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# **Go Global Internship and Research Handbook 2015**

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**Making the most of your  
international internship or  
research placement**

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**UBC Go Global: International Learning  
Programs**

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## UBC Go Global Interns' Handbook: Table of Contents

<a href="#">Introduction</a>	
<a href="#">Working and living abroad</a>	
<a href="#">Student Safety Abroad</a>	
<a href="#">Activity 1: Learning Plan</a>	
<a href="#">Activity 2: Progress Report</a>	
<a href="#">Activity 3: Final Internship Reflection and Report</a>	
<a href="#">Career Development Assignment #1: Informational Interview</a>	
<a href="#">Career Development Assignment #2: Create a LinkedIn Profile</a>	
<a href="#">Career Development Assignment #3: Attend an Industry Event</a>	
<a href="#">Online Resources – Make the most of your internship</a>	
<a href="#">Go Global Internship Program: Interns' Responsibilities Checklist</a>	
<a href="#">Learning Planning Worksheet</a>	
<a href="#">UBC Pre-departure Safety Planning Checklist</a>	
<a href="#">MyWorldAbroad: Handouts</a>	
- <b>Your International IQ</b>	
- <b>How To Survive Your First International Internship</b>	
- <b>Job Hunting During Your International Internship</b>	
- <b>Debunking The Myths About How Young Professionals Find International Jobs</b>	
- <b>Career Tips After Your Time Abroad</b>	

## Introduction

Congratulations on your international internship or research placement. This handbook is intended to provide you with resources and tools to help you get the most out of the experience for maximum benefit to your academic and professional career.

It also outlines the responsibilities of students undertaking internships supported by UBC or as part of a Go Global program.

## Working and Living Abroad

Being able to effectively prepare for, and adjust to, life and work in another city or country is a skill that will serve you throughout your professional and personal life. Employers hiring for jobs abroad are looking for employees that know the realities of living and thriving in an unfamiliar environment.

Think about all the things that could be different about your new work and living environment when you take a job abroad. Cultural and environmental differences all require adaptation:

- Language
- Weather
- Transportation options
- Living arrangements
- Social norms and customs: forming friendships, sense of humour, interactions between people of different classes, races or gender, sense of formality
- Professional behavior and customs: importance of punctuality, importance of status/hierarchy, the importance of protocol, difference in dress expectations

Early in your stay in an unfamiliar place, you will see obvious cues that point to differences. All of these factors which you can easily see are only the “tip of the iceberg.” As you work and live in this new culture, you may have experiences that are uncomfortable, surprising or confusing. Over time, you may see how certain behaviors reflect the values of the new context in which you are working. The more you understand, the more you will be able to adapt to different situations. As more time passes, you may find yourself naturally adopting the cultural behaviours of your new environment.

See the online resources listed later in this handbook to learn more about understanding and managing cultural differences.

## Student Safety Abroad

**UBC's Student Safety Abroad Registry:** Complete this prior to departure, and update relevant information when you arrive to your destination. Find the registry at <https://registry.safetyabroad.ubc.ca>.

**UBC Student Safety Abroad Modules:** Good trip-planning is essential to success while travelling and living abroad learn more about important topics by reviewing the modules and take relevant notes. : <http://safetyabroad.ubc.ca/online-safety-learning-modules>.

- Passports and Visas
- Emergencies
- Insurance
- Health & Wellness
- Trip Planning
- Cultures and Customs

**UBC Third-party Authorization:** no one can contact Go Global or UBC to inquire about you unless you have authorized them to do so. If I plan to have a parent, spouse, or other person contact UBC regarding your involvement in this program (including paying fees or logistical details), download and complete the Third-Party Authorization form from the [Student Service Centre](#). (SSC)

### Important contacts:

Keep these numbers handy and share them with your supervisors in case of emergency.

- UBC Security: +1-604-822-2222  
Available 24 hours a day. If you call this number, let them know you are Go Global student.
- Go Global: +1-604-822-0942  
Open 8:30am – 4:30pm (PST) Monday to Friday, except for holidays.
- The Canadian government's free hotline for all Canadians travelling abroad  
email [sos@international.gc.ca](mailto:sos@international.gc.ca)  
Call collect: 1-613-996-8885  
Toll free in some countries: <http://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-assistance/toll-free-numbers>
- Record your own emergency contact numbers and share them with your internship or research supervisors, roommates or homestay hosts.
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See the UBC Pre-departure Safety Planning Checklist at the end of this handbook.

## Activity 1: Learning Plan

**What?** Create 4 learning goals/objectives for your internship or research placement

**When?** In the first week of your placement

**Why?** The Learning Plan is designed to help students and supervisors establish and discuss learning goals and track their progress throughout the experience. Learning is the priority and this is a great way for you to start creating goals for yourself.

### Instructions:

1. Arrange a meeting with your supervisor within the first week
2. Complete the reflection questions (below) before that meeting. Your answers will help you when creating your learning objectives.
3. See the Learning Plan Worksheet at the end of this handbook and use it to note your learning goals, opportunities and resources
4. In the meeting, discuss the reflection questions, and draft some learning objectives with your supervisor. It is very important for you to go over your goals with the supervisor to ensure that you are getting the most out of your placement.
5. Arrange a second meeting to go over learning objectives and complete the opportunities and resources sections..

### Reflection Questions: (These are some questions to think about when you are creating goals for yourself)

1. What are some of my long-term career and educational goals? What skills will I need to be successful?
2. How does this internship or research experience fit with some of my longer term career goals? What do I hope to gain from my time there?
3. What strengths am I bringing to this position? What areas would I like to continue to work on?

### Column 1: Learning Objectives

Establish at least 4 learning objectives you would like to accomplish during this experience. Identify areas that would be relevant to your current internship or research position and beneficial to you in your long term career development. Please be as detailed as possible.

#### Examples of learning objectives:

- Improve technical skills (i.e. Increase familiarity & proficiency with Excel, PowerPoint)
- Increase knowledge of a particular subject area (i.e. Deepen understanding of Pacific Rim trade policies. Develop a greater understanding of fund-raising best practices)
- Improve communication skills in the workplace (i.e. Improve public speaking skills, Present in a staff meeting)

## Column 2: Opportunities

In discussion with your supervisor, identify specific opportunities for you to achieve your learning objectives. What are the specific responsibilities or projects you will be taking on that will enable you to work on your learning objectives?

## Column 3: Resources

In discussion with your supervisor, identify the learning resources available to you throughout your time in your placement. Examples might include talking with people who have specific expertise, meeting the Board of Directors, or attending workshops or other types of professional development seminars or lectures.

## Activity 2: Progress Report

**What?** An opportunity to reflect on the progress you have made in the first month of your experience, and share your successes and challenges with Go Global.

**When?** At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> week of your experience.

**Why?** Make the most of your internship by building on successes and addressing challenges! Let Go Global know how we can support you.

The Progress Report is designed to track your progress throughout your experience to ensure you are on the right path to completing your objectives. Take advantage of opportunities to periodically check in with your supervisor to discuss your ongoing progress. This activity is designed to help you get the most out of your internship and encourage you to create opportunities for yourself in your internship experience.

