



EMPLOYER ADVICE TO MIGRANTS & EXPATS

March 2013

Three weeks ago we ran a survey of Weekly Overview readers asking about people's experiences in hiring staff from offshore, and inviting comment on what advice they would give expats or migrants wanting to work in New Zealand.

What we wanted to do was not just provide useful information to migrants and expats, but to also get a feel for the prevalence of employers who have had experience of working overseas. Out of the 100 responses a high 72% had worked outside New Zealand and of these 59% were expats and 41% migrants. The migrant proportion interestingly is relatively high.

For ease of analysis we can divide the responses into three groups

- Employers who have not worked outside New Zealand 29
- Employers who were expats 42
- Employers who are migrants 29

Doing this we get the following two key answers.

Are you willing to hire returning NZ expats and/or migrants?

Employers who have not worked outside New Zealand	89%
Employers who were expats	100%
Employers who are migrants	93%

There is a slight tendency for employers without offshore experience to avoid people from offshore. But the proportion who would hire a migrant or expat is still very high at 89%.

Have you hired returning NZ expats and/or migrants?

Employers who have not worked outside New Zealand	59%
Employers who were expats	74%
Employers who are migrants	59%

There is a tendency for expats to hire migrants or other expats more than migrants and employers with no offshore experience. The differences are not large but the question is begged – why have some 41% of employers without overseas experience opted not to hire someone with the experience which they lack? Perhaps the following section delivers us an answer.

What advice would you give NZ expats or migrants wanting to work in New Zealand?

In asking this question we primarily wanted to be able to present to expats and migrants a simple list of recommendations for what to consider when contemplating a shift to New Zealand. This list is presented in the first column of the table below. But what we are also able to do is identify whether each group of employers produced the same list. The answer is no and while these results may not be of great interest to potential migrants and repats, they do provide some interesting insights into how the three different groups see the world they operate in – discussed below.

	Employers who have not worked overseas	Employers who were expats	Employers who are migrants
• Go to NZ for family & lifestyle reasons	x	x	x
• Learn and speak English	x	x	
• Consider the regions, especially Christchurch	x	x	
• Hard work is needed on the job	x	x	
• Explain the benefits you can bring	x	x	
• Consider starting your own business	x	x	
• Expect reduced income	x		x
• If you want good income, go elsewhere	x		x
• Let employer know you are "here to stay"	x		
• Outperform. Effort will be rewarded & earn you respect	x		
• Don't speak much about your overseas experience		x	x
• Study up on and embrace Kiwi culture		x	x
• Build & work networks to find work		x	x
• Be prepared for a bigger/wider job role		x	x
• Apply only for relevant roles		x	X
• Arrange a job first, then come		x	X
• Expect reduced cosmopolitanism outside Auckland & Wellington			X
• Seek business expanding overseas			X
• Be prepared for NZ's small size			X

There is only one piece of advice which all three groups agree on – if you are coming to New Zealand then you need to view yourselves as doing it for family and/or lifestyle reasons. After that commonality there are five suggestions offered by employers with no offshore experience and repats. The first is telling – learn the English language and speak it. Willingness to tolerate poor English on the part of natural Kiwis appears low. They also suggest not just opting for the cities but to go to the regions. But migrant employers do not give such advice and in fact warn about the small size of New Zealand and low cosmopolitanism outside of the main centres.

Expat employers and the stayers warn that migrants and fresh expats will need to work hard and explain to their bosses why they should be hired. They then go on to advise newcomers that maybe their best option is to set up their own business.

It would be hard to imagine a less welcoming attitude to people fresh from overseas. And maybe the migrants pick up on this attitude because they and the employers with offshore experience warn fresh people to keep their mouths shut and not speak about what they did overseas. They suggest making extra effort to fit in by studying and embracing the existing Kiwi culture, not wasting people's time by applying for irrelevant jobs, and building up and making good use of networks. Basically – fit in.

The divergence in responses suggests perhaps that when considering the degree to which they may fit in to a company, expats and migrants would perhaps do best to seek out companies headed by those who have spent some of their working life overseas. Fortunately, our survey suggests that there are quite a few such people.

