AGILITY AND RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGE

ANDRES BARRY CREDITS HIS NORTHWESTERN EXPERIENCE FOR HIS ABILITY TO NAVIGATE COMPLEXITY AND UNCERTAINTY IN THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY.

As president of JetBlue Travel Products, ANDRES BARRY (‘02) solves complex problems every day. The company, launched in 2018, handles the airline’s travel packages, travel insurance, and car rentals, a crucial part of JetBlue's portfolio of offerings.

Barry acknowledges he has relished the challenge of building a new business, albeit one backed by an established brand, using data-driven decision-making, a skill he honed as an undergraduate in the Department of Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences.

“At Northwestern, I learned how to break down any challenge into discrete pieces and glue those particular bits together,” Barry says. “The undergraduate program really built on our natural problem-solving skills as students to prepare a future generation of critical thinkers. As a result, I’m able to put together an end-to-end process combining creativity, invention, design, and implementation to tackle even the most challenging real-life business problems I encounter.”

Barry, who previously served as managing director and partner of Boston Consulting Group, challenged his team to consider how to make their products easy to use while building on the trust and name recognition of the parent company. Then, in 2020, an unprecedented obstacle arose.

“Building a travel business when travel demand was wiped out by the pandemic was quite the challenge,” Barry says, “but we had the resiliency to stick through it and come out on the other side with a winning business.

“Being flexible in an unpredictable market is key, and the most important thing is to build the right team,” he adds. “There are millions of ideas out there, but the winners end up being those who can execute best against them, and for that you need great people to come together.”

BUILDING OFF A NORTHWESTERN BASE

Agility and resiliency, traits Barry says he learned at Northwestern, have served him well during his career. His advice to incoming engineering students reflects that experience.

“Every skill I’ve developed since my time at Northwestern builds off the base I built during my time as a student. The analytical skills you develop are extremely valuable throughout your career, and your ability to understand and assess issues quickly enables better decision-making in the future,” he says. “Get to know and appreciate the people around you. You have access to an incredibly talented and diverse group of classmates, many of whom will grow professionally with you. Take the time to build relationships. They can last you a lifetime.”

BRIAN SANDALOW