### Instructions:

- Review the learning objectives established in the first week of your experience
- Consider these questions:
  - What is going well so far? What are you most satisfied about?
  - Are you facing any challenges in your internship work? Outside of the workplace?
  - How will you build on your successes?
  - What will you do to address concerns? What help or resources will you seek out?
  - Does your learning plan need adjustment? What needs to be changed?
- Submit your progress report to Go Global at [go.global@ubc.ca](mailto:go.global@ubc.ca) at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> week of your internship. It will be kept confidential, and will not be shared with your host organization, host institution or placement organization without discussing with you first.

## Activity 3: Final Reflection and Report

The purpose of this document is to reflect on your internship or research experience. Optimal learning occurs when students are active participants in their own learning, rather than passive recipients of content and experience. Internships enable to students to engage in continual learning and growth experiences and consider the practice of reflection as significant to the program.

Please take the time to reflect back on your experience, and answer some of the following questions in your response.

- Was the internship or research placement what you expected (why or why not?)
- What was the working culture like? Did anything surprise you?
- What was the best part of your experience?
- What was the worst part of your experience?
- Did you encounter any challenges or conflicts? Why did these occur? How did you deal with them?
- Did the internship/research experience provide you with any insights that you hadn't anticipated?
- Who was the most influential person that you met and why?
- Can you make connections between this experience and other experiences that you have had at UBC?
- What do you think the value of an internship is?
- What advice would you give to new students entering the program?
- Did you complete any of the 'Career Development Assignments'? What have you learned? How has your career developed?

Looking back on what you have learned helps you to articulate your experience to employers. Think about what tasks and projects you were responsible for, and what skills you developed in the process.

- You do not need to be an expert in any given area to 'complete' the learning objective.
- Skill development is a life-long process of growth, change, and re-adjustment.
- Authentic and meaningful reflection is an important part of any learning process. It fosters critical thinking, connections, deep understanding, and metacognition.
- Please do put some thought into this assignment. Please reflect on the positive and challenging parts of the process.

While quotes may be pulled from this document for reporting purposes, all information provided will be kept confidential.

## Career Development Assignment #1: INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW

You can use informational interviews to talk with people in the working world, build a network of contacts and gain a better understanding of an occupation, field or industry. Leverage your current internship opportunities and ask your supervisor to help you find a person to interview. It could be a colleague or board member. This is a great opportunity and it is something we tell students to do daily at the Centre for Student Involvement and Careers.

For the assignment, it's recommended to keep a record of your meeting: description of the person you interviewed, how you were connected with them, and what you learned from this interview. Think about how you will stay in touch, in a professional way, with this person.

### **BENEFITS OF THE INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW**

- Access information about a particular occupation, field or industry directly from working professionals (which can be more detailed and up-to-date than what you'd find from online or print sources)
- Discover career options you may not have known or thought about
- Open doors to other opportunities like internships, volunteer positions, summer jobs, part-time work, contract work, or paid work experience
- Build connections for your LinkedIn profile

For more information, please visit: <http://students.ubc.ca/career/resources/informational-interviews>.

## Career Development Assignment #2: CREATE A LINKEDIN PROFILE

- Create a LinkedIn account.
- Follow 3 organizations, invite ten people to join your network.

Check-out the tips and videos at: <http://students.ubc.ca/career/resources/linkedin>.

For more information and the benefits of having a LinkedIn profile for students: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jordan-friedman/college-students-linkedin\\_b\\_2506542.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jordan-friedman/college-students-linkedin_b_2506542.html)

## Career Development Assignment #3: ATTEND AN INDUSTRY EVENT

An industry event is a networking event where people of a certain industry (i.e. fundraising professionals, environmental professionals, HR professionals) gather to meet and exchange ideas. This may be a conference, social event, or other. This may be done as part of your internship or independently.

Before the event: think of 3 things you are hoping to learn. What kinds of people do you want to speak to? What questions do you want to ask? See the tips for preparing at the link below.

After the event: Take a record for yourself of who you met and what you learned. Plan to follow-up with people that you met in order to maintain the connection.

### **BENEFITS OF NETWORKING**

- Gain access to the 80% of jobs that go unadvertised
- Access first-hand, current information on trends and opportunities that will help you develop your job-search strategy
- Connect with experts in your field
- Meet like-minded people who may end up being your future supervisors or colleagues
- Have fun and gain practice networking and articulating your experiences to other
- Serve as a representative for your organization and for the program.

For more information: <http://students.ubc.ca/career/resources/networking>.

## Online Resources – Make the most of your internship:

### 1. UBC Student Safety Abroad Learning Modules

[safetyabroad.ubc.ca/online-safety-learning-modules](http://safetyabroad.ubc.ca/online-safety-learning-modules)

These are great to review every time you travel to develop habits for safe and successful trips abroad!

### 2. UBC Career Resources

[students.ubc.ca/career/resources](http://students.ubc.ca/career/resources)

Get help with résumés, interview skills, team skills, and your career exploration. Book an appointment with a Career Educator using CareersOnline.

### 3. GoingGlobal: Access this through UBC CareersOnline under Recommended Links

<https://shibboleth-ubc-csm.symplicity.com/sso/>

An excellent resource with detailed city and country guides, as well as international job and internship listings.

### 4. Understanding and managing cultural difference

- **Canadian Centre for Intercultural Learning Country Insights**  
<http://www.intercultures.ca/cil-cai/countryinsights-apercuspays-eng.asp>
- **Unite for Sight: Cultural Competency Online Courses:**  
<http://www.uniteforsight.org/cultural-competency/>

### 5. MyWorldAbroad: Access this through UBC CareersOnline under Recommended Links

<https://shibboleth-ubc-csm.symplicity.com/sso/>

This is an excellent resource full of up-to-date resources for all aspects of developing your international career.

At the end of this handbook, you will find some key resources from MyWorldAbroad to help you get the most out of your internship:

- **Your International IQ**
- **How To Survive Your First International Internship**
- **Job Hunting During Your International Internship**
- **Debunking The Myths About How Young Professionals Find International Jobs**
- **Career Tips After Your Time Abroad**

# Go Global Internship Program: Students' Responsibilities Checklist

## Pre-Departure:

- Attend a one-on-one or group pre-departure safety briefing and program orientation
- Review UBC's Student Safety Abroad Modules
- Complete the UBC Student Safety Abroad Registry
- Complete the Pre-Departure Safety Checklist

## Within 5 days of the start of your internship/research experience:

- Update your contact information on the UBC Student Safety Abroad Registry
- Check-in Go Global within 2 days of the start of your internship. Email Go Global at [go.global@ubc.ca](mailto:go.global@ubc.ca), include your UBC ID number and any highlights or concerns from the first week of your internship
- Activity 1 Learning Plan:** Develop your learning plan with supervisor in your first meeting

## After 4 weeks in your internship/research experience:

- Reflect on the learning plan you created in the first week
- Required Activity 2 Progress Report:** Complete your Internship Progress Report and send a copy to Go Global at [go.global@ubc.ca](mailto:go.global@ubc.ca).

## During your internship:

- Stay in touch with Go Global as needed
- Review your learning plan and check-in with your supervisor as needed to achieve and adjust your learning goals
- Career Development Assignment #1:** Make a LinkedIn profile
- Career Development Assignment #2:** Informational Interview
- Career Development Assignment #3:** Attend an industry event

## At the end of your internship:

- Send a check-out email to Go Global at [go.global@ubc.ca](mailto:go.global@ubc.ca)
- Required Activity 3 Final Internship Reflection:** Within two weeks of the end of your internship complete your final report and email to Go Global.
- Include one or two pictures with captions

**\*\*Important reminder:** please include your name and UBC ID number in all emails to UBC Go Global.

# Go Global Research and Internship Program

## LEARNING PLANNING WORKSHEET

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This chart gives you an example of how to set up your learning goals, and keep notes on opportunities and resources available to you. It's suggested to create 4-6 goals in the beginning of your placement and reflect on them throughout your experience to see how you are doing. Think about whether your goals need updating, changing or if you have any to add.

