

How to Build A Career Overseas

As the effects of globalisation continue to evolve and talent becomes a truly international resource, many executives, specialists and members of the professions are finding it helpful to be able to point to international careers as a fundamental part of their work experience.

Enterprises are increasingly searching outside their own struggling local markets to the growth markets of other regional economies to acquire talent with the experience to relate to and understand these emerging markets.

Dynamics Of Overseas Employment

Simply sourcing an executive with a track record of operating effectively in diverse professional and cultural environments is rarely as straightforward as identifying a candidate with one or two years in an overseas role.

Candidates immersed in an international market sector over the past several years may be a more attractive choice than one just finishing a short-term expat assignment working within a European market.

Factors such as these should all be considered by those looking to build a career overseas. Is this to be a short-term move? Is the move a longer-term shift, or is it a more permanent international relocation?

Potential expats should understand the implication international careers carry in terms of their future attractiveness as candidates. Maintaining up-to-date industry knowledge of home market developments may be a wise precaution.

However, if a returning candidate demonstrates success in understanding and operating in foreign cultures, this indicates adaptability to new working environments, and an ability to get up to speed on new regulations and market operations without undue difficulty.

7 Tips For Finding A Job In Another Country

There are many approaches to finding a job in another country. Here are 7 tips for discovering job opportunities overseas.

1. Don't Stress

If you are interested in living and working abroad, commit fully to the concept. Don't fret about opportunities you may be missing at home. Many people who move overseas say they would do it again, even if they did not find their ideal

career initially. Most value the experience gained and the insights into different cultures and work practices.

2. Tap Into Word Of Mouth

A surprising number of international job opportunities come from personal recommendations or contacts. Do your due diligence and research your preferred overseas destinations.

When you decide on a location, tell your friends, family, co-workers, contacts, everyone in your network. Chances are they may know someone who in turn knows someone.

Take that person out to coffee and explore their insights or experience. Don't stop at the tourist guidebooks. Seek out contacts who may be able to assist and don't be bashful, networking is all part of the process.

You may find yourself pleasantly surprised by the information you can glean from people you already know.

3. Do A Skills Inventory

One of the keys to understanding how you may fit into an international talent pool is to understand your skills and weaknesses. What attributes are in demand internationally and what areas could you improve on?

Languages are a good place to start. Not only are languages a highly desirable skill that will differentiate you from the herd when applying for jobs, but they provide you with an introduction to peers with similar language interests.

If working for an NGO in the developing world is of interest, language proficiency has the added benefit of helping direct where you may land. It can also give you a competitive edge.

If you speak French, usually you could be spending a lot of time in West Africa. Similarly, Arabic language skills will make it easier to get jobs in the Middle East.

Language skills can prove to be even more critical if you are pursuing a business-related field, as you may have to hold business meetings in a foreign language.

If you are interested in working in emerging markets, study the language while at a university. You can learn specialized or local vocabulary in-country and progress your language skills to the next level when you are living in the region,

4. Immerse Yourself

Providing you enjoy the financial resources, taking a few months out to study a language by immersing yourself in a local environment can help you land a better job down the line. While homestays can provide a great immersion experience, it is always a risk that you will get along with the family. Always research any homestay program you are considering and if possible, the potential family.

5. Fortune Favours The Bold

Depending on your aspirations, your financial resources, your point in your career path and your preferred destination, it may make sense to just try your luck at finding a job when you arrive.

It is potentially riskier and more fraught but many people have found it easier to find jobs once they are physically in the country. For one, you can tap into your local expat community and surf their word of mouth to find your first job.

This strategy can also be useful for aid workers as well. Someone is always more likely to recruit you if you are available in the country then and there and are ready and willing to work than if you are in still in the home country.

However, while this strategy can prove effective in some locations in others it may be far too dangerous.

There are certain countries that you should never go to if you are not under the protection of an organization because you don't know what the local situation is and travel there is too dangerous to just go to without the benefit of a safety net.

6. Shortlist Target Companies

If you are interested in a thriving commercial hub such as Singapore, Shanghai or Dubai, it might be easier to apply for an international transfer with your current organisation.

Alternatively, develop a shortlist of companies in your target destinations and do your research on them. Get to understand their industry focus, look for new initiatives that may require a new round of hiring or track the jobs section on their websites.

Look for organisations with international branch offices, overseas investments or major projects as these typically have a more diverse pool of employees to help them compete in these markets or sectors.

7. Lifehacking Is Its Own Reward

The day-to-day experience of living abroad is one of the key benefits of a career overseas. Most expatriates nominate improved self-confidence and self-reliance, exposure to different cultures, and the opportunity to gain work experience that may not have been available in their home country as the main advantages of overseas employment.

Advantages Of A Career Overseas

Working in an overseas country is a classical way to enhance your current professional skill set or develop new capabilities. Employers find a flexible and adaptive skill more attractive ensuring your curriculum vitae continues evolving.

If you happen to be a specialist, you may have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience working on major projects that simply would not be undertaken in your home country.

Many expats also find themselves working at more senior levels or with more responsible roles than they would typically find themselves working on in their local area.

This accelerated experience will burnish your CV and provide you with more diverse exposure to world-class experiences that can fast-track your professional development.

Moreover, the salary and benefits for expats can be higher in for expat roles than at home and overseas experience provides a path to greater opportunities for career advancement.

Frequently, working overseas offers the opportunity to gain experience in different operational environments, cultures and professional approaches.

This experience can prove to be an important differentiator in a globalised economy where technical specialist talent is more mobile than ever before and will be expected to go where the international projects are during their professional working lives.

