

**More Than a Line on
Your Resume:
Marketing Your
International Experience**



Presented by :

Career Center for
Vocation & Development

Marketing Your International Experience

So you've just had one of the most amazing experiences of your life so far. Perhaps you could even say it was "life changing." Your experience abroad likely expanded your horizons, your global perspective, and your willingness to take risks. What do you do with all that you have seen, learned, and gained through this experience? It's no secret that studying abroad is something that is highly valued by employers in virtually all industries, but it needs to be more than just a line on your resume. It's up to you to clearly articulate the experiences you had and skills you developed while abroad. The purpose of this packet is to help you translate your international experience to prospective employers in meaningful and relevant ways.

SKILLS

★ **What specific skills have you acquired or enhanced while abroad?**

Skills desired by employer	Example of how I've demonstrated it

★ A Note about TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Transferable skills can be developed by any person in any major. These skills are "transferable," or useful, to a variety of employers and occupations. Undoubtedly, you developed a great deal of skills throughout your time abroad that would be useful to a variety of employers.

★ Common skills gained through international experience:

- Listening and observation skills
- Enhanced cultural awareness and appreciation
- Adapting to a new culture or environment
- Interpersonal communication skills, sometimes despite language barriers
- Perseverance in spite of chaos and confusion
- Organizational and management skills
- Foreign language proficiency
- Patience and flexibility
- Problem-solving abilities
- Crisis management skills
- Clarification of goals and self-awareness
- Increased self-confidence, initiative, and independence

RESUME TIPS

FACT: On average, employers spend 20-30 seconds scanning resumes. You want to make sure that your international experience gets noticed. Consider listing your study abroad experience in your education section, as opposed to an "activities" section. If your experience included an internship, however, this should be noted under a professional or relevant experience category.

Education

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, May 2008
Messiah College, Grantham, PA

University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain, Fall 2007
Study abroad program with a focus on Spanish art, language and culture

International Experience (It's worth having a separate category for this if you've had more than one international experience)

Study Abroad, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain, Fall 2007

- Immersed in intensive language program
- Improved verbal and written Spanish communication skills
- Demonstrated competence and flexibility to function well in cross-cultural situations
- Enhanced understanding of Spanish history and culture

COVER LETTER TIPS

A cover letter demonstrates not only your written communication skills, but also the ways in which your skills and experiences match the employer's needs. A cover letter is not meant to repeat all that is on your resume. Instead, it should provide highlights of skills and experiences that would prove your interest and qualifications. Consider the transferable skills you gained from your international experience when constructing your cover letter.

Examples

My experience studying and living in Ecuador has well-equipped me to communicate effectively with the Latino population, a skill that is critical for this position.

My studies in China provided me with great insight into the cultural differences that influence consumers in different countries and have prepared me to contribute to international marketing strategies.

INTERVIEW TIPS

A job interview is an opportunity to showcase your strengths, experience, and interest in the position for which you're applying. As with your cover letter, an interview is an opportunity to demonstrate or, prove, how your skills, experience, and personality fit the needs of the employer.

★ 3-Step Process for Answering Interview Questions

- 1) **State what you want to prove** ("I have excellent organizational skills")
- 2) **Provide an example of how you've demonstrated the skill** ("During my study abroad experience, I was responsible for organizing all aspects of a two-week backpacking trip...")
- 3) **Relate the skill to the position for which you're interviewing** ("This experience has prepared me well for the organizational tasks that are required of this position")

★ Sample Interview Questions

- Why did you decide to study abroad?
- Tell me about your study abroad experience. What did you learn?
- What experiences did you have that would contribute to your doing this job successfully?
- Tell me about a challenging experience you had while abroad. How did you deal with it?

Finding a Job Internationally

Perhaps your international experience has sparked your interest in exploring international career options. Finding an international job is a challenging task, so it's important for you to be well-informed about the process and what's involved. First, let's take a look at the definition of "international careers."

10 Myths about International Jobs

Myth #1:

Saying "I want an international job" or "I want to use my foreign language skills" constitutes a career decision.

- **Truth:** "International" is an adjective. *Think first about what you want to do* and then apply international to it. For example, are you interested in teaching, the law, or business? All of those career fields offer international opportunities.

Myth #2:

With all the talk about globalization, international jobs with American companies are plentiful.

- **Truth:** Most American companies employ only a few Americans abroad, and primarily in management positions. By far the largest numbers of recent graduates who are working abroad are those who volunteer for the Peace Corps and related programs, teach English as a second language, or work under a short-term permit through Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE).

Myth #3:

International jobs are always located outside the United States.