Remember, your supervisor can help you identify opportunities during your placement and resources available to you to help you achieve your learning goals. It's all about using the time you have to make the most of your opportunity.

<b>Learning Objective</b> <i>Establish at least 4 learning objectives you would like to accomplish during your internship. Identify areas that would be relevant to your current internship position and beneficial to you in your long term career development. Please be as detailed as possible.</i>	<b>Opportunities:</b> <i>In discussion with your supervisor, identify specific opportunities for you to achieve your learning objectives. What are the specific responsibilities or projects you will be taking on that will enable you to work on your learning objectives?</i>	<b>Resources:</b> <i>In discussion with your supervisor, identify the learning resources available to you throughout your internship. Examples might include talking with people who have specific expertise, meeting the Board of Directors, or attending workshops or other types of professional development seminars or modules.</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		



## Safety Planning Checklist

### Passports and Visas

- Ensure that your passport will be valid for six months after your date of entry to your destination
- Photocopy the identification page of your passport and keep your copy in a safe place
- Leave a copy with someone at home
- Find out if your destination country requires a visa for entry – ensure you have the right type of visa (student, work, etc.)

Additional notes:

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### Emergencies

- Register with the Student Safety Abroad Registry:  
<https://secure.students.ubc.ca/global/safetyabroad/index.cfm>
- Be aware of common problems when travelling abroad – check [www.travel.gc.ca](http://www.travel.gc.ca)
- Know the address of the nearest Canadian embassy or consulate in your destination country
- Fill out and bring your UBC Emergency Wallet Card with you
- Register with Registration Of Canadians Abroad (ROCA) if you are Canadian at <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration> or register with the equivalent for your home country
- If you are Canadian, make note of the Emergency Assistance service number: **613-996-8885**. Learn more about this service at <http://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-assistance>

Additional notes:

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### Travel Health and Medical Insurance

- Ensure you have adequate travel and medical insurance** (extended medical and emergency insurance)
- Carry a copy of your insurance policy with you
- Leave a copy of your insurance policy with someone at home
- Carry name of provider, policy number, and telephone number with you
- Understand your coverage** (i.e., the amount you are covered for, if you are covered for high-risk activities, pre-existing medical conditions, etc.) and ask questions if you need clarification
- Inform MSP and existing extended/emergency medical insurance providers about your time abroad
- Check [www.travel.gc.ca](http://www.travel.gc.ca) to find out whether vaccinations or immunizations are needed, and which ones
- Book appointments to get any necessary vaccinations or immunizations (Travel Medicine and Vaccination Centre: [www.tmvc.com](http://www.tmvc.com)) (Vancouver Coastal Health Travel Clinic: <http://travelclinic.vch.ca/index.html>)
- Bring your vaccination/immunization certificate with you as proof
- Carry medical records and prescriptions with you

Additional notes:

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**Money Matters**

- Find out about banking fees, availability, access to ATMs (card compatibility), etc.
- Pack credit cards for emergencies
- Complete required paperwork for awards/bursaries/scholarships/student loans, etc.
- Keep the original receipts for purchases you make, your hotel bill, medical bills/vaccinations, etc.
- Notify bank or credit card companies of your travel plans to avoid having your cards blocked for suspicious activity
- Obtain a Power of Attorney if required

Additional notes:

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**Itinerary and your Destination**

- Research your destination and know the 4 C's: Customs, Currency, Culture, and Climate (know what to pack, how much money to bring with you and the denomination, important phrases, areas to be aware of, etc.)
- Leave a copy of your travel itinerary with a relative or friend and inform them if there are any changes
- Carry the name and phone number(s) of the person meeting you at the airport
- Carry the address and phone number of where you are going
- Be aware of airline carrier baggage limits and potential additional charges

Additional notes:

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**Other**

- Complete the Student Safety Abroad Registry:  
<https://secure.students.ubc.ca/global/safetyabroad/index.cfm>
- Submit the Student Mobility Agreement as indicated in the Student Safety Abroad Registry
- Submit any other specific pre-departure forms as required by your faculty, program, or department

Additional notes:

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People who live abroad are different than those who have not traveled. International employers recognize this and so do the expat families who make a living overseas. I remember being uneasy meeting diplomats when traveling to Lagos, Nigeria on my first excursion outside my home province of New Brunswick, Canada. These diplomats alarmed me with their “we are different than you” attitude. But after a few encounters, I realized that they were different, their spouses were different, and even their children were different. Their unique set of skills set them apart from the average North American. I now identify these unique skills and traits with the term “International IQ.”

## Your International IQ

Just imagine yourself in a few years looking for an international job, applying to study abroad, or selling your skills as an international intern. Below are four categories outlining how international people are different. These insights will help you understand what international recruiters are looking for and will help you learn how to join the ranks of those working and living abroad.

- **Political, economic and geographic knowledge:** Imagine a dinner conversation taking place around a table in a lush garden terrace — in your temporary home in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. Your seven guests are from France, Belgium, the US, and Burkina. The expatriate conversation is rich in world politics, economics, and geography. The conversation is lively and intellectual. (Even if you are on a beach drinking beer in Thailand, you'll find yourself engaged in worldly conversations with other travellers.) You enjoy the dialogue, and you know these conversations are so much better than the typical North American conversation about weather, neighbours, or the costs of housing renovations. People with high International IQs can converse intelligently about international news, world events, and multiple countries and their ethnicities. To become an international person, start traveling and read world politics and learn geography. Your first test question: How many countries are there on Earth?
- **Knowledge about the international aspects of your field:** There is an international aspect to every field of work, to every area of study, to each and every field of interest. If you are going to go international, you have to develop a good knowledge of the international aspects of your area of expertise. Know which organizations work internationally in your field, what the types of jobs are, and what aspects of your work have an international application. Knowing how your specialization is practiced in an international setting allows you to focus your education, job research, networking contacts, and your discussions with peers on landing the right job for you abroad. A bit of research will uncover the international aspects of your area of expertise: look for the umbrella organizations, the web sites, the trade magazines, and international conferences in your field. Your first challenge: talk to people in your field who have worked overseas to find out what skills they have and how they broke into working internationally.
- **Cross-cultural knowledge and skills:** Do you know when to burp at a table and when to hold it in? Can you figure out how close to stand next to a stranger in an elevator or while holding a conversation at a cocktail party? Can you tell that someone is being polite when they agree to your proposal, but that they will not follow through? International people have the cross-cultural skills and knowledge to be effective in another culture. They study the country's belief systems, modes of behaviour, and attitudes before they arrive. International people are like cross-cultural detectives. If they are thrust into an unfamiliar culture or meet someone with an ethnicity they have never encountered before, they will be sensitive and skilful; they will quickly display the appropriate cross-cultural traits required to make any new relationship work. Their skills are portable and can be carried from country to country, place to place, and culture to culture. The ability to utter a few words in the local language is important to those living there. Your first assignment: Acquire these skills at home by seeking out people from other cultures, becoming active in cross-cultural groups, and learning a second or third language.
- **Personal coping and adapting skills:** Can you deal with change? Can you deal with having to eat soup each morning for breakfast, as they do in some parts of India, instead of sitting down to cereal? Can you sleep in a room with a