Gaining hands-on practical experience on world-class projects can also convey a significant competitive edge, in addition to being personally quite rewarding.

Increasingly, employers are coming to acknowledge and value international experience as local markets increasingly feel the pressure of globalization and increased international competition.

Expats not only enjoy the opportunity to expand their technical repertoire and develop language skills and but can leverage the life experience to prove their resilience and ability to adapt to contrasting cultures and working environments.

Benefits Of An International Career

Working overseas increasingly conveys many advantages, both professional and personal:

- Exposure to contrasting cultures and nurturing greater cultural awareness
- Greater initiative and flexibility
- Improved professional and interpersonal communication skills
- Enhanced language skills
- Greater self-reliance and self-confidence
- Fosters independence
- Qualifying for new certifications
- Expanding the breadth and depth of professional expertise
- Becoming proficient a second language
- Mastering alternate working styles while building an international network.

All these factors can be expected to greatly enhance your CV.

7 Strategies for Landing a Job Overseas

Do you have a flair for seeing things from a broader, more global perspective? Are you looking to broaden your corporate experience with a stint working overseas? Can you communicate confidently in several languages? Do you love learning about other cultures? If the answer to any or all of these questions is 'yes', then working in a foreign country could be for you.

However, looking for a job overseas isn't the same as searching for a job in your home country.

Issues such language barriers, visa complications, and ultimately distance from family and friends at home can be barriers to finding a fulfilling new job overseas.

However, if a career overseas is a key part of your life plan, you need a strategy to land that international job. Check out these seven savvy strategies for landing that dream job abroad.

1. Put a Job-Search Strategy In Place

The very first thing you need to do is to develop a strategic approach to your job-search. If you don't put a structured plan in place your job-search experience will envelop you in frustration and missed opportunities.

What's do you need for a job-search strategy? Identify the types of companies that interest you. Are you are interested in public or private firms? Would you be better suited to working in a multinational environment, a regional company or a local firm?

Similarly, think about what type of corporate culture works best for you both professionally and personally in terms of fit and opportunity.

Nailing a job lead can involve a strategy, which reflects how much emphasis you will place on the range of job-search tools out there:

- Networking through professional associations, alumni and co-workers
- Cold contact direct email campaign to target companies
- Corporate websites register on company career or running searches for openings
- Job sites both including international and domestic job sites
- Scanning overseas newspapers and trade journals
- Targeting recruiters by discipline and geographic location
- Government agencies, embassies and trade offices
- International job fairs.

2. Decide What Jobs You Are Looking For Overseas

One of the biggest problems with looking for an overseas move is narrowing down your job criteria. Successful job searches usually involve focus and discipline.

Too many candidates conflate "international" with travel, excitement, and exotic foreign cultures. Sadly there is usually very little of the former two and those exotic foreign cultures may all too soon become a routine grind.

Go back to first principals and review what interests you in an overseas job. Next, review your skill inventory and develop a list of skills and competencies you've mastered.

Thirdly, assess your achievements from your work experiences to date before assessing the results of the first three stages and develop a profile of the types of roles that interest you and that you are qualified for.

Be specific and if necessary be brutal. International careers are not easy to achieve and competition is usually fierce.

3. Do Due Diligence On Prospective Jobs, Companies and Countries

Map out all the information you know and need to know. If visual representations or lists are your thing, building a spreadsheet that details job titles, skills and the experience needed, target company names, locations, and websites.

Don't forget to research your target country's work visa requirements and get your documents organised. Having a certified set of key documents such as academic record, degree, marriage certificates and birth certificates are all part of the joy when it comes to the grind of actually smoothing your path once you have that fabulous new job overseas.

Focus your efforts on domestic and foreign companies active in your target destination as well as multinational enterprises.

Realize that one of the best, if not the fastest ways of securing an international role is to work for a company in your native country, building your reputation and skills, before applying for a transfer to a branch or an overseas division in a target country.

4. Draft International Credentials

Understand the differences in the typical application process in the countries you are keen to work in. A nuanced understanding of local preferences can make or break your application.

While a one-page resume may be standard in the United States, employers in other countries expect a two-to-four-page C.V.

Similarly, employers in many European and Asian countries will also expect to see a photo and personal information on your resume.

5. Work Remotely

As the gig economy gathers momentum, working remotely has become a viable option for those looking to export their skills to new markets. Thanks to modern technology it is now possible to work from almost anywhere.

If your work isn't dependent on your physical location, then give freelance opportunities serious consideration. Research countries where you qualify for birthright citizenship or do your homework on countries with freelance visa options.

6. Talk to Other Expats

Seek out contacts that have worked overseas. Fellow expats have been through the process and may have useful contacts with the expat community in the country you are targeting or know of companies that regularly hire expats.

7. Study Abroad

Overseas study programs expose you to international work experiences and cultures, build your network of overseas contacts and often act as a conduit for international job prospects. Studying in another country is also a great low-stress way for you to check out the international experience and decide if it's right for you.

The Big Move

Always remember moving to a foreign country requires a lot more planning than relocating domestically. Ideally, you should have sufficient money to live on while you secure a job and await your first salary.

Allow yourself time to find a home, settle in to your new living arrangements, open a bank account, and organize transport.

You should also look to secure a few introductions once you are on the ground to help you network and build up your local contacts. Even after you move, you should maintain a lifeline back to your home country in the event circumstances change and you need to return home.

Final Point

One of the most interesting aspects of exploring overseas employment is the indirect path new job opportunities often take. Just how to find a job abroad soon becomes the key challenge. Expats soon find that word of mouth; networking and personal recommendations all play a significant role in forging a career overseas.