

International experiences greatly affect individuals at the personal, academic and professional levels. The exposure to adverse situations and new environments that study abroad provides, not only enables students to be more flexible and adapt to new surroundings, but it helps to develop knowledge, skills and abilities that are desirable in any professional setting. Thus, it is essential that you leverage your study abroad experience in your job search via your cover letter, resume and most certainly in your interviews.

Unfortunately, when interviewing candidates, many potential employers look for a certain skill set that fits the available position, but fail to recognize the benefits of international exposure and how they apply to the open job position.

BEGINNING YOUR JOB SEARCH

When beginning your job search, it is important that you differentiate yourself from other candidates by highlighting your international experiences.

- Develop a list of key target companies you would be interested in working for.
- Consider targeting local companies with international connections.
- Be willing to take a first job with an international company that may not have an international dimension to it - you always have the opportunity to work your way into the international division once you have proved yourself otherwise.
- Join professional organizations with international chapters.
- Network, network, network! Let every recruiter, professor, etc. know what you are doing and how it fits in with your career goals.

SKILLS FROM INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Be able to recognize your skills that you have gained from your international experience and how those skills will 'add value' to you as an employee. Put into writing how your international experience fits into your long-term career goals. Develop a strategy as to how what you learned abroad might uniquely benefit a professional in the particular career field you are interested in. For example, you could say "My experience living in Ecuador will enhance my ability

to communicate and interact effectively with the local Latino population this position has the opportunity to work closely with" or "My studies in Japan provided me with a great insight into the cultural differences that influence consumers in different countries and will improve my ability to contribute to international marketing initiatives."

You will also want to identify the skills you have acquired while abroad, such as: enhanced cultural awareness, sensitivity to customs and cultural differences, foreign language proficiency, adaptability, ability to identify and achieve goals, increased confidence, initiative and independence, awareness of global economic and political issues, and the ability to work in cross-cultural teams.

STUDY ABROAD AND YOUR RESUME

Consider listing the study abroad program in your education section of your resume rather than in the activities section. If you worked while abroad, list the experience and focus on the cross-cultural learning. Include a skills section in your resume listing specific skills gained while abroad- refer to previous section for examples.

STUDY ABROAD AND YOUR INTERVIEW

Employers might inquire about your international experience while conducting an interview by asking the following questions:

While abroad, did you:

- "Complete a specific project or research applicable to your field of interest?"
- "Travel independently?"
- "Learn to work with a more diverse group of people than you had previously been exposed to?"
- "Resolve conflict based on misunderstandings or cultural differences?"
- "Learn new activities, languages, hobbies or skills?"

Tell me about a time when you:

- "Dealt with uncertainty or ambiguity."
- "Confronted a challenging situation."
- "Had to handle conflict."
- "Had to learn something new."

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