humming fan, a stifling mosquito net, and the constant noise of goats and chickens just outside your bedroom window? How about being so overwhelmed with a continuous stream of well-meaning visitors – so many that you fake the need for prayer time just to have two hours alone? These are just a few of the numerous cross-cultural challenges that require so many small adjustments that you may think at times that you are going mad. With practice and insight you can improve your personal coping and adaptation skills to help you deal with culture shock. People who enjoy living and working overseas are adaptable and tend to embrace challenges. You will face changes in culture, friends, work, climate, and food. Therefore, having a sense of adventure, as well as humour, curiosity, and a great deal of patience, is invaluable. To prepare yourself, you can do volunteer work or become active in organizations which put you in contact with other cultures, either in your home country, or by visiting a country where the culture is radically different from your own. Your test question: Do you like change? Your ability to enjoy change may be the single biggest factor in assessing your suitability for work and life abroad.

## Summary of Skills For Succeeding Abroad

This list of characteristics will help you assess your suitability for overseas work and assist you in preparing to live in a foreign environment. Self-knowledge is power in today's job market. When you understand your skills and career objectives and have a professional self-assessment of your cross-cultural work skills you will be much more effective and focused when dealing with international recruiters.

- **General traits:** enjoyment of change, desire for challenge, having street smarts, sense of adventure, open mindedness, patience, and curiosity
- **Adaptation and coping skills:** emotional stability and ability to deal with personal stress, understanding of culture shock, receptivity, flexibility, humour, and self-knowledge
- **Intercultural communication skills:** tolerance, sensitivity, listening and observing skills, nonverbal communication skills, and second language speaking skills
- **Work-effectiveness traits and skills abroad:** independence and self-discipline, training experience, resourcefulness, versatility in work, persistence, organizational and people skills, leadership, energy, a calm demeanour, project planning skills, writing skills, verbal communication skills, diligence and dedication, loyalty, diplomacy and tact, and a philosophical commitment to your field of work

## General Traits

- **Enjoyment of change:** Do you adapt well to new situations? If you get upset when you find your toothpaste on the wrong shelf, chances are that life abroad is not for you. Change can be frightening for even the most daring people, but you must learn to embrace and enjoy it.
- **Desire for a challenge:** Every activity can seem like a challenge in a foreign environment. Do you enjoy overcoming difficulties to achieve a goal? Do you remain cheerful in almost any situation? If so, you'll succeed abroad.
- **Street smarts:** Working and living abroad is all about interacting with new people, but there's a fine line between being open to new things and putting yourself at risk. Do you know what steps to take to avoid being a victim? Are you cool-headed when things go wrong?
- **Sense of adventure:** Going abroad involves navigating uncharted waters – and having a sense of adventure is important. Don't exaggerate your taste for adventure in interviews with potential employers, but present yourself as someone who enjoys tackling unknowns.
- **Open mind:** An open mind is a basic ingredient for succeeding in an international environment. Be aware that the North American way of doing things isn't always the best way. Stay open to new ideas and perspectives.
- **Patience:** It is perfectly natural to feel out of place and slightly confused in new surroundings. It takes time to adjust to a new culture and going with the flow is

## WANT MORE INFO ON GOING ABROAD?

MyWorldAbroad has everything you need. Register for FREE access at [www.myworldabroad.com/register](http://www.myworldabroad.com/register)

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the best approach. Stay patient and observant and you'll soon feel more at home.

- **Curiosity:** Curiosity can help you appreciate, understand and learn from virtually any situation. Don't leave home without it!

## Adaptation And Coping Skills:

- **Emotional stability:** Emotional stability is critical for work abroad. Employers are wary of applicants who are going abroad to "get away" or those who are overly reliant on family and friends.
- **Understanding of culture shock:** Any serious international job hunter knows about culture shock. Do you recognize the symptoms? Understanding culture shock will help you adjust and may even allow you to help others.
- **Receptivity:** The successful international employee can observe social customs and cultural norms in his or her new culture, and adapt accordingly. Depending on where you are stationed, adhering to social customs can be extremely important.
- **Flexibility:** When you go abroad, leave your ego at home. Never assume that the North American way is the "right" way. Flexibility will make you more likely to succeed, and it will make your experience abroad more enjoyable.
- **Humor:** A sense of humor is invaluable abroad, in both personal and professional contexts. The ability to see the lighter side of things can make the difference between enduring the adaptation process and actually enjoying it.
- **Self-knowledge:** Succeeding abroad depends on understanding fully. Assess your need for space, alone time and the comforts of home. Know your limits! Nothing can be gained by pretending to be something you're not.

## Intercultural Communication Skills:

- **Tolerance:** You may find cultural norms abroad frustrating, inefficient or impolite, but don't pass judgment. Always assume a cultural basis for anything you don't understand, and endeavor to learn from the differences.
- **Sensitivity:** Be sensitive in your dealings with others. Try to see situations from all sides. Often there is a simple cultural explanation for behavior that may at first seem frustrating or odd.
- **Listening and observing skills:** Your eyes and ears can teach you the most about a new culture. Observe people and then ask tactful questions of your hosts and other expats. Remember: keen observation is the key to good intercultural communication.
- **Non-verbal communication skills:** So much of our communication is non-verbal. Being observant will help you become acquainted with foreign body language and its meaning.
- **Second language skills:** A working knowledge of the local language is often crucial to effective intercultural communication. Even knowing a few phrases will help – if only by showing that you have made an effort.

## International Work Traits And Skills:

- **Independence and self-discipline:** An international posting may be far removed from head office supervision. In many cases, you work totally on your own or with just one level of supervision. To thrive in these conditions, you must be independent and self-disciplined.
- **Training experience:** The *raison d'être* for most expat jobs is to aid in the transfer of expertise to local workers; and a project's long-term success depends on effective training models. Be sure to foreground any training experience on your CV.
- **Resourcefulness:** While working abroad, you'll likely have to solve problems without guidance and without the benefit of previous experience. Resourcefulness is about being imaginative, determined and flexible.

