

International Students and the U.S. Job Search

Career Lab
Lucina Hall Room 235

International students need to approach the U.S. job search the same way that Americans approach it. However there are some unique obstacles to the job search for the international student, such as making sure that you have appropriate work authorization status and finding an employer willing to sponsor you. For information pertaining to your visa and work authorization status, check with the Rinker Center for International Programs in the Student Center room 102. Make sure that you have researched and understand all of your visa options.

Other obstacles you might encounter during the job-search process include employers

- Thinking that visa sponsorship will be too costly and time consuming and that it is easier to hire an American.
- Thinking that internationals' differing cultures will bring problems to the workplace.
- Thinking that you are not committed to the job since your visa states that you must return to your home country when your visa expires.
- Thinking that you won't be able to communicate effectively with co-workers and customers since English is not your first language.
- Harboring animosity toward internationals in the U.S. job market.
- Thinking that you lack the interpersonal skills to fit into the U.S. business culture.

You need to be ready to address these possible obstacles during your job search and counter them with reasons why it is to an employer's advantage to hire you over a U.S. citizen. Some advantages you might highlight to employers include

- Fluency in a language other than English;
- Knowledge of cultures, business practices, and markets outside of the U.S.;
- Adaptability as demonstrated by your ability to adapt to and graduate from college in a foreign country;
- Bringing new perspectives to the company;
- Contributing to the diversity of the company; and
- Commitment to the employer and assurance that you will not quit unexpectedly since visa issues make it more difficult for you to change jobs as often as Americans do.

The U.S. Résumé

Many countries require curriculum vitae or CVs to be submitted during the job-search process, while the U.S. generally requires a résumé. The CV is more of a summary of who you are and often includes personal information such as marital status, age, or religion. The résumé is more of a summary of what you have done that specifically relates to a job you are applying for. CVs are typically longer than résumés. Résumés generally do not include photos. For help converting your CV to a U.S. style résumé contact the Career Center in Lucina Hall.

The U.S. Interview

Interviewing for a job in the U.S. may be different from interviewing for jobs in your country. One of the main differences is that the U.S. interview process is an equal exchange of information between you and the interviewer rather than a situation where the interviewer does most of the talking. Be prepared to talk about your experiences and skills and to be an equal partner during the entire interview process. Be prepared to ask questions that demonstrate you have done research about the company and issues facing the industry.

Some other cultural differences include that regardless of gender it is considered polite to shake the hand of the interviewer if the interviewer extends his or her hand to you. In the U.S. it is also considered rude not to make eye contact with someone when you are speaking to them. Making eye contact during the interview process shows that you are confident and trustworthy. However, staring is considered rude, so be careful to make sure that your eye contact is not overdone.

Another important difference is that employers in the U.S. are forbidden by law to ask you questions related to your marital status, religion, health, race, or political affiliation. If an employer has asked these questions and you answered them and did not get the position, you may have been discriminated against and may be entitled to legal recourse.

Additionally, the questions you are asked by U.S. employers may be much more direct than you have experienced from employers in other countries. Speak directly about your accomplishments, skills, experiences, and goals to sell yourself to the employer.

Finally, be sure to be on time for the interview. Punctuality is important in the U.S. Plan to arrive ten to fifteen minutes early for your interview.

When to discuss your visa status

As a general rule, don't bring up your visa status until you have had an opportunity to sell yourself to the employer. You should not bring it up in initial screening interviews such as phone interviews. When you have proceeded to the in-face interview, finding a way to bring it up after you have sold yourself to the employer can show that you have knowledge of the visa process and that you recognize that it might be an obstacle to the employer. An employer may ask earlier in the interview process about your visa status. If this happens, be prepared to demonstrate why sponsoring you would be worth the employer's time and expense and demonstrate knowledge of the visa application process so that you can assist the employer with it.

Networking and the U.S. job search

More than eighty percent of jobs are not listed in public postings like newspapers and Internet job sites. They are considered part of the "hidden" job market. You need to access these opportunities through networking. Networking is the art of cultivating relationships that lead to a mutual exchange of information, support, and advice that might lead to job offers. Even though you are not a U.S. citizen and may not have contacts and ties to U.S. business professionals, there are still plenty of ways for you to network to find job contacts.

Join professional associations related to your major. Use professional online resources as tools to generate face-to-face meetings and close connections. Some you may consider using include LinkedIn.com, Ryze.com, Yahoo discussion groups, and professional chat rooms. Make connections with employees at companies through Internet sites like Zoominfo.com and Ziggs.com. Join the Career Center's LinkedIn group. Vault Career Insider includes a feature that allows you to connect with employees at companies listed in Vault through discussion boards. The Career Center provides access to registered Ball State students through its website. You will need to enter your BSU username and password to access Vault Career Insider.

Don't neglect connecting with other international students and professionals in the community as they may have already developed connections that could be useful to you in your job search. Volunteering at organizations in the community can also help you develop a network of professional contacts.

Researching Employers

Researching potential employers is even more important for international students than for U.S. students. Losing your job could mean having to leave the country. It is important for you to choose employers that are financially stable, free from legal problems, and that do not have a history of laying off employees frequently. Publically traded companies are easy to find information on since they have to file their financial status with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). You can check companies' SEC filings at Edgar.org. Private companies are more difficult to find information on. Check out their websites and use library databases like Reference USA to find information about companies and links to newspaper articles about them. Be sure to ask questions about the companies' future plans during your interviews.

