Leading Abroad: Growth, Family, and Making the Move



***Aileen Goh**, Country Manager for Mastercard Indonesia, is no stranger to stepping out of her comfort zone. In the first episode of *Boss Abroad – On the Ground and On the Move*, she shared her experiences working overseas, the challenges of balancing career and family, and the mindset shifts required for success abroad.*

### **Building a Global Career**

In her current role, Aileen oversees Mastercard's business in Indonesia, making sure the company's products, technology, and marketing strategies align with local market needs. Her day typically starts with either gym time or quiet reflection over coffee, both helping her mentally reset before tackling the demands of leadership.

Her global journey began when her husband took overseas assignments, and she followed. Watching him adapt to different cultures and grow professionally inspired her to take on an international role herself. She eventually took the leap, managing Mastercard's operations in Thailand before moving to Indonesia.

“I wanted to grow in ways I couldn’t in Singapore,” she said. “I needed to develop skills to lead through complexity and uncertainty.”

### **Navigating Challenges Abroad**

Aileen was candid about the difficulties of leading in a foreign environment. Senior leaders often need to make quick decisions with limited local knowledge. Developing a trusted network, building cultural understanding, and earning the trust of local teams take time and effort.

“You can feel like an imposter,” she shared. “You’re trying to succeed in a space where others have more context. You need discipline, patience, and most importantly, self-compassion.”

### **Should You Go Abroad?**

When asked if others should pursue regional or global roles, Aileen emphasized the importance of clarity.

“Don’t go abroad just because it seems exciting or impressive. Ask yourself: what do I want to learn? What skills do I need for the next stage of my career?” she advised.

For her, overseas experience offered exposure to complexity and a chance to build business resilience. But she acknowledged that not everyone needs to leave their home country to grow.

“It’s not about geography. It’s about whether the environment helps you stretch and develop the skills you need.”

### **Family Considerations Matter**

Relocating with a family adds another layer of complexity. Aileen and her husband made careful decisions about their three children’s schooling—choosing a campus where all their kids could be together. It wasn’t about picking the “best” school, but the one that would help them adjust and feel secure.

When her husband remained in another country for work, they spent a year living in separate cities—a difficult experience that taught them the importance of staying connected and supporting each other’s needs, not just the children’s.

She described this with a powerful metaphor: “Everyone has a box they live in – school, work, friends — and when you move countries, you’re not just moving homes, you’re moving that entire box.”

### **Final Reflections**

Aileen credits her husband for pushing her to pursue new opportunities, and she encourages others to speak up and ask for help. “My success isn’t just about strategy – it’s about support, persistence, and getting comfortable with failure.”

Her final piece of wisdom? Don’t be afraid to fail. “Trying more increases the chances of success,” she explained, quoting a book she’s reading, *The Psychology of Money*. Behind every success story, there’s persistence, resilience, and often, a bit of luck.

Aileen Goh’s story is a reminder that working abroad isn’t just about professional growth. It’s about personal courage, family support, and staying grounded in what matters most.