



## **Expat Jobs in Australia – How do expatriates and repatriates find work in Australia?**

I received a phone call last week from a recruitment firm in the United States wanting to employ a financial accountant here in Melbourne. You can imagine my surprise when I suggested to him that he use Linked In and he got a shock! Because of course that is what he always uses in the US and for some reason, he did not think he could use the same tool here in Australia.

Of course, the most senior and well networked individuals with an international/global mindset know that they need to manage their own careers and have their own 'brand' out there in the online world. They know that they are 'always in the market' for the next career position and they keep themselves networked whilst they are in work to ensure that that they can utilize their network to get their jobs done and ensure that their next best offer is just a moment away if required. They keep their network alive by staying in touch with people at least four times a year (or once every three months).

But now we keep hearing about the economic downturn and 2009 is a reminder that some of the 'old ways' may need to be re-used. So what are they? What have we found successful for expatriates living in Australia? What can all professionals use at any time in their career to make sure that they have the best opportunities that match their personal goals and preferences?

I hope you find the following five detailed tips and suggestions useful and feel free to contact me with any more ideas and I will share those with both expatriates and repatriates (returned Australians). Get ready to be very busy and take a lot of action – for your own benefit.

### **1. See a Careers Advisor**

My advice for anyone looking for work is to first of all know what you are looking for. Once you are established in your career, you will find that you have mastered many skills and it can become increasingly difficult to define what you are looking for or to even know what to apply for (especially if you do not have any recent local experience and you don't know what is available in Australia).

A Careers Advisor/Counsellor/Manager/Professional can help you with this process. They are impartial and should work on the principle that it does not matter whether you want to be a Rock Star or a Rocket Scientist – their job is to help you come to these conclusions and work out the best strategies moving forward in the local marketplace.

You pay their bill so they should not have any ulterior motive to put you into a job that they 'have on their books' as a recruiter would do (who is paid by the employer). Make sure that the person you see does not have a conflict of interest!

Careers Advisors come in many different shapes and sizes. Some take a psychology based route offering all sorts of tests and measuring instruments to assess your abilities. Others provide a coaching method or a practical 'how to' process referring you on to relevant contacts, associations or websites.

Contact a few different advisors and find out what packages they offer and then make your decision. Do not be scared off by hourly rates. The beauty of this option is that you only pay for what you use and if you are not finding it helpful, you can move on to someone else.

Look for clues in your life. What work did your parents do? Did your culture say that only tertiary qualified professionals were important? Do you have some natural abilities or passions that you would



like to pursue? Has someone told you that you could not do something so regardless of whether or not you could, you have told yourself that you cannot do that job?

Clear out these old demons, stereotypes and wrong thoughts and brain storm all of your options with someone who can help you become clear on what is really important to you. Then you can make some real choices. You also won't have these negative voices appearing during interviews or in half hearted job applications. Nobody wants to employ someone who thinks that they are hopeless. And if you are 'desperate' for a job, interviewers can pick this and again, you will miss out.

However, none of these professionals can help you if you are not prepared to help yourself. The ultimate responsibility lies with you to do the homework, the research, the adjustments to your resume, actual job applications etc. Work with professionals but do not expect them to do the work for you.

Remember that finding a job is a different task to completing a job – so it makes sense to hire a professional to help you – I am sure that you would still visit a doctor rather than try searching on Google for a medical complaint! Hopefully you will spend a lot more time at work than at the doctor's – even more reason to use a professional approach to make sure that you find yourself the right job.

Also be clear on whether you want to work full time, part time, casual, on contract, temporary placement etc. All options are worth exploring in Australia and now may be the time to consider an entirely new direction (but only if you have support).

Consider the workplace culture you would like to be a part of (some people are happy scrubbing pots if they are with friendly people, other people don't care what the people are like but are really stimulated by the work they do).

Do you want to work for an organization that is very parochial, international, multicultural or spiritual? Remember that all of your own personal lifestyle needs cannot be met through your work – you need to have a life outside of your work so make sure you have a good social network and other hobbies and interests to pursue.

If you have trouble with your personal relationships, sort that out during your own private time (again with help if required). If you are having difficulty coping for any reason, there are many low cost, free and confidential services available and you can be referred to these through Lifeline and Mensline. You will perform much better in interviews and at work if you are generally happy and healthy in your everyday life. Keep in contact with supportive friends and family members and believe that you will find the RIGHT job for you (not just any job) in due course.

Websites to visit:

Career Development Association of Australia <http://www.cdaa.org.au>

Career Advice Australia <http://www.careeradviceaustralia.gov.au>

My Future <http://www.myfuture.edu.au>

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations <http://www.deewr.gov.au>

Relationships Australia <http://www.relationships.com.au>

Lifeline <http://www.lifeline.org.au>

Mensline Australia <http://www.menslineaus.org.au>

Search terms to Google:

Career Transition, Development, Counsellors, Advisors, Outplacement



Other information:

Visit job advertisement websites and do their online quizzes and read their resources sections for more advice.

## **2. Three main strategies**

Once you are clear on three main strategies that you would like to pursue (it may be that you are considering applying for jobs, starting a business in the future or completing voluntary work to gain some experience), you need to set your priorities and start doing the work. Devote as many hours to finding work as you would to actually working.

If the job hunting work becomes too challenging (it can take up a lot of energy and three hours of this sort of work can feel like eight hours of normal work), take a break. Look around and see what else in your life needs sorting out and spend the rest of your time tidying up your paperwork, computer files, garage, spare room, photos, unpacked boxes – any other jobs you have been putting off for too long.