Full Responses to the question

Employers who have not worked outside New Zealand

- *Be prepared for lower wages*
- *Consider Christchurch - just make sure you've got accommodation sorted first.*
- *Attitude and sense permanence let the employer now you are here to stay and build a future*
- *Be prepared to live in Christchurch*
- *To have the same or better skills than those living here already.*

- *There is a real shortage of skills in New Zealand particularly Trades based employment. There is a lot of opportunity because of that.*
- *Must be able to speak and understand English to a high degree.*
- *We are miles away from the rest of the world, but NZ is a tough place to do business and certainly to succeed requires hard work and high degree of empathy with staff, customers and suppliers.*
- *Do your homework before settling into a particular city/ region.*
- *Be willing to consider your options in light of why you are returning to NZ. Lifestyle and family are important and the regional cities have much to offer in that regard, it is not all about the big cities.*
- *Come home quick, bring your friends and acquaintances, underrate your skills then over-perform in your job, get into a small business, or buy one, under 50 employers, avoid big businesses like the plague. If you can't speak with the owner, and see him regularly, someone else will claim the credit for what you have done, and it will mean nothing to them to fire you. Honesty, modesty and work very hard, but, not over 55 hours per week*
- *Don't expect to walk into a job that is paying what you can get overseas. Choose a professional company in your field to work, and give it 100%. Your efforts will be recognised. Earning the respect of your managers is the best way to increase your income and standing within the company.*
- *Be positive and sell yourself with all the experience that you have got while you have been overseas*
- *Migrants need to ensure that their CV reads well. Remove jargon. Watch their English...avoid the sentences like 'I wish to work for your esteemed organisation'. And only apply for roles for which you are qualified! Expats and migrants - explain your role scope and organisation on your CV so it's easily understood.*
- *Have the right attitude to work. Just because you have lived/worked overseas does not mean you know everything. We are constantly learning as we go through life. Explain what skill set you can bring that will be advantageous to the business. Look for the bigger picture in the job you are applying for, not just what you can get out of it. What can you give to help make the business more successful.*
- *It can't be about money. You need to be passionate about being on the team to help our client businesses. Our companies success relies on the success of our clients.*

Employers who were expats

- *Be willing to do a bigger role (wider remit) than you had overseas.*
- *Contact two (or three at the most) agencies who specialise in your area of expertise. Don't fire out your cv to all and sundry across LinkedIn and recruiters who don't specialise in your field.*
- *Come on your own if serious, but wait until a job is secured before bringing other family members and committing to any property purchases.*
- *Recognize that New Zealand is a unique operating landscape like all other countries but it does need to fit within a global community. Local solutions to local problems is a good approach*
- *Be open minded, back yourself and don't listen to the knockers and cynics*
- *Speak English*
- *Often, roles that exist in banking outside NZ do not exist in NZ. I would recommend that candidate tailor their CV to the NZ environment rather than a verbatim regurgitation of their off shore experience. An applicant should be inclusive rather than exclusive.*
- *Have an up to date CV, fill in gaps in employment (big breaks are fine if you are traveling/holidaying), don't have "attitude" that it is better overseas (why are you back here if it is so good), accept the money offered here and look for a career - not just a job. My own experience was that I was unemployable doing what I had done overseas, so I acquired a business that has given far greater rewards than any wage/salary ever could.*
- *Take the best things you learnt overseas & see how they adapt into NZ business & life. We are a small market so ask yourself what you can do to contribute to the business, the Economy & Country & not the other way around.*
- *Don't just consider the salary differences between NZ and overseas. There are far more benefits to living in NZ - lifestyle, ease of doing business, tax freedom, good support services*
- *Bring as many networking connections as possible, for migrants study up NZ culture and your English language*
- *Explain how you can tangibly add value to the business Don't be arrogant about how much more clever you are from having worked in a bigger business. Kiwi companies aren't impressed with size, and are only interested in what you can do to help them commercialise their products/services, particularly offshore*
- *For migrants often spoken English is good and NZers are tolerant of poorer sentence construction etc. when dealing with a person face to face or even over the phone whereas written English often lets migrant workers down as a recipient of a poorly constructed email or letter is less tolerant. Be willing to live in other parts of NZ than Auckland. Non Aucklanders would argue not only are there good work opportunities, cheaper housing, and shorter travelling times to work thus providing a better quality of life but you do not get a real NZ experience until you are outside our largest city.*
- *Although the wages in NZ are low compared to many overseas countries the Quality of life is the ultimate. Raising children and lifestyle has to be the best in the world. Friendliest people in the world also.*
- *Align expectations with local Market conditions*
- *NZ is different to where you have been a nation. Particularly in the provinces relationships and understatement are the norm.. Employers are risk averse around staff because it is hard, time consuming and expensive to get rid of bad ones and even worse managing average ones. Expats and migrants who over sell in*