- **Versatility in work:** Many international jobs require you to work independently, and you'll have an advantage if you possess a wide range of skills. This is especially true in developing nations, where everything from negotiation to car repair can prove useful.
- **Persistence:** In a culture you don't understand, it's easy to believe there's no solution to a problem. Don't become cynical! Persistence and positive thinking are your best friends.
- **Organization and people skills:** These two important skill sets are discussed in Interviewing for an International Job. Visit this section to get inspiration and start building your skills.
- **Leadership:** Be aware that norms of leadership, management and discipline differ hugely across cultures. Your ability to lead effectively abroad will depend on your understanding of local customs.
- **Energy:** If you're going to be a successful international worker, you'll need energy to overcome cynicism, frustration and exhaustion. Those who thrive on challenges are most successful.
- **Calm demeanor:** In most cultures, emphasis is placed on maintaining a calm, stoic composure rather than showing emotion. The ability to remain cool-headed in stressful situations is essential for success in work abroad.
- **Project planning skills:** As most international work is based on implementing projects, it is important to understand the fundamentals of project management. Do you know how to break a project down into phases? Can you write a project plan?
- **Writing skills:** Most jobs abroad demand good writing skills, as extensive report writing is often required. Be aware that North American students (even graduate students) often have poorer writing skills than college-educated professionals elsewhere in the world, and certainly in comparison with Europe. Always strive to improve.
- **Verbal communication skills:** As a representative of your institution abroad, you will meet many people and even be called upon to speak publicly. Many societies cultivate the art of conversation to a greater extent than we do; Westerners are often at a disadvantage in this respect. Be as polite and articulate as possible while abroad.
- **Diligence and dedication:** Because of its inherent challenges, work abroad requires a high degree of dedication. You might need to be willing to undergo discomfort or take unusual measures. Ask yourself if that's a commitment you're willing to make.
- **Loyalty:** International employers demand greater loyalty than domestic employers. Terms of employment may place restrictions on your behavior, both at work and in social situations. Keep the lines of communication with your employer open, and be prepared to compromise.
- **Diplomacy and tact:** "Think before you speak" is a good idiom to keep in mind while abroad. Take care to observe customs and levels of formality and, above all, be tactful at all times!
- **Philosophical commitment to your field:** Most international employers are looking for employees who are committed to a broader cause, rather than just earning a paycheck. Learn how to describe your passion without seeming overzealous.

## A Last Word

International recruiters are looking for people who are different: people with a high International IQ. By carefully assessing your own international skills and traits against the cross-cultural blocks of skills described in this article, you can compile a strong skills inventory and convey these qualities to recruiters. Keep your international skills inventory in mind when applying as a volunteer or intern abroad, for international scholarships, or for full-time work abroad. If you can professionally explain that you have a high International IQ, your next assignment abroad will be just a flight away!

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## A Few Fundamental Work Habits

An internship may be your first professional job. Based on the experience of hundreds of international interns, there are a host of fundamental work habits that you will need to master in order to succeed.

- **International work is all about communication:** International work environments tend to be more formal, and there is greater emphasis placed on good writing. There's also the added complexity of having fellow employees from all corners of the world who may communicate in ways different from your own. It's essential that international interns exhibit good communication skills. There are two spheres of communication in the workplace: firstly, interpersonal communication with colleagues (develop your people skills), and, secondly, the technical/procedural communications you design to help you plan and organize work.
- **Always maintain a well-organized to-do list:** When a task comes to mind, write it down immediately; when your manager asks you to do something, he or she wants to see you writing it down. There are two types of to-do lists: one is the general to-do list (this should not be a series of papers with scribe notes or a wall of post-it notes), and the second is for organizing various projects. The second system is comprised of lists that itemize projects in a detailed way. Always have a method for flagging or prioritizing important items.
- **When organizing a meeting, always write an agenda ahead of time:** Make two copies; one for yourself and one for the colleague with whom you are meeting. Group similar items together under separate headings and sort items from most to least important. Number each item and sub-item to promote clearer discussion.
- **Be sure your writing is error-free:** Learn to write grammatically perfect e-mails, letters, and reports. Determine who the top writers in your workplace are and emulate their writing styles. Learn when to send an e-mail (to communicate facts) and when to pick up the phone (to communicate an opinion, provide feedback, and negotiate).
- **Get organized and create systems to manage work:** At least ten per cent of your day should be devoted to filing and organizing hard-copy files, to-do lists, agendas, project plans, and status reports. Learn how to organize your pending e-mails and completed e-mails. Develop and adhere to a consistent electronic file-naming procedure. Stay on top of paper filing. Develop audit tables to track the progress of your work. Look for repetitive processes and document them. Seek out formal methodologies and let these guide your work. Write and adhere to procedures manuals. Write evaluation/closing reports on all mid-sized and large projects.
- **Become familiar with project planning techniques:** For all your projects, whether they are two hours or two months, write project plans before they become active. Have the plan pre-approved by your manager. There is nothing more impressive than when an intern follows up after an initial project discussion with a short project plan broken down into phases.
- **Learn to make effective phone calls and answer the phone politely:** Learn how to place someone on hold politely, to answer two calls at the same time, or to ask who is calling before transferring the call to your manager. Similar skills are required for short-wave radio communications, which may be an element of some international jobs. Learn to devise a strategy before making calls: write down the points you want to make and the specific outcome you want to achieve.
- **Your people skills are the most important of all your skills:** Many university graduates learn a hard lesson in their first full-time salaried position. The most common reason for losing your first job is failure to deal with office politics. Natural enthusiasm and hard work only take you so far. You must focus on learning people skills *first*. Be respectful of your supervisor's position and responsibilities. Practice tact at meetings, and find ways to recognize the accomplishments of co-workers. Master the imprecise art of listening, as well as taking and giving constructive criticism. Understand the value of compromise, work to build consensus, learn to mediate, and practice motivating others. In

cross-cultural work, as in many other fields, good people skills are at least as important as your technical knowledge and personal ambition.

- **Manage your time with the boss:** Ask questions, but organize them first. Tell your boss when you successfully finish a project. If you must absolutely be late for a deadline, let your boss know well ahead of time.
- **Thank your boss and colleagues regularly:** Many managers are reluctant to accept interns because of the time it takes to train them, and then the investment evaporates when the intern leaves. No matter how you feel about your internship (and no internship is without its problems), you should regularly take the time to thank your boss and colleagues.

## A Few Specific Lessons From The Field

Search out past interns who have gone abroad. They have experienced the excitement and challenge of working in a cross-cultural work environment. Here are some lessons that many interns learn on the job:

- **Learning to work within large international organizations:** Interns who are successful in large organizations quickly learn that it is futile trying to beat or change the bureaucratic system. Although you may find the bureaucracy frustrating, old fashioned, or hierarchical, and may be shocked that colleagues do not necessarily share your humanitarian ideals, understand that your job is to make the system work. Successful interns learn the system and take delight in making it work for them. Recognize that there is such a thing as a "good bureaucrat"—someone who knows the ins and outs and understands politics. Seek out these people as coaches and mentors.
- **Many international interns are given wide latitude in choosing projects:** Interns come with fresh ideas, and quickly identify many areas that can be improved. But be careful, your enthusiasm may lead you to promise too much at the start. Choose small projects and finish them professionally rather than over-promising and under-delivering.
- **Be patient in your analysis, especially when you first arrive at a placement:** Don't let your enthusiasm overtake you or jump to conclusions about what you first observe.
- **Take time to socialize; it is not all about work:** Interns who spend personal time with work colleagues, learn a bit of the local language, and share in local food, are much appreciated. North Americans are very *results-oriented* but most of the world is *process-oriented*. While we often measure our success with *what* we accomplish, we often give little regard for *how* we accomplished it. Take time to ensure that people are an important part of the equation in your new workplace.
- **Expect problems:** International internships are fraught with a series of small and large challenges. Your host organization may not measure up to your expectations. Your sponsoring organization back home will not always provide adequate support. The work you are given may be boring and job descriptions may change. You may feel justified in lashing out; in reality, this rarely helps the situation. You will be much better off if you expend your energies in finding solutions, being flexible, and rolling with the punches. If an internship is really not working, then negotiate a transfer. Generally, however, do not analyze work issues solely in terms of how you are affected—your manager will appreciate it if you see your role as a small part in a larger picture.