Do not put yourself in front of the television or the computer – get out and about and do some exercise outdoors. Visit your doctor for a full medical, visit the dentist for a check up and sort out your finances/tax returns/wills/documents. Keep yourself fit and healthy, eat well and rest at normal times (don't stay up late and wake up late).

During this process, also consider taking a day off (not just on the weekend). Book a train ticket and go on your own to a country location at least two hours in the train from where you are living. Take a notebook and pen with you in case you come up with any ideas to write down – you can even pack your own lunch. Use this time to think about your next job, enjoy the fresh air when you arrive and explore a new destination. You can do this in just one day – a mini holiday that is cheap and can keep you in a good mood through the difficult process of looking for a job.

Remember, it is the employer's loss if they do not hire you. You will not remain unemployed forever. Consider whether you want to aim for a career position or a 'job for now' that you will then review again in six months time (particularly if you are running short of cash).

## **3. Applying for advertised jobs**

You need to be registered with jobs websites and set up email alerts so that as soon as jobs matching your criteria are posted, you can send off your application. Now that each advertised job attracts more applicants, if you do not apply quickly, you may miss out as sometimes the jobs are removed from listings because they have already received enough applications.

Some jobs are only advertised on the organisation's websites. This is particularly important for government, university and corporate jobs as well as contract and temporary roles offered through recruitment companies. You need to register on these websites and again, subscribe to job alerts.

You must not fall into the trap of using one resume for all jobs. Each resume should be tailored for each job with the career objective statement matching the job description. Key Selection Criteria need to be answered accurately and succinctly without spelling or grammatical errors. Make sure that your resume has as many keywords as possible – especially if it is submitted to a recruitment firm who may use your resume to consider you for other jobs that they need to fill. Cover letters are generally brief.

Have your overseas qualifications assessed (some state governments offer this service free of charge) so that you can have the Australian equivalent recorded on your resume. If necessary, complete any additional testing or certification if you want to remain in the same industry in your new job.



Websites to visit:

Recruit.net (lists all job websites in one spot) <http://australia.recruit.net>

Six Figures (for jobs involving \$100,000 package) <http://www.sixfigures.com.au>

Recruitment and Consulting Services Association <http://www.rcsa.com.au>

Other information:

Make sure you register with organizations, industry bodies, recruitment firms that specialize in your area (you need to find these and register yourself)

#### **4. Networking for a job**

First of all you need to start with your professional association. Some of these associations are more professional than others, but you still need to connect and attend events, become a member and help increase standards through your support. People connected with these groups are often well connected and can refer you on to someone else. It is not what you know or who you know, it is who refers you that is important.

When you attend events, make sure you have a business card (home made is fine) that has your name, email address and mobile/cell phone number. But more importantly, if you meet someone that you would like to contact later, see if they will give you their business card.

Do NOT sell yourself on your first meeting – treat it as a fact finding mission and follow up within 24 hours and see if you can organize a 20 minute coffee meeting (where you pay for the coffee). Build up a relationship (at least seven exchanges – phone calls, emails, meetings etc) BEFORE you ask them to provide you with a referral or ask them for a job.

Once your resume is the best it can be, contact everyone you know, anywhere in the world and let them know specifically the type of work you are looking for and ask if they can pass on your details to anyone they know. Ask them to invite those people to contact you direct if they have any contacts in similar roles or organizations anywhere in the world. I have often heard of people getting a job in Sydney through a contact in London! Follow up with these people around one week later and then again two weeks later (letting them know how you are going with the process).

Make sure you have your professional details listed on Linked In and other forums/websites for your industry. Consider some short term voluntary work in either your industry or in an organization that matches your work culture values. Be proactive and ask people for information and make new friends and connections wherever you can. Most people know at least 250 people so if you get to know three new people per week, you have access to 750 people and what they know!

Australian Skills Recognition (listing industry associations by profession) <http://www.immi.gov.au/asri/>

Linked In <http://www.linkedin.com>

Networking World <http://www.networkingworld.net.au>

Networking to Win <http://www.networkingtowin.com.au>

Volunteering Australia <http://www.volunteeringaustralia.org>

#### **5. Don't panic**

It can be so easy to lose heart when looking for work. It doesn't matter if you already have a job or have been looking for six months. When people do not respond to your applications or you always come second, the feeling is the same, one of rejection.

It can be very easy to think that the reason you missed out was because you were too old, too young, too experienced, not enough experience, over qualified, under qualified, too short, too tall, your English skills were not good enough (rarely the case), etc.



Some Australians can feel threatened by international experience. Make every effort to get some local experience and talk about 'in the past' rather than 'in London' when you get to the interview stage.

Remember that it is not a personal criticism if you have missed out on a job. Do not spend hours wondering why you didn't get the job, just keep moving on and completing your various strategies and it will happen. Do not put up invisible barriers (quite often it is the job candidate not the employer who jeopardizes their chances).

This is less likely to happen if you are feeling confident that your purpose is to find the right job for now. In six months time, you could be seeking something entirely different. But with a clear focus, multiple concurrent strategies and a professional approach, I can assure you that you WILL find work. Have faith and courage – if you have read this article and can take responsibility to do it yourself (with help as required), I am certain that you will find work in Australia.

The next stage will be doing the job well....but that is another topic.

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