

# **JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

## **PREPARING FOR THE JOB SEARCH**

- **Utilize Resources at the office of career services at your university or college**

Most universities and colleges have an office of career services that offers a wide range of services and resources to help you prepare for your job search: qualified career counselors to assist you; seminars that include resume writing, interviewing skills and job-hunt strategies for international students; internship and full-time job listings; recruitment programs; career directories, videotapes, and computers for preparing resumes and cover letters.

- **Contact the International Student office at your university or college**

To ensure a smoother transition into the U.S. job market, it is necessary to become familiar with the regulations involving your Visa and to have the proper documentation authorizing you to work. International Student offices provide current information regarding Visa regulations and work permission stipulations.

- **Examine Issues of Cultural Differences**

Cultural values reflect personal and lifestyles choices, cultural perspectives and how individuals relate to one another. As an international student pursuing employment opportunities in the U.S., closely examine inherent cultural values that could impact on the effectiveness of your American job search. Taking a closer look at cultural norms does not mean relinquishing them. It does involve, however, reviewing some of your own values in relation to the cultural expectations of American employers. Some examples of American cultural expectations will be provided in the interviewing section.

- **Define your Short- and Long-Term Career Goals**

American employers seek out candidates who are goal directed. Your short- and long-range career goals may be communicated, in writing, through your resume and cover letter, and verbally during the interview. Tailor your goals to the job for which you are applying. For some international students, a short-term goal may be to seek employment sponsorship from an employer. However, a premature discussion concerning sponsorship might discourage some employers from extending a job offer. Handle this topic delicately; try to avoid the subject of obtaining sponsorship from an employer unless the employer introduces it.

- **Develop Well-Written Resumes and Cover Letters**

Your resume and cover letter can determine how successful you are in attracting potential employers. Therefore, focus on your strengths and achievements. Highlight your multi-cultural background including work and educational experience and language skills. Information regarding your Visa status need not be included in your cover letter or resume. Although mentioning your Visa status could successfully eliminate one obstacle to be dealt with during the interview, it could also prematurely exclude you from the interview process. It might be more effective to concentrate on incorporating current information about the prospective organization.

## **THE INTERVIEW**

### **Be a Savvy Interviewee**

For most students, a job interview is stressful. For international students, interviewing with American organizations, there is the added factor of how to discuss the visa status. If you are an international student and are interested in being employed in the United States, there are employers that may be willing to hire you if: you are qualified, you are legal to work under the conditions of your visa, and you can discuss the visa issue with confidence during the job interview.

**Apply only for positions that are available to individuals with foreign status.** There are specific American companies, organizations, and government agencies that hire only U.S. citizens. Pursuing positions with these organizations, even if you believe that you would be a perfect candidate, is probably not an effective use of your time.

**Employers are interested in hearing about specific accomplishments and career goals.** Elaborate on your achievements and focus on your strengths using examples from your past performance. American employers also favor candidates who can demonstrate thorough knowledge of their career interests, and of the organization, including information on an organization's mission, products, services, clients or customers, and future goals.

**The quality of the interview for an international student can also be affected by cultural variables,** such as language proficiency, nonverbal communication style, body language, and overall physical appearance. Interviewees are expected to be groomed and coordinated in appearance, to be able to communicate self-confidence, goal direction, flexibility, and independence. Speak directly and clearly. In addition, communicate your self-confidence with a firm handshake in the greeting and closing, and maintain steady eye contact during the interview.

**Be prepared and knowledgeable about your visa status before the interview.** Know your work permission guidelines and be able to discuss them confidently with the employer. If you are unclear about your visa status, consult with OISS. Know your eligibility and conditions under which you are permitted to work in the United States. Since most American employers do not have an in-depth knowledge of visa regulations, it is essential that you articulate this during the interview. For example, you should be able to explain what your visa status is and answer questions about how long the visa lasts and how it can be renewed or changed. Because regulations change so quickly, know the most up-to-date information that affects you and your visa status.

**Handling the Visa Question.** Respond to any questions regarding your visa in a direct, clear, and confident manner. If you are nervous or unsure, the employer will pick up on these signals and may not be able to stay focused on your skills and qualifications. Avoid excessive detail. This may give the impression that hiring you will be too complicated and confusing. Do not let your visa status be the focus of the interview. The purpose of a job interview is to demonstrate your skills and expertise related to the available position. Keep the focus of the interview on your skills and qualifications.

**The decision to introduce your visa status and work issue is a personal and individual one.** It is not required for you to bring up this topic. However, if the interviewer introduces the issue, address your visa status and work eligibility directly and confidently. For example, you can say, "I am on a student visa and I would be happy to discuss this with you. I have met with my advisor at the NYU Office for International Students and Scholars and can assure you that the process involved in hiring me is not complicated."

## FINDING THE JOB

### • Networking

Networking is a process through which we develop and maintain relationships with professionals in order to solicit information, advice and referrals which will facilitate the job search. It will be one of your most valuable job-search tools. Maintain a list of people with whom you are in contact, including peers, relatives, professors, and past employers. As the definition suggests, this may open up many avenues for information that can lead to job openings. For more tips on networking, take advantage of our *Job Search and Networking Skills* seminar.

### • Direct Job Leads

There are some job opportunities provided by multi-national companies seeking foreign nationals to work in their home country. In many cases international students may receive their practical training in the U.S., after which they return to their home country to work for a U.S. employer. Research potential employers, particularly those with international affiliations to uncover unadvertised job openings which are a part of what is commonly referred to as the “hidden job market,” a selection of job openings which are often not advertised.

## A FINAL NOTE

Preparation is the key to any effective job search, requiring practice and research. International students should be savvy to the cultural values of American employers and know how to communicate them effectively. Your job-hunting skills require that you practice being assertive, taking the initiative to establish contacts and follow up on potential job leads. Handle all interactions with employers professionally, and remember to send thank you letters to everyone who was helpful in your job search.

## RESOURCES & RELATED SITES

- ? International Directory of Corporate Affiliations. Annual. National Register Publishing Co. Over 30,000 listing of corporations in the world.
- ? Encyclopedia of Associations: International Organizations. 37th edition. Gale Research International, Ltd., 2002. This classic reference covers approximately 20,000 multinational and national membership organizations from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe - including approximately 2,500 U.S.-based organizations with multinational membership.
- ? Worldwide Branch Locations of Multinational Companies. David S. Hoopes, ed., Gale Research, Inc., c1994.
- ? “The Employment Interview: American Style” – videotape
- ? Directory of American Employers for International Professionals. Ten volume set covering a variety of fields. Provides information on companies who have actually sponsored and/or have employed foreign nationals.

- ? Directory of American Firms Operating in Foreign Countries. 14<sup>th</sup> Edition. 3 vols. Juvenal L. Angel. World Trade Academy Press Publication, Uniworld Publications Inc., 1996.
- ? Directory of Foreign Firms Operating in the United States. World Trade Academy Press Publication, Uniworld Publications Inc., 2004.

*Communication skills training for foreign nationals in the New York-area:*

- ? The International Center in New York, Inc., 50 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, 7<sup>th</sup> floor, New York, NY 10010, 212-255-9555. [www.intlcenter.org](http://www.intlcenter.org)
- ? English in Action, The English-Speaking Union of the U.S., 144 East 39th Street New York, NY 10016, 212-818-1200. [www.esuus.org](http://www.esuus.org)
- ? American Language Institute at NYU, 48 Cooper Square, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, New York, NY 10003, 212-998-7040. [www.scps.nyu.edu/departments/department.jsp?deptId=1](http://www.scps.nyu.edu/departments/department.jsp?deptId=1)