

We live in a global society, and employers seek candidates with a solid understanding of the world. During your experience both in your home country and in the United States, you have developed a wealth of skills and knowledge that will benefit you in the job search. The key is knowing how to market these skills to employers.

## **IDENTIFY THE SKILLS THAT SET YOU APART**

### **COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

Solid written and oral communication skills are two of the top skills that employers want you to have by the time you graduate. Expand your knowledge of the English language while you are in the United States, whether you are starting to learn English or practicing your fluency. In addition to language, you will have the opportunity to learn how other cultures communicate. This may include awareness of appropriate mannerisms and cultural norms as well as appropriate communication styles for different genders or generations.

### **CULTURAL AWARENESS**

When you are living in another country you will undoubtedly develop a greater cultural awareness. This will be a time of reflection on your own culture as well. You likely will notice similarities and differences between cultures and find yourself having to adapt to your surroundings. Multicultural sensitivity in the workplace is especially important in order to work effectively with others who identify with a culture different than your own.

### **COUNTRY-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE**

Of course you will develop country-specific knowledge if you are going to live in another country! As international students, you have the advantage of knowing about the United States and your home country. Employers particularly appreciate this if they work directly with your country. During your time in the U.S. you may learn about the country's geography, history, political structure, education system, and business practices. The more you know about both locations, the more marketable you will be.

### **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

These skills may be less obvious to both yourself and your future employers. As you live abroad, you will likely grow as a person from your many experiences and situations you encounter. To effectively sell these skills to employers, it is important not only to identify the skill, but also to provide an example of how you developed it and how you can apply it to the workplace. Following are examples of skills that you can market to employers:

- Ability to take initiative
- Enhanced leadership and independence
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Ability to connect with a variety of people
- Learn quickly by listening, observing, and making mistakes
- Functioning with a high level of ambiguity
- Problem-solving
- Confidence
- Interpersonal communication

## **APPLYING SKILLS TO THE INTERVIEW**

It is important not only to identify your skills while reflecting on your experiences, but also to explain to employers how you can apply those skills in the workplace. When possible, give an example of how you developed the skill and how you can specifically apply it to that position or company. Behavioral interview questions request you to give a specific example in order to answer the question effectively. Answer behavioral interview questions by providing an example of the situation, task, action, and result (STAR). Follow the result portion of your answer with an explanation of the direct application of that skill. Be sure to include stories from both your country of origin and the United States to demonstrate your ability to work in both regions. (See Interviewing Handout.)

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND INTERVIEWING

As international students, you will face additional questions during the interview about your visa status that you must be prepared to answer. It is important that you steer the focus of the interview to your skills and accomplishments rather than to your international status. Prove to the employer that you are the best candidate for the position before you discuss possible sponsorship of H1-B visas. Be honest with the employer when asked about visa restrictions; many employers may not be knowledgeable about the requirements. Whether or not you are planning to stay in the United States after your Optional Practical Training (OPT), you will need to decide if you wish to share that information with the employer. This information can work for or against you in the hiring process depending on the employer. Be sure to do extensive research on the employer before the interview to prepare for these tough questions.

## USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Wondering how else to market your experience? Have you ever thought about creating a blog to keep in touch with friends and family and share your stories while you are in the United States? Providing that the content remains appropriate, this can be a very marketable resource to employers as well. You also could include the blog's link on your résumé or digital portfolio. Just remember to keep the content positive. Blogs are a great way to share both positive and negative stories; however, always make sure to end a story on a positive note and add what you learned from an adverse experience. That is part of the reflection process. Here are some blog resources to help you start:

- **Blogger:** [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)  
You must have a Gmail account set up to use this. Both the e-mail account and the blog are free.
- **WordPress:** <http://wordpress.org>  
Another free blog server.

Many students use **Facebook** to keep in touch with friends and family and connect with new friends. If you are on Facebook, try to keep your status updates positive as well and set your privacy settings. Also remember that employers often check to see if you have a Facebook account and you do NOT want any negative pictures, statuses, or posts out there for everyone to see.

To portray a professional image online, using appropriate websites is essential. More employers are checking their applicants' online presence, so use social media as a marketing tool. You may look into starting your own website or creating an online portfolio to show employers what you can do. Some helpful sites include–

- **LinkedIn:** [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)  
Professional networking site that allows you to build a professional profile (résumé) online and connect with people around the world
- **Visual CV:** [www.visualcv.com](http://www.visualcv.com)  
A free website that allows you to build a profile (résumé) and portfolio online. You can claim your URL and include it on your résumé for employers to see what you are capable of doing.
- **Google Sites:** <http://sites.google.com/>  
Set up a free website to post whatever you think will help an employer decide to hire you. Use the URL on your résumé.