

Looking for Work Abroad? 10 Steps to Conquer the Expat Job Search

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Whether you're looking for a new job abroad or moving between industries in a foreign country, the job search process is never really an easy one for an expat. In today's economy, the competition for employment is intense and becomes even more difficult in a foreign country. **Resumes seem to disappear into the black hole of recruitment regardless of whether you're in China, Brazil or the UAE.**

Take charge of the situation by applying the following steps to help you overcome obstacles faced during your expat job search.

1. Decide on what you want to do and Research your Targeted Industry

Define your next career move and be clear about the job you want. Are you looking to progress in your current field or do you want to change careers and industries? Once this has been established, commence with researching the related industry.

For example, you might be an expat in Shanghai working in the recruitment of call centre agents, and you're now looking to become involved in international recruitment. Research the top recruitment companies in Shanghai that specialize in international recruitment and establish what they're looking for in their staff. Make a list of such companies and start targeting them.

2. Overcome your Fear

Fear is one of the most debilitating aspects of the job search, and it can rob you massively of your sizzle. Work to overcome this. **Adopt an attitude of addressing your fears by drawing close the very thing you fear.**

For example, you might want to pursue a career in public relations, but you have a fear of speaking up during company meetings or doing presentations. Investigate opportunities to develop your public speaking and communication skills and work to overcome your fear by attending a public speaking seminar or becoming a member of a public speaking group (such as Toastmasters), which are available in many countries.

3. Re-Evaluate your Brand and Identity

Your core values, talents, strength and image all make up your brand and need to fall into alignment and resonate with who you truly are and what you can bring to the world.

Using self-help resources like the exercises in *What Colour is Your Parachute* can help you identify your core skills and strengths and create a brand that's authentic to you. This brand needs to be consistent across all platforms (social media, your resume, networking events, etc.).

4. Target and Market your Resume

The first half of the first page of your resume needs to reflect your skills and experience that are stipulated in the job specification. Include any industry-related qualifications that give you the edge over your competition. Show that you hold skills of impact, such as cross-cultural communication skills.

Your brand or elevator pitch and contact details should appear on the first page of the first half of your resume. Use a neutral email address such as Gmail rather than one showing your country of origin to avoid complications in the minds of recruiters. **Search the host country to identify their standard on how to present your employment experience and determine if that country is using British or American English.**

5. Tap into your Network (Online and Offline)

Networking is the art of connecting with people and cultivating strong relationships. Devise job search campaigns by accessing your database of personal and professional contacts and letting them know you're in the market for a new job in your host (or target) country. Connect with people on professional sites such as LinkedIn and social sites such as Facebook. **Ask each of your contacts to introduce you to two people who will be able to help or lead you in the form of contacts/referrals, ideas, potential job opportunities, etc.**

Attending networking events related to your target industry is also helpful. For example, you might want a career in the fashion industry, so you will want to attend fashion shows and related events, as this will improve your chances of connecting with people in the know. Spread the word that you're on the lookout for a new job opportunity; even speak to people outside your industry.

6. Connect with Key People in your Future Country

Use social groups such Meetup.com, InterNations.org (both are free to join) and other expat groups to **connect with people in your future host country who can give you advice on recruitment and job placements or provide you with a list of recruitment agencies you can connect with in preparation for your move abroad.** Also connect with members for friendship and join groups or activities that are of interest to you, such as a salsa dance group.

Following people or groups on LinkedIn, Twitter, etc. in your host country and contributing to forums or discussions will also lead to strong connections. The art of blogging and posting is another useful tool in your job search and should not be taken lightly. Blog on sites relevant to your field -- for example, if you're a financial consultant, you could blog about the services you offer and other useful financial information that people might need in your host country. This will increase your visibility to future employers and people in the related industry.

7. Overcome the Challenge of Employers looking for Candidates with Local experience

From my experience with the expat job search, this has not really been a prominent problem. **One of the best ways of dealing with this is to volunteer at companies in your related industry.** Not only will you be adding immense value to yourself, but you'll be building great credibility, and when a position does become available in Company X, they might just employ you. If you're on a spousal visa, you also have the opportunity of engaging in freelance work.

8. Cope with the Stress Factor

Taking the stress factor out of the job search is easier said than done. **But it's important to keep your mind and body active and positive.** Exercising regularly -- a run in the park or doing yoga and engaging in your host country's cultural activities -- will work wonders for you.

Keep the company of positive people who support you; regular communication with family and friends abroad (via Skype, Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp, etc.) will help maintain positive energy. And do reward yourself for the baby steps taken during your job search.

9. Look into Recruitment Agents / Attend Career Summits

Registering with recruitment professionals is one sure way of sharing your job search project. Work with the recruitment agents and not against them. Attending career summits/career fairs is another good way of putting yourself out there and increasing your chances of finding a job in a foreign country.

10. Secure Work Permits and Visa Regulations

The spouse of an expat in most cases is permitted to work under a spousal visa; otherwise make sure you're not overstaying in a country or working without an employment visa (this is illegal). **If changing jobs abroad, ensure that your work visa can either be transferred to the new employer or your new employer is providing you with an appointment letter and has indicated that your visa application is in process.**

Expats following these steps will create a buzz and build visibility to showcase their abilities, skills and professional image and increase their chances of landing a job in any country. Good luck and happy travels!