## A Last Word

International internships can provide fascinating professional experiences and are an excellent means of launching your international career. Take your internship seriously, but also keep a good sense of humour—no internship is perfect. Think of your placement as a "real job" that carries importance for the organization you're serving. The value you place on your internship will translate into value placed on your skills by your sponsoring organization—and could even lead to an offer of paid employment. Don't be overwhelmed by the many suggestions found in this document. Choose a few, and make a professional go at it. Good luck, and enjoy your internship.

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Here are a few important strategies to ensure that your internship experience will help you improve your long-term international job prospects. Adhering to only a few of the suggestions below will put you in a much better position to land a paying international job once you graduate. Try to score as many points as possible by using the strategies below.

- **Be bold in your job hunting tactics:** Most entry-level job offers are through the back door. Keep your eyes open for any potential jobs and take quick action when they arise.
  - **Be curious during your internship:** Make friends from other departments and organizations. Make networking contacts and try to attend conferences and meetings outside your department. Travel on short job hunting trips in your region of the world. Seek out managers and leaders in your field of interest. Track names and addresses of all international colleagues for future job networking. Maintain an old-fashioned address book.
  - **Work hard:** Internships are often viewed as testing periods for selecting permanent hires. Impress your employers. Go beyond your job description and volunteer with whoever needs you. Offer services that are in short supply: editing, translation, computer work, and online set-up.
  - **If a paying job opportunity arises, consider leaving your internship:** You need to be gracious and honourable when negotiating your departure. Your new employer should be flexible on the start-up date in order for you to give full consideration to your internship hosting organization.
  - **Score extra resume points during your internship:** While interning abroad, look at how you can build one or two other professional experiences. This way, you can score extra points on your resume: Teach a computer class at a local high school or for local NGOs. Produce a radio program on a development-related topic. Present a seminar to a professional group or college class on your area of expertise. Participate in organizing an event, any event, outside of your workplace. Write a quick-reference card on the cultural norms of your host country, then design and deliver an orientation program for new expatriates entering the country. Teach business English part-time. Edit a manuscript for a professional in your field of expertise. Over one weekend use Quicken software to design the accounting system for a small NGO. Any of these suggestions can be done fairly easily to score big career-building points on your resume.
  - **Continue traditional job hunting techniques while you are still abroad:** This is a very potent job hunting technique. There is nothing more impressive for an international employer than to receive a job application from an organized young intern based in another country. The Internet makes doing so easy. Whether you are applying to North American or international organizations, employers will take notice when they receive, for example, an application from an intern currently working in Taiwan. You are much more impressive if you are abroad and job hunting than if you are at home, jobless on your parents' couch, looking for international work!
  - **Plan for two internships while studying for a Master's degree:** Consider doing two international internships during your college studies: one after your undergraduate degree, the other during or after your Master's. The premise is that you will be completing a Master's degree to qualify for an international position.
  - **Find a short-term consulting contract abroad after your internship:** This is perhaps the most important advice in this whole document. There is nothing more important than trying to extend your stay as an intern abroad for an extra month to work in a professional job with another organization. With a one-month consultancy, you double the value of your professional international work experience on your resume.
  - **It will never be easier to get an international contract:** The key concept here is that you are abroad: you are able to make contacts and you are bathing in a soup called *the international job market*. There is no other more effective strategy in building your international resume than looking for international work while interning abroad. The task of finding international work will get much harder when you return home to North America; seize any opportunity to extend your stay after your internship to gain more international experience and build up your resume.
- **Go abroad with the express purpose of extending your stay:** You need this mindset to envision that you will be staying longer than your six-month internship. Remember, this is an important career move for you and you should realize the potency of your decision to extend your stay.
  - **Start with a clear job search plan that begins when you first arrive in your host country as an intern:** For a six-month internship broken into two-month phases: Phase One: work hard to impress your host organization. Phase Two: begin researching potential employers outside your workplace. Phase Three: begin a series of information-gathering interviews and network, network, network. Phase Four: actively approach potential employers.
  - **Who are the employers that can offer you a one- or two-month consulting contract?** Here is a list of possibilities: other NGOs, IGOs, or INGOs; embassies (not just your own); other international consultants who are always hanging out at the local high-end hotel; international firms operating in your country; your host organization could transpose your internship into a paying contract; field offices of all the above types of organizations located inside your host country or in nearby countries.
  - **Why would these employers be interested in you?** Firstly, you are already in the host country and know the ropes. In comparison to other international consultants, you cost very little in salary and travel costs. You know the geography of the city and the country, you probably have a smattering of local language skills, and you certainly have the cross-cultural experience to work in tandem with local staff. You can quickly respond to an employer's needs. You probably also have good contacts with other expats and their international employers. Moreover, you are skilled—educated with talent and enthusiasm. Bravo! What an irresistible combination for an employer with temporary staffing needs.
  - **Off-the-wall research techniques:** Have a resume ready—one clearly stating that you are looking for a short-term, one- or two-month contract at the end of your current internship. Post a small ad where expats hang out: embassies, expat clubs, local bars, etc. Have business cards printed to facilitate all manner of networking. Socialize at the spousal clubs that exist in most capitals—it is often easier to network through them than directly with their working spouses. Go to as many expat parties as you can. Offer to work for free and provide country orientation for incoming consultants—pick them up at the airport and hand them your resume while driving into town (this works). Speak to commercial officers at embassies and ask for private sector contacts from firms based in your home country and operating in your host country. Do your own freelance consulting—submit proposals directly to international organizations in your region. Offer to work as a low-paid assistant to busy international professionals living in the country—even in exchange for room and board, with the express purpose of building experience. Offer to be an administrative assistant (and driver) to an international consultant who is in town on a short mission. Find a second short-term internship with another organization.
  - **Other strategies to extend your stay abroad after an internship:** There are hundreds of ways to stay abroad and continue to build international experience. Here is a list of tactics, but don't stop here, use diplomatic prowess and entrepreneurial imagination to find more.
    - Consider teaching at a third world college or university for a semester if you have a Master's and like to teach.
    - Consider teaching English abroad as a stepping-stone to other jobs.
    - Consider doing international refugee or relief work.
    - Continue to travel, but make it a job hunting vacation. Show up on the doorsteps of international employers.
    - Extend your stay to learn a new language while job hunting.
    - Volunteer as an editor with non-English-speaking experts.
    - Keep up your correspondence with international colleagues.

Be bold! Be industrious! Get what you want and build experience.

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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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Whether you are backpacking around the world, visiting relatives in a far-off land, or touring a single country with a work visa (the BUNAC or SWAP programs offer work and travel visas), consider gaining professional experience while abroad. Traditionally, travellers find work in seasonal or retail industries while abroad to fund their trip. Finding these jobs is fairly easy; hours are flexible, and you have time to travel. But you could also use part of your time abroad to gain career-building experience. Imagine spending the first six months of your one-year trip working or volunteering in your field of study, saving the last part of your trip for travel and fun. Consider career objectives before you leave – you could build experience *and* have a blast!

## Think About Your Career Pre-Departure

Finding a career-building position abroad is feasible, but it takes more effort than finding low-skilled work. Begin your job hunting strategy before leaving home and you will jumpstart the process.

