

# DEBUNKING THE MYTHS ABOUT HOW YOUNG PROFESSIONALS FIND INTERNATIONAL JOBS

Students always ask a standard set of questions about international job hunting:

- How do I find a job in a specific country?
- How do I get a visa to work in that country?
- How do I write a country-specific resume?
- Where can I find a list of employers in a specific country who hire international staff?
- What should I study to better my chances of finding an international job?

All of these questions point to major myths about the international job hunt.

## WHAT ARE THE MYTHS?

This guide lays bare many of the following myths about how young professionals find international jobs;

- A country-specific job search is the most effective strategy to go about finding professional work abroad.
- Domestic employers in foreign countries often hire young professionals just graduating from university or college.
- There are a limited number of fields in which a young professional can find international work.

Read on and put yourself on the path toward a more effective international job search.

## LOW-SKILLED, COUNTRY-SPECIFIC WORK FOR THE WORLD TRAVELER

A country-specific job search is most appropriate for backpacking world travelers looking for low-skilled temporary work in their country of choice. Short-term or short-notice jobs in specific locations tend to be low-skilled, in retail or service sectors, and are often seasonal and/or tourist-oriented (working in a pub, hotel, or picking grapes). Teaching English abroad also falls into this category. These experiences are great for building global perspective and cross-cultural skills, but are most often not career track experiences.

A job seeker's main goal in scoring this type of work is to understand the domestic job market and how to write a resume geared to the norms of that country. As an outsider you have many challenges to overcome, and the traditional approaches to job hunting, such as communicating with employers via e-mail, are generally not effective. Impress employers directly with your charm, personality, and an in-person sales pitch. Note that legal work permits can be a challenge to obtain, and travelers sometimes end up working under the table for local firms. There are, however, many organizations (e.g. BUNAC in the US and SWAP in Canada) that can help secure working-holiday type visas for many of the most popular countries.

## INTERNATIONAL WORK FOR THE YOUNG PROFESSIONAL

While a country-specific job search can be practical for students on a working holiday looking for low-skilled work, the country-specific job search is rarely successful when looking for a professional position. When a young professional attempts to get a job with a domestic firm in a foreign country, they must find a local employer and convince them to sponsor their visa application; the local employer then has to prove to their government that no other native citizen is qualified to do the work. This is a very high hurdle to jump over and therefore makes the country-specific job search difficult, if not entirely impossible.

So how do young professionals find international work? We can debunk the myths surrounding international job hunting when we identify who the key international employers are. It may come as a surprise, but young professionals almost never work abroad directly with domestic foreign firms. The great majority of young professionals in North America work internationally with US/Canadian-based firms, US/Canadian-based NGOs (non-governmental organizations), the US/Canadian government, and, to a lesser extent, international organizations. It is very rare for a North American professional to work abroad with a local firm unless they are well-established in their careers.

Most international employers are based right here in North America. Eighty percent of people who go abroad do so with a US or Canadian-based employer. As job seekers (rather than low-skilled workers) you will not be doing a country-specific job search, researching visa requirements, or writing country-specific resumes. When you are going abroad with a home organization, it is the employer who arranges the visa and, in most cases, designates the country in which you will be working.

So how do you find an international job when the employer is based in your home country? Carry out a sector-specific rather than a country-specific job search. With a sector-based job search, you target your search and find out who the international players are within your field.

It's important to note that you don't have to study a particular field in order to find success abroad. Every field has an international component, and you can research companies and organizations operating at that level.

You must identify employers who regularly send employees abroad. Contrary to conventional thinking, large multinationals like Pepsi or General Motors rarely send people abroad, and, if they do, they tend to send only senior or long-term employees. You need to identify organizations whose mandate is international, such as international engineering, health, finance, disaster relief, teaching, research and consulting firms. Don't ignore small and medium-size firms, since they often send junior workers abroad.

## WHERE TO START

To begin your search, decide what type of organization you wish to work for: private firm, NGO, government, or international organization. *The BIG Guide to Living and Working Overseas* offers a large list of international employers (over 2,200 organizations are profiled) that can serve as a benchmark for the types of organizations hiring internationally in your field. Contrary to the convention of many international job books, *The BIG Guide* is organized by sector, not by country: NGOs, private sector firms, international organizations, government and a host of specific professions.

Once you have identified your target field and the type of organization you wish to work for, your goal is to uncover the "international hierarchy of organizations" within your area of professional interest. Begin by identifying the world umbrella organizations representing your field and the international organizations regulating your industry. These organizations will have regional bodies, national associations and, most importantly, institutional members (private sector firms, NGOs, government departments, and universities) that are located in your home country. At each level in this hierarchy, there is a rich layer of potential employers.

This research will uncover a wealth of information. You will find lists of member organizations that are active internationally along with lists and descriptions of their current international projects. Industry web sites and trade journals will also point directly to internationally active organizations in your discipline. These leads also point you to opportunities for internships, scholarships, research opportunities, professional courses, and international conferences. And, just as important, you will find names of international experts in your field who can provide career advice and networking opportunities. You will be surprised to find that some of the international experts live within a 200 mile radius of your home town. Invite them to speak at your school, organize a networking visit to their office, or offer to volunteer your services. These are the resources required for scoring big in the international job search process.

## AND NOW – GO THAT EXTRA MILE!

With your abundant research material, you must now apply extra entrepreneurial zeal to your job search. Be bold and forthright when contacting employers. Entry-level job seekers are most successful when they do a series of small extraordinary things during the job search process, finding jobs using alternative or back-door strategies. Read more about these strategies in *The BIG Guide to Living and Working Overseas*, and good luck with your search!

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