



International Jobs, Part I

By Sara Tusek

What does it take to get a job in a country that's not yours by birth? How can you build a career with an international slant? What are the key skills for successfully working abroad?

The very words "international jobs" hold a certain glamour, especially for young people, but the reality of working abroad is quite different from what you might imagine. The February and March 2011 issues of *Careers* will examine what's needed to get your first job abroad and to develop an international career.

Getting a Job: Legalities

Perhaps surprisingly, one of the first considerations for finding a job in a foreign country is whether or not you're eligible to work there legally. You can investigate this with a little Internet research at the country's government sites.

For example, I, an American by birth and citizenship, am now eligible to work in the Czech Republic because I have a long-term residency permit, which I obtained from the Foreign Police here in Prague.

Applying for and being granted this permit was no easy matter. I has to submit documentation that I have an official residence in the Czech Republic (the lease for my flat), that I have health insurance, and that I

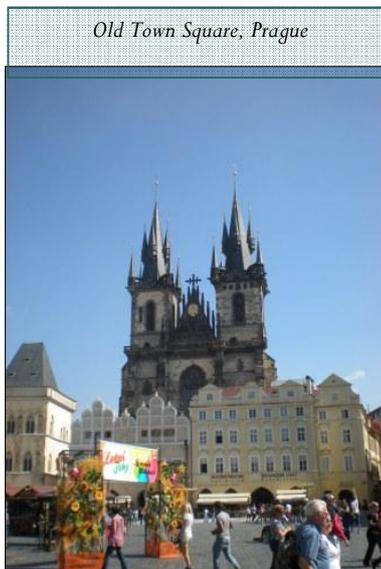
have sufficient financial resources to survive here. I had to provide passport photos, a copy of my marriage certificate and my US passport.

My case was a relatively simple one, as my husband has dual Czech/US citizenship, making him an EU citizen, so I am entitled to "join him" here by EU law. Yet it took more than two months for me to receive the permit; armed with this permit, I am now legally employable.

Alternatively, your employer could get you the permit, with the proper documentation, and most international firms will do so, once you have a job. However, you'll usually find it harder to get a job without a work permit, creating a kind of "catch-22" situation in which you can't get a job without a permit, and vice-versa.

By the way, you could work "under the table," illegally, which is not a good idea, as you can be immediately expelled from the country if you're caught.

Old Town Square, Prague



Getting a Job: Competition

You need to make a clear-eyed assessment of what you have to offer in terms of marketable skills and languages; a good career development course will help you do this. There will be competition, often stiff, for good jobs in attractive places.

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Getting a Job: Competition—cont.

For example, teaching English seems like a perfect casual job in any non-English-speaking country, all over the world, English language skills are highly-prized in education and business. You may have heard that Americans, Canadians, Australians and Brits can get jobs teaching English to young people, students and business executives, so off you go to teach English in, say, Prague.

But you may be in for a shock. Simply being fluent in English is no longer enough to get a decent job as an English teacher. Most employers require credentials such as a degree in English, experience in teaching, and a commitment to stay in the job for 2-3 years. Often, language schools will expect you to complete TOEFL, TESOL, or TEFL training before they will hire you. And by a happy coincidence, most language schools offer the training, at a price. In fact, it seems that some language schools are really more in the business of training teachers than of teaching students!

Recently I spoke with an Australian-Czech who runs a language school in Prague. She had placed an ad for someone to teach English part-time, after school, to Czech children. More than 100 people applied for this modest job. She told me that a job teaching English in Prague usually involves traveling all over the city to schools and businesses for classes in the early morning or after work. The jobs don't pay all that well and demand lots of energy, but she still has many more applicants than she can employ.

In most cases, your competition already has the right certification, and something else—knowledge of that country's

language. Although technically it's not necessary to be fluent in the language of your students when you are teaching English, as your students already know some English and primarily need to simply perfect their skills, it is a real advantage in the job search. The Czech that I speak has been most helpful to me in Prague.

Working Abroad: Culture Shock

Culture shock is a cliché, but, like all clichés, contains some truth. Your first weeks in a new country may be like a honeymoon, when all the adorable differences just make you love it all the more. However, months of living in a society with values, language, history, social customs, religion, food, even transportation that's not what you're accustomed to can be tiring and frustrating. The smallest chores (shopping, opening a bank account, making friends, keeping in touch with the folks back home) are more time-consuming and draining than being in your own culture.

As the months go by, moaning and groaning about the ridiculous ways things are done "here" (as compared to your home) may relieve your stress but will not make you any happier. Accepting the validity and internal logic of the country where you live is crucial to overcoming culture shock and being effective in your job.

Next month: Part 2 of International Jobs: key job skills and building a career abroad.

*To get help in the career development process, you can buy a copy of our latest book, **21st Century Jobs**, for \$10.00 plus postage by contacting Sara Tusek, ILI Managing Director, at stusek@ili.cc.*

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