You might also want to avoid employers struggling to survive in today's economy such as the automobile industry or the airline industry. Many jobs with the federal government require that you be a U.S. citizen.

Finding a sponsor

One of the most difficult challenges international students face in the U.S. job search is finding an employer willing to sponsor them. Spend your time looking for positions with employers that either have a history of sponsoring visas for internationals or companies that are likely to be willing to sponsor you. Bigger companies are more likely to sponsor visas than smaller companies. Concentrate your company research on

- U.S. businesses that conduct business in your home country;
- U.S. businesses that have offices in your home country;
- Businesses in your home country that have offices in the U.S.;
- Companies that might expand their business to your home country or other international locations;
- Companies where you did optional practical training; and
- Companies that require employees to have highly specialized, unique skills.

Bracken Library has print and electronic resources that list foreign companies operating in the U.S. and U.S. companies operating in foreign countries. Reference USA is a database you can access through University Libraries' databases page that enables you to search for U.S. businesses that have foreign companies as their parent company.

For more assistance with researching companies visit the Career Lab in Lucina Hall 235 or the reference desk in Bracken Library.

The Career Center is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday (7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. during the summer). Drop-in advising is offered Monday-Wednesday from 1 to 3 p.m. and Thursday-Friday from 10 to noon.

Visit the Career Center

The Career Center in Lucina Hall 220 offers career advising, job fairs, on-campus interviewing, practice interviews, workshops, and other programs to help you find a career, internship, and job. Cardinal Career Link, available on the Career Center's website, lists on-campus jobs, off-campus part-time jobs, internships, and full-time jobs.

If you have highly specific or in-depth questions or concerns, you may be referred to an individual appointment with a professional staff member specializing in your major. Schedule an advising appointment through Cardinal Career Link at <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/careerlink>.

Additional Resources

Books in the Career Lab, Lucina 235

150 Best Recession-Proof Jobs

American Ways: A Guide for Foreigners in the United States

The Art of Crossing Cultures

Best Careers for Bilingual Latinos

Breaking the Bamboo Ceiling: Career Strategies for Asians

Business Etiquette

Complete Job Search Guide for Latinos

From the Outside In: Seven Strategies for Success When You're Not a Member of the Dominant Group in Your Workplace

The International MBA Student's Guide to the U.S. Job Search

Latino Advantage in the Workplace: Use Who You Are to Get Where You Want to Be

Living in the USA

Résumés that Knock 'Em Dead

U.S. Internships: For International Students and Young Professionals

Win the Interview, Win the Job

Reference Books in Bracken Library

Directory of American Firms Operating in Foreign Countries

Directory of Foreign Firms Operating in the United States

Hoover's Handbook of World Business (REF HG4009 .H66)

International Directory of Company Histories (REF HD2721 .I37)

Market Share Reporter (REF Desk HF5410 .M35)

Databases (University Libraries)

Lexis Nexis Business

Reference USA

Westlaw Campus Research (News & Business) for articles about various companies

(Databases are available at <http://www.bsu.edu/libraries/databases/>)

Internship Databases

Cardinal Career Link: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/careerlink>

Internships.com: <http://www.bsu.edu/careercenter/secure/interncompass/>

Internships USA: <http://www.bsu.edu/careercenter/secure/internshipspass/>

Web Resources

Career Center: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers>

Rinker Center for International Programs: <http://www.bsu.edu/rinkercenter>

Cardinal Career Link: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/careerlink>

Career Management Action Plan: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/cmapp>

Quest (Ball State Career Center): <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/quest>

Career Center Publications: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/publications>
Great Links to Explore: <http://www.bsu.edu/careers/links>
Business Week Online: The Visa Maze: http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05_38/b3951434.htm
CIA World FactBook: The United States:
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>
Embassy.org: <http://www.embassy.org>
Employers Hiring International Students
Job Search for International Students (University of Chicago):
<https://caps.uchicago.edu/resourcecenter/handouts/international.pdf>
List of Top 100 Employers Hiring Foreign Workers (garamchai.com):
<http://www.garamchai.com/TopH1b.htm>
Me Likes H1B: <http://www.melikesh1b.com/>
My Visa Jobs.com: <http://www.myvisajobs.com/reports/>
ForeignBorn.com: <http://www.foreignborn.com/>
H1Base.com Immigration, Visa, and Employment Center: <http://www.h1base.com/index.asp>
H1VisaJobs.com: <http://www.h1visajobs.com/>
Internal Revenue Service International Taxpayers page: <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/international/index.html>
International Students and Social Security Numbers (Social Security Administration):
<http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10181.html>
InternationalStudent.com: Looking for Work in the U.S.:
http://www.internationalstudent.com/jobsearch/usa_article.shtml
Job Search for International Students (Florida State Univ.):
<http://www.career.fsu.edu/employment/jobsearch/international-students-guide.html>
U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services Green Card Resources:
<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.eb1d4c2a3e5b9ac89243c6a7543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=32ae9ddf801b3210VgnVCM100000b92ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=32ae9ddf801b3210VgnVCM100000b92ca60aRCRD>
U.S. Immigration Guide to the Visa and Green Card Process: <http://www.visa2003.com/>
U.S. State Department Visa Information: http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html
WorkPermit.com (United States): <http://www.workpermit.com/us/us.htm>

If you need adaptations or accommodations for any of our educational programs or publications because of a disability, please contact
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