

# Seeing the big picture through the bottom line: Stefan's EF journey

By [Lauren Shiraka](#) 2 min read



Stefan is a problem solver. Whether he's figuring out how to backpack through 10 countries in seven weeks or how to increase quarterly revenue, when faced with a challenge, this ball-player-turned-financial-analyst isn't one to back down. Instead, he asks big questions and works to find smart solutions. In other words, when things get tough, Stefan shines.

A former math student and pro baseball player, Stefan didn't plan on a career in finance. After graduating from the University of Waterloo in Canada, he embarked on an epic, two-month tour of Europe. When he returned home to Canada, he discovered [EF Education First](#).

Initially attracted to EF's culture (and travel perks), he began his journey as an analyst in Toronto for [EF Educational Tours](#), which works with teachers to bring high school students on domestic and international tours. Not long after, he was asked to put his analytical skills to work for the finance team. Today, as a Financial Planning and Analysis Manager, Stefan uses his mathematical background to think in terms of EF's bottom line and its big picture.

“Being an analyst allows you to tackle any problem in the business,” he says. “I’m able to jump in where I see issues, and from there, I use numbers to tell a story.”

While you might think finance is all about spreadsheets, this isn’t Stefan’s reality at EF. In fact, much of his day is focused on market research and strategic decision-making. That is, he’s constantly thinking about how EF can thrive by hiring the right teams, targeting the right markets and offering competitive itineraries. It’s a role that regularly requires Stefan to go beyond Excel sheets and collaborate with teams across departments and continents.

“I’m most excited when we’re faced with complex problems or challenges and we’re able to work effectively as a team to solve them,” reflects Stefan, who serves as a resource for teams when they’re struggling to make tough decisions. “People come to me after they’ve tried a lot of other options, and together we look at the numbers to see if we can come up with something creative.”

For instance, if a tour is in danger of being canceled, Stefan and his colleagues are called in to assist. Stefan examines questions like, “What happens if we change the travel dates?” or “Could we run this tour if we added more optional excursions?” or “What if we merge these two groups of travelers together?” After assessing every angle, more often than not, Stefan’s able to find a solution that satisfies both the customer and the business.

“It makes me happy when we’re able to find options that are good for both parties and still ensure our customers are able to travel,” he says. This people-first attitude underscores Stefan’s approach to making important financial decisions. Because to Stefan, the numbers are more than figures—they represent opportunities to help teachers share the world with their students.

“When you’re staring at the numbers, it’s important to remember your impact on the traveler,” says Stefan. “We’re the strongest when we keep the customer at the forefront. If the teachers and students who choose to travel with us are happy, everyone is happy.”