



U.S. Job Search Strategies for International Students

MIT Careers Office
Building 12, Room 170
<http://web.mit.edu/career/www/>

Workshop Objectives

- Overview of U.S. business culture
 - How to succeed in the U.S. workplace
 - Researching international “friendly” employers
 - Writing resumes and cover letters
 - Interviewing skills
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Potential Barriers: U.S. Business Culture

- 🌐 Disorientation – lack of adequate information
- 🌐 Culture shock
- 🌐 Lack of confidence: different cultural norms
- 🌐 Language fluency challenges or accents
- 🌐 Stereotyping, insensitivity to and from others
- 🌐 Immigration status – ability to explain status to employers

Tips to Succeed in the U.S. workplace

- ✓ **Expect** cultural, personal, and societal differences.
 - ✓ **Understand office protocol** and business norms.
 - ✓ **Dress** for success: dress code.
 - ✓ **Be aware** of dining etiquette.
 - ✓ **Respect** for professional behavior.
 - ✓ **Comply** with legal regulations in the workplace.
 - ✓ **Speak up** and voice your issues and concerns.
 - ✓ **Avoid** racial or sexist slurs and jokes at your workplace.
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Building Cross-Cultural Awareness

- ❖ **Increase** understanding of your own cultural perspective.
 - ❖ **Recognize** and challenge biases, stereotypes, and assumptions in yourself and others.
 - ❖ **Develop** effective communication skills.
 - ❖ **Keep** an open mind to different views and perspectives.
 - ❖ **Acquire** basic knowledge about the different cultures you interact with.
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Visa Types

- ① Be able to talk to employers about your visa and visa status.
- ① Contact the MIT International Students Office for specific questions: (617) 253-3795, Building 5-133.
 - F-1 = Non-immigrant students
 - J-1 = Non-immigrant exchange visitors
 - M-1 = Non-immigrant vocational studies
 - B-2 = Prospective student visa
 - H4 = Spouse dependent visas
 - H1B = "Specialty occupations" or "Professional worker visas"

Researching a Prospective Employer

- # Discover if a company hires non U.S. citizens — particular locations or departments.
 - # Learn more about potential employers to help evaluate if you want to work there.
 - Research web sites
 - Review Annual Reports
 - Goals, objectives, future plans
 - Contact MIT alumni who work there
 - # Save time by finding information about companies before interviewing.
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Where to Look for Information

- ✓ Directories: National Business, Specialized Business, State and Regional Business
 - ✓ Books
 - ✓ Business Magazines and Newspapers
 - ✓ Trade Associations
 - ✓ Annual Reports
 - ✓ Published Financial Services
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What Information is important?

- # Company Locations
 - # Strategies
 - # Facilities
 - # Products/Services
 - # Financial Data
 - # Company History
 - # Industry Outlook
 - # Executive Biography
 - # Company Size
 - # Employee Morale
 - # Management/Employee Data
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How to Find Companies who hire non US citizens

- # Initiate detailed MonsterTRAK search for companies who come on campus.

<http://www.MonsterTRAK.com>

- # Network! Network! Network!

- MIT Alumni Association

<http://web.mit.edu/alum/career/>

- Friends, colleagues, academic depts.
- Professional Associations
- MIT Student Organizations

- # Look at products/services

- Avoid companies related to defense, government related, or where security clearance is needed.
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Resumes and Cover Letters

- ❑ Provide a frame of reference
 - ❑ A \$10 million (U.S. dollars) marketing firm
 - ❑ One of the top five universities in China
 - ❑ Second largest technology manufacturer in Europe

- ❑ Emphasize strong English skills
 - "Translated written and spoken English for two years."

- ❑ Must be free of grammatical and spelling errors, including awkward use of language.

- ❑ Have everything reviewed by a Career Counselor
 - ❑ Ask for explanations about changes

Potential differences between U.S. and International Resumes

U.S. Concise and frequently chronological marketing tool which includes relevant jobs, education skills, accomplishments

Abroad: Explains academic and formal work experience.

U.S. One page is typically preferred.

Abroad: Sometimes two or more pages

U.S. Does not include age, relationship status, geographical preference, or religion.

Abroad: May have age, relationship status, etc.

U.S. Less frequently includes military service.

Abroad: Frequently states completion of military service

General Interviewing Tips

- ✓ Be enthusiastic.
- ✓ Be a good listener:
 - ✓ Allow the interviewer to finish the question.
 - ✓ Be aware of your non-verbal signs and body language.
- ✓ Use concrete examples from past experience to answer questions.
- ✓ Be honest and be prepared to prove everything you say.
- ✓ Research the company website and/or annual report and ask some questions specific to that company.
- ✓ Always send a thank you note to the employer. Check note for grammatical or spelling errors.

Speaking and Language

- ❖ *Organize* your thoughts first.
- ❖ *Slow down* your speaking speed.
- ❖ *Never hesitate* to confirm or ask to repeat a question if you do not understand.
- ❖ *Don't worry* about your accent!
- ❖ *Practice* rephrasing — don't be stuck by the lack of vocabulary.
- ❖ *Schedule* a mock interview with Career Services. Receive feedback on skills for traditional and telephone interviews.

Potential differences between U.S. and International Interviews

U.S. Be punctual. Arrive 5 to 15 minutes early.

Abroad: Being late may not be a problem.

U.S. Eye contact is expected and shows confidence.

Abroad: Eye contact with people of higher status may be disrespectful.

U.S. May begin with minimal small talk and direct questions.

Abroad: May start with small talk and look for information regarding character or personality.

U.S. Candidate usually does most of the talking.

Abroad: Interviewer may talk for the majority of the interview.

U.S. Age, race, and relationship status questions are illegal.

Abroad: Age, relationship status, or race may be legal questions and issues in the interview.

Potential differences between U.S. and International interviews

U.S. Open discussion of accomplishments and skills shows confidence.

Abroad: Citing accomplishments and skills may be considered boastful or too individualistic.

U.S. Interviewer may expect immediate competence.

Abroad: May not expect immediate competence and be seeking a long-term employee.

U.S. Researching the organization and proving it is expected. Shows initiative and interest.

Abroad: In-depth research may show too much initiative and independence. Questioning a company may be seen as disloyal.

U.S. Acceptable to ask where they are in the process when you might hear from them.

Abroad: Asking where they are in the process and when you might hear from them may be too forward.

Salary and Legal Issues

- Review salary surveys to be aware of what you are worth.
 - MIT
<http://web.mit.edu/career/www/salary/salary.html>
 - Bureau of Labor Statistics
<http://www.bls.gov>
- Avoid salary or benefit questions in interviews.
- What is an illegal question?
 - Related to relationship status, age, race, religion.
- How do you handle an illegal question?
 - Politely refuse to answer.
 - Redirect the question to the interviewer.
 - Address the issues behind the question.