- **Truth:** About 80% of "international" jobs are located in the United States. Only a small portion of American citizens work abroad. (*Note section on "International Jobs in the U.S. at the end of this packet)

Myth #4:

International jobs require strong bilingual or trilingual skills.

- **Truth:** While some positions require strong language skills (translator, interpreter, consultant, etc.) others demand only minimal foreign language skills. Some consulting firms and law firms will hire you for your language skills, train you in their field, and then send you abroad, many times within 3 to 6 months of employment. The better your knowledge of the country's language, the better position you will likely be offered. Aside from employment, though, knowing the language can be vital in helping you feel comfortable and "at home" in another land.

Myth #5:

The best way to find an international job is to grab a suitcase and go.

- **Truth:** Or not. *The best approach is to do your homework before you leave.* Plan to spend several months researching the country and career field in which you want to work. Begin contacting employers before you leave the U.S. If you don't get anywhere, then travel to the country and meet with potential employers. Remember, if you enter the country under a tourist visa, you are prevented from working, and you can't enter a country under a work visa without the necessary paperwork.

Myth #6:

Employers will want to interview me because I know a foreign language.

- **Truth:** Unfortunately, this is not always true. Some employers such as school systems or translation firms, will, of course, be interested in your foreign language skills. But, in general, language skills are not enough. You need to bring strong, work-related skills which enable you to do the job. Employers don't always know how to use your foreign language skills, so you must be prepared to tell them.

Myth #7:

International jobs involve lots of exciting travel.

- **Truth:** Travel can be tiring after the initial excitement wears off. Ask anyone who travels a lot for their work. And many international jobs never require that you travel.

Myth #8:

I am going to change the world through an international volunteer and development job.

- **Truth:** Volunteer and development programs like the Peace Corps offer many personal rewards and satisfaction, but they are looking for people who have a realistic sense of what they can accomplish. Overseas development workers face a lot of bureaucracy as they try to accomplish their tasks, making the work harder and less fulfilling. Bottom line: Monitor your expectations when working with individuals and communities.

Myth #9:

Living and working abroad is dangerous.

- **Truth:** Certain parts of the world are more dangerous than others, and the State Department provides safety information for travelers. But living and working abroad in many countries is no more dangerous than living and working in New York City or Los Angeles.

Myth #10:

I should use a job placement service to get an international job.

- **Truth: Do not pay someone to find you a job.** Employers pay the fee at a reputable employment agency. Don't be fooled by ads in newspapers promoting international jobs for a fee. Do not deal with any employment agency that requires a fee unless there is a money-back guarantee, and even then think twice. Always contact the Better Business Bureau or your state Attorney General's office before you do business with a fee-based agency.
 - **Note:** some legitimate international placement or internship services do charge a fee such as Princeton-In-Asia, or the fees charged by CIEE for working papers. These programs are well-

respected and you are getting a valuable service for your money. This type of service is quite different from the employment agencies which advertise in newspapers.

How to Work Internationally In the United States

Opportunities for international connections are available in virtually every sector of the economy: private (for-profit), nonprofit, education, government, self-employment, etc.

To find international work in the United States:

- Look for organizations with international ties. This could include American companies that have significant global interests, foreign companies that have American branches, nonprofit or social service agencies that deal with an international population, etc.
- Look for American companies interested in promoting their services or products to US residents with ethnic or foreign backgrounds. The sales field, for example, often needs bi-lingual workers to sell products to people whose primary language is Spanish.
- Look for international pockets within a city. Many cities have a district which is primarily Asian, Latino, Middle Eastern, etc. Seek out opportunities to work in those communities.

While all cities and regions of the country have some opportunities for a global experience, some are particularly ripe for opportunities. Check out these options:

- **New York:** New York is the hub for many businesses including communications and media (advertising, publishing, etc.), nonprofit organizations, finance, trade, and shipping. Many of the film industry's international offices are located in New York. Many international corporations have offices in NYC as well.
- **Washington, DC:** Virtually every agency in the US government has an international division. In addition, Washington is host to a variety of lobbying groups, nonprofit organizations, consultants, and think-tanks.
- **Miami:** Miami is a hub for international shipping and trade. Many companies which manufacture their products elsewhere ship through Miami, and have a Miami office.
- **Philadelphia:** serves as a major import/export center and also offers international banking opportunities.
- **Chicago:** is the base for several international consulting firms and also has international banking interests.
- **San Francisco and Los Angeles** serve as major connections to the Far East.

★ Ways to pursue your international interests regardless of your career choices:

- Volunteer work
- Participating in international exhibits and programs in an American city
- Joining clubs or international organizations, visiting museums and art galleries
- Going to local ethnic festivals

**Some content in this packet was provided by:
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For More Information:

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