- **Make the decision to go professional:** Set your goal now and work towards it. Be flexible when you arrive and be prepared to accept low-skilled work while you continue to look for professional work.
- **Focus on finding professional experience, not a job:** Your chances of finding short-term employment in a professional capacity are exponentially greater if employers know up front that you are looking for short-term entry-level professional work and that you are willing to work for low wages in exchange for professional experience. Say this at the top of your resume and when contacting employers. You can even use the term “internship” if the term is familiar in your host country.
- **Professional experience abroad has great career value:** Any type of work while abroad is considered international work experience, and this looks good on any resume. The assignment can be as short as two weeks and can still have great career value. In terms of resume impact, if your experience was in your professional field, your resume will speak volumes about the kind of candidate you are.
- **Offer to work for low wages—experience is what counts:** Say yes to a job which gives you professional experience over a job that pays more. Let employers know that you are willing to work for low wages, a small stipend, or in exchange for room and board if circumstances permit. A part-time job in the evening can subsidize a low-wage professional job. Remember, professional experience now will pay off exponentially later in your career.
- **Focus on finding professional work during the first phase of your time abroad:** Professional work and holiday time do not usually mix well. Use the energy you have when you first arrive to look for professional work. It is difficult to shift into professional mode and land a professional position in the latter stages of your time abroad. Save the fun and travel for the second half of your time abroad.
- **What does it take? Something extraordinary:** There is no doubt that you need to show entrepreneurship when looking for professional work. You will need to impress a local employer to take a chance on hiring you. Organization, persistence, and being fearless when networking are key. These are the characteristics that employers expect you to have when you work for them, so do something equivalent while you search for jobs. Do small extraordinary things well and you will succeed.

## Pre-Departure Details

- **Business clothing:** Have professional attire with you. You may not have much room for extra baggage but you need to pack two dress shirts, dress pants or a business dress, a business jacket and dress shoes. If you land a position, purchase additional clothing from the local second-hand shops to save funds.
- **Your job-search portfolio:** You can sell yourself quickly to employers if you bring a portfolio of your work. Traditionally, this strategy is best-suited to those in the creative industries, but increasingly others are creating “portfolio” web sites to sell their wares. Include samples of your past work (including essays).
- **Resume materials:** Have copies of your resume printed on quality stock before leaving. Keep resumes in a folder to protect them from being rumpled.

Purchase a document holder to look professional when meeting potential employers. You should also have your portfolio files on a portable drive.

- **Reference letters before you go:** In a traditional job search you write “References available upon request” on the resume. In a job search abroad, you must impress employers immediately, so they can make fast hiring decisions. Assemble reference letters before you go and include them with your resume. Coach references about the type of jobs you will be applying for so that they can address those objectives.
- **Local mobile phone:** Consider acquiring a local mobile phone when you arrive. It will facilitate all aspects of the job search and, better still, you can stay in touch with friends and family.
- **Business cards:** Consider creating business cards to give potential employers. Include your name, e-mail (professional address), web site (if professional), cell phone (if local), career objective (i.e. internship or short-term contract work “in the field of ...”), indicate if you have a work visa, and include a short mention of your expertise and/or key qualities. No need to include a local address, since it will probably change.

## Pre-Departure Job Search Essentials

Start looking for work before you go. Spend three or four full days doing this before your departure. Ideally, start two months before you leave, but it is not too late to start two weeks before your departure.

- **The pre-departure job search strategy:** E-mail employers saying that you will be arriving in your host country soon and that you would like to set up an interview for a work placement / internship. Consider phoning employers while still at home; they will take note of a long-distance call. Upon arrival, call employers and ask for an information interview even if they have not replied to your original email or replied negatively. Use charm and professional determination to get your foot in the door.
- **Prepare a two-paragraph professional description of yourself:** This is more important than you might think. Use it when cold-calling employers. Aside from your skills, tell employers that you are willing to work for low wages in exchange for professional experience.
- **Prepare a resume and cover letter:** Target your field of expertise and mention the key points from the career objective section above.
- **Target one industry in the city of your choosing:** Research twenty-five companies in your industry that have an office in your destination city. Find employers using Google and the Yellow Pages online. Extend your list by researching local industry associations. Build document with one employer per page, including the organization name, contact name, title and address, and a description of the organization. After you have a sense of who the industry players are, begin making contact.
- **Be forward when networking and contacting employers:** The charm of a bright, enthusiastic, articulate, and prepared international job seeker will go a long way to impress employers. The job search is a series of rejections, followed by one offer. Stay committed.
- **What type of professional jobs should I target?** The choice is easy for an engineer or graphic artist. For others, choosing a target might seem difficult. The key to choosing the correct job search target is to understand your skill sets. What are the dominant features of your professional personality? An outgoing person should work in sales, or public relations. A shy but process-oriented person should work in systems. The job search will be easier if you target, but remain open to alternatives when they arise.

## A Last Word

Don't miss out on the experience and career punch of holding a professional position abroad. Go forward. Use your entrepreneurial zeal. Make the sacrifices necessary to secure these positions, and reap the rewards. Good luck!

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You are now home after going abroad. Since you have built up international credentials you may have aspirations to find full-time work abroad. Alternatively, you may have decided to look for domestic employment and want to know how to market your international expertise to employers who have no international experience. In either case, this article is here to help you get the best from your international travel experience and market it to employers.

## Take An Inventory Of Your Experience

When you return from your international travel experience, you are already well on your way to developing a solid international IQ. This is the unique package of skills possessed by people who have lived abroad—and these are the skills sought out by international employers. Before writing a resume, you need to review the international skills you have gained from your time abroad. The following will help you assess the new skills you acquired:

- **Low-skilled work experience abroad is marketable:** Future employers, especially if they are international employers, will judge you based on your personality traits more than your work experience. Recruiters recognize that people who succeed abroad have a specific set of skills and traits. To prove this, you must be capable of recognizing and selling your skills. Read on for more tips. (See also *The BIG Guide*, Chapter 23, *Selling Your International Skills*.)
- **Professional experience abroad:** Hopefully, you supercharged the international value of your time abroad by doing a few extra things that will look good on your resume. Employers want to know that you successfully accomplished tasks in a new environment. Did you:
  - Lead a group of fellow travellers on a fact-finding visit with local professionals?
  - Complete projects within a multicultural environment?
  - Organize a social event or outing?
  - Work part-time, with a professor, or as a language coach?
  - Volunteer abroad?
  - Overcome a bureaucratic hurdle by making use of professional skills?

Audit your time abroad for professional experiences and be prepared to describe them in your resume and when meeting employers.

- **Country-specific skills:** Can you speak about the specific cultural traits of your host country nationals? If not, read up on this now by consulting books on country-specific cultural traits and published by companies such as Nicholas Brealey Publishing (<http://nicholasbrealey.com>). Imagine the impact on potential employers when you are able to contrast the work habits of your Japanese host with people in your home country. You also gain points with employers if you traveled independently, or lived with host nationals. In all these cases, prepare descriptions that support your professional and intercultural skills.
- **Universal cross-cultural skills:** While abroad, you developed a unique set of cross-cultural skills. These are portable! You can apply these in any new country. You are familiar with culture shock and can professionally describe it. You understand the cycle of stress and exhilaration of moving to a new place. You are more adaptable, open-minded and observant. You can spot cultural differences and change your behaviour to accommodate local norms. You have a better understanding of yourself and you can use this self-knowledge when making decisions in a culture other than your own. You are curious, brave and have a sense of adventure. At the same time you are streetwise and can function in unfamiliar environments. All these skills can be woven into your resume and when networking with recruiters.
- **Language skills:** You already know that language skills are important for international and domestic employers. Even basic or obscure language skills indicate a propensity for language learning in general. When communicating with employers, indicate the level of reading, writing and speaking a second language you acquired. Always describe what you can do as opposed to what you can't.

