International Students – Job Search Tips

Job searches for international students can be especially challenging, as many international students may be unfamiliar with the customs and behaviors used in most American job searches and therefore may not make a good impression on employers during the interview process. It is therefore important for international students educate themselves about how US job searches are conducted, as it may differ from the processes used in their home countries.

Before the Interview

1. **Research employment regulations**
   International students should become thoroughly familiar with the immigration regulations and benefits attributed to their immigration status. Oftentimes, students are expected to educate the employer during interviews about these details. For further information, speak with international student advisors in the Office of International Education, 301 Warner Hall or visit their website at [http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/](http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/).

2. **Research employers**
   This is essential for any job hunt. The student must understand what the company does, what they are hiring for, and what qualifications they are seeking. Ideal candidates cannot present themselves as ideal if they do not know that they meet the criteria. Research the employer’s website and use the Vault guides to gain additional company insight. Attend an employer information session to gain an overview of the company and speak to company representatives. (For a list of campus presentations, log in to TartanTrak, click on the ‘events: info. sessions, job fairs, workshops’ link on the top menu bar, then select the ‘Information Sessions’ tab.)

3. **Develop yourself**
   For a variety of reasons, many international students have very limited work experience by the time they graduate. As an alternative, these students may become actively involved in student organizations and volunteer activities. These involvements can also develop skills that employers value. Any student should identify the marketable skills they can bring to an employer and highlight them in resumes, cover letters and interviews.

   Steps to help this process:
   - Make a list of your strengths and weaknesses
   - Describe experiences that illustrate your main strengths
   - Think of one experience where you have learned from your weaknesses

4. **Network**
   Networking is one of the best ways to identify potential jobs for any student. In developing networks and resources, international students should not forget to include local ethnic communities, nationality clubs, and classmates and professors originally from the same home country.
5. Practice
Mock interviews can give any student invaluable interview practice and insight into their interview strengths and weaknesses. The Career & Professional Development Center has an employer mock interview program – this is incorporated into on-campus interviewing on TartanTRAK. Career Consultants can also conduct mock interviews with students. For more information, contact your Career Consultant.

Excellent verbal and written English skills are required to secure employment in the United States. International students may wish to practice American pronunciations. For additional help with enhancing English skills, contact the Intercultural Communications Center in 308 Warner Hall.

The Four Stages of an Interview

1. Greeting - The employer welcomes the student to the interview
   - Good first impression is important
   - Appearance is important
   - Be a few minutes early
   - Smile, make eye contact
   - Stand a few feet apart from the employer
   - Posture is relaxed, facing employer, ready to answer questions

2. Employer questions - Employer asks direct questions, the student gives direct answers
   - Do not simply repeat information on resume
   - Answers are simple and direct and show confidence
   - Elaborate on ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ answers
   - Examples of past performance are necessary
   - Focus on strengths
   - Sell yourself, do not worry about bragging, have conviction
   - Show self-awareness, willingness to learn
   - Tone is clear, strong, at a medium rate

3. Applicant questions - The applicant asks questions about the organization
   - Asking questions does not show you are ignorant or unprepared but rather shows interest and initiative
   - Topics can include job responsibilities, organizational structure of the company, etc.

4. Closing - The end of the interview
   - Make one last solid impression by briefly outlining your strengths one last time and expressing an interest in the position
   - Shake hands, make eye contact, smile, be positive
   - Be confident
Interviewing Hints

1. Be aware of employer expectations of excellent candidates:
   - Confidence/self promotion
   - Goal orientation
   - Self-sufficiency
   - Efficiency/time control
   - Flexibility/change
   - Competition
   - Direct speech

2. Do not overlook any aspect of appearance:
   - Be neat, conservative

   Business suits are generally expected in an interview for both men and women; however, some companies and industries do not require this. Check with your Career Consultant for more specific information regarding interview attire.

   Remember to think about:
   - Clothes
   - Hair
   - Nails
   - Underclothes
   - Breath
   - Posture

3. Eye contact and smiles show you are:
   - Approachable
   - Have positive self-concept
   - Confident
   - Capable

4. See the Career Success Guide on Interviews for typical questions and more general tips.