- **General work skills:** When speaking to employers, recognize the value of the general skills you developed while abroad. You are adept at managing change and you are independent and self-disciplined while being sensitive to the needs of others. There are dozens of work characteristics developed abroad: resourcefulness, versatility, persistence, an observant and calm demeanour, diligence, communication skills, broad and strategic thinking, an ability to deal with ambiguities, courage, open-mindedness, flexibility, resourcefulness, tact, listening and observing skills, an ability to deal with stress, sense of humour, awareness of interpersonal politics, a respect for protocol and hierarchy, loyalty and tenacity. All of these skills are valuable to you when contacting domestic as well as international employers.

## How To Explain Your International Experience

You are already aware that, with the exception of others who have lived abroad, very few people are interested in or able to understand your life changing travel experiences. Here are a few tips to help you sell your skills to future employers.

- **Be professional in describing your travel experiences:** You are probably fairly animated about the challenges you faced while abroad. Practise rewording your description of job responsibilities in a more businesslike manner. Be formal and articulate.
- **Use the language of your future work:** You may have to give up the expatriate jargon that has become second nature to you. Avoid using names and titles that will be foreign to your prospective employer. Speak in terms familiar to your audience. For example, use "adjustment" instead of "culture shock"; use "able to deal with change" instead of "cross-cultural adaptability"; use "interpersonal skills" instead of "cultural sensitivity"; use "effective listening skills" instead of "cross-cultural communications"; use "political acuity" instead of "diplomacy."
- **Speak of your successes and accomplishments:** Do not discuss insurmountable challenges or why you did not succeed at something. Employers, especially those with no international experience, will not be able to understand the context and could form erroneous conclusions about your capabilities.
- **Network with other world travelers:** Actively seek out others who have recently returned from abroad who can provide mutual support during your job search.

## How To Boast About Your Skills

It can feel awkward to boast about your own skills. Non-North Americans in particular have a cultural aversion to selling themselves to employers. Here are a few tips to make the act more palatable when networking with employers.

- **Say what others say about you:** "My previous supervisor relied on me mainly to..." "My colleagues appreciate working with me because..."
- **Say why you were successful:** "I can attribute my successes to being able to..." "In my previous position, I was commended for..." "This project was successfully managed because I..."
- **Say how you do things:** "When managing a project, I always pay close attention to..." "I am particularly well known for my skills in..." "My general approach in these circumstances is to always..."

## Write An Elevator Pitch

There are multiple situations where you will need to respond to someone saying: "Tell me about yourself." Imagine that you have one short elevator ride to explain to a potential employer who you are. A two-paragraph professional description of yourself written before you write your resume will help you figure out the high level attributes of the professional you. These are your "main" selling points; focus on highlights only. Decide on a theme to bring it all together. The first paragraph should be hard skills (work, study, volunteer experience). Build a theme around

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# Career Tips After Your Time Abroad

international experience if looking for international work. The second should be about your soft skills (what makes you succeed in a work environment). This second paragraph is the most challenging. Ensure that each paragraph supports your major theme.

## Develop A Stock Of Career Stories

Everyone who has worked and lived abroad has their own list of “wild and shocking” stories to share with friends. These edgy cross-cultural experiences are fun to share, but are not appropriate for potential employers. You need to modify them or devise a new set of cross-cultural career-related stories about your travel experiences. Craft these stories ahead of time and build them to reinforce your professional skill sets. Here are a few examples:

- Describe your roles working with local colleagues and in teams while abroad.
- Describe your encounters when meeting professionals.
- Speak about personal encounters that gave you insight into the local culture.
- Speak about the link between your country and the host country, especially in terms of the work place. Describe your professional skills through a story about a cross-cultural encounter that went wrong.

You only need three or four of these pre-scripted career stories when job searching. One story alone is often enough to demonstrate a whole grouping of your professional skills/maturity, insightfulness, sound judgment, cross-cultural knowledge, etc.

## Writing About Your Travel Credentials In A Resume

Younger professionals should write about their travel experience more extensively than mid-career professionals. Consider writing a section about your travel experiences as if it were a job. Start with the job title “Cross-cultural and Professional Experience While Traveling Abroad.” Include countries and dates. Outline your experience abroad and the skills you developed. Consider describing your travel experience with bullets for your leadership roles when organizing fellow travellers, cross-cultural mentoring roles, integrating with local families and professionals, succeeding in overcoming challenges, and travel to remote or difficult areas. If you visited the offices of a world-renowned organization or with a prominent professional, reference this. Perhaps indicate how you overcame financial challenges to pay for your trip. List what fascinated you in your travels.

All of the above functions to tell employers something about your professional personality. It points to your top skills, what you are good at, and what you enjoy. If you are applying for international work, consider grouping all your international experience (work, volunteer, study abroad, international courses, travel and languages) under one heading for greater impact.

## Dealing With International Employers

Never announce to potential international employers that your career goal is to live in Paris or to travel extensively in Asia. Don't mix personal goals with career goals. Employers want to hear about goals that match their skill requirements. Tell employers that you want:

- *to apply the unique set of international skills you developed while traveling and working for a year in South East Asia.*
- *to work in an environment that requires you to make use of the insights and knowledge acquired while accomplishing work within a multicultural team environment.*
- *to apply the experience and skills you developed while interning for six months in London.*

The focus should be on skills, not on your personal goals.

## Dealing With Employers Who Have No International Experience

Employers with little or no international experience may have misconceptions about job seekers who have international work and travel experience. While not all employers believe the following myths about returnees, you may want to keep them in mind:

### POSSIBLE EMPLOYER ASSUMPTIONS:

- **Returnees have emotional re-adjustment problems:** They no longer feel they fit into Western society
- **Returnees are too exotic:** They have adopted alternative lifestyles and can't be team players. They are excessively individualistic and independent. Their differences are threatening.
- **Returnees are flighty:** They don't really want permanent jobs or long-term responsibilities. They will soon be off traveling again.
- **Returnees have health problems:** They may have strange tropical diseases.

### YOUR SOLUTIONS:

- **Do not overstate or dwell on your re-entry adjustment problems:** Stress positive aspects of your overseas and re-entry experience.
- **Do not say that you plan to return overseas:** You are glad to be home in familiar surroundings.
- **State that you are happy to be back:** This is your home. You are anxious to join your peers in the working world.
- **Demonstrate your business acumen:** Draw attention to your effective work habits, adaptability to new technologies, willingness to be a team player, understanding of Western leadership styles.
- **Avoid wearing souvenir clothing or jewellery:** Dress in smart, businesslike clothing. Focus on fitting in.
- **Show your attachment to home:** Mention your enthusiasm for things like home cooking, a particular university, or a sports team. Talk about the pleasures of finally reading home country newspapers again.
- **Say that you are healthy:** Mention the clean bill of health you received during your recent physical.

## A Last Word

After an extended period of living and working abroad, you know the value that this type of experiential education brings you. You have now returned home a stronger individual. You have insights into the world that others who have not traveled do not have. You are conscious of a wider set of ideas about humanity. Your planet is smaller, your insights are larger. Whether you are speaking to domestic or international employers, your experience abroad will always provide you with strengths and vision that are almost unattainable under circumstances other than living abroad. Your intellect is stimulated and your mind is free when you live in close proximity to people from a different culture. Good luck and best wishes in your long career of continued learning.

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