- Forget about jobs NZ is anti expats, your networks don't really exist and the businesses don't understand your experiences. Not even close. Start your own business or range of businesses, and employ/partner with locals and other expats. It takes as many years as you were away to rebuild networks.
- Emphasise to prospective employers that are returning for lifestyle reasons. It may well be necessary to indicate a willingness to work hard for less money in a lower paid job, as the reality is that this is often the lot for a returning expat. It is however very easy to undervalue the huge value through higher quality of life that can be achieved under many circumstances. Do not rule out the smaller NZ cities, as this is where the quality of life gains can be greatest, particularly if it allows reconnection with family.
- Positive attitude
- Slotting back in isn't as easy as you might expect
- If possible get networks going before arrive or get back
- Try and help the Kiwi employer cross "the bridge" with you! Show passion for the brand and why! Forgive NZ insulated thinking. It is not easy finding an enlightened employer!
- don't mention your salary; share only the experience relevant to the job..... kiwis are real scared of the tall poppies
- Migrants: Learn the local place names (suburbs, land marks) and how the locals pronounce them. This will help you to feel, and seem to be, more connected with your new town / city. It will also help once you're in the job!
- Migrants: Aim for the better known educational institutions, if you can, for any tertiary training. In my (possibly biased) opinion that is the long-term Universities.
- Remember that many of those in the business you may be joining will have worked or at least travelled overseas as well.
- Opportunities exist in the area of middle and upper management, that require a lot of commitment where kiwis don't seem to want to go.
- work on your CVs and be realistic on what you expect to get paid
- Spread the net wide.
- Be willing and honest. These are the two most important criteria. Work first, play afterwards.
- Be prepared to work harder for less payment per hour than where you have come from
- Have a clear idea what you want and be committed to that

Employers who were migrants

- Persevere. Try and follow up applications with a phone call. Ensure they are only applying to roles that are relevant to their backgrounds. Be selective in applications - Don't apply to everything advertised
- Be patient. People here in established positions don't view your experience the same as you do. Some/many may feel threatened by it. Others may see you as a "flight risk" thinking you will quickly come to see NZ as too small for your experience. That is most likely not the case but you have to deal with these perceptions.
- Expect to see a drop in salary & quality of work.
- Be prepared for relatively low wages!
- Don't talk about your history and what you have learned elsewhere, just do what is asked of you. Because otherwise you will be a threat to the small minded Kiwi who has never worked and lived overseas and thinks that the "Kiwi way" is the only way - any other suggestions are unwarranted!
- Be proactive in your search, make eye contact, learn to parallel park.
- understand the culture, and live in the kiwi culture
- Be nice to people. We have choices.
- * Understand the hesitancy that some employers might have and position yourself accordingly. * Do not assume that the amazing experience you have gained will give you an automatic right to a big, high paying role in NZ.
- Use your network or contacts if possible.
- Get onto Linked in and use the people you already know in NZ for contacts.
- NZ is Australia's Mexico - this is reflected in general by lower salaries. Don't expect the people who have not been away and had their mind widened, to move over so you can have the best jobs - even though you are by now probably somewhat more experienced (Kiwis still down like a smart bas**d..). Big cultural differences between North Island and South Island. Outside Wellington and Auckland quality of intellectual capital thins out and the style of communication becomes more basic, which requires a change in approach. Come for a holiday first, to be sure that you really want to trade down to financially. Unless you are from a third world country - the majority of people who work here for NZ business's will not make as much money as they did/could elsewhere, and it is expensive to live here. If hard cash your ultimate goal - invest your working life elsewhere, come here when you're done.
- Take advice from local recruiters, add more detail about overseas experience e.g. Info about companies worked for, their websites etc. Understand the local market and prepare to enter at a lower position to prove yourself. I was promoted pretty rapidly.
- Adjust salary expectation downward and NZ might not be as comparatively affordable as one might assume
- Preferably suitable for family life style. NZ is top for work life balance. Reset their salary expectations by -15% to 20%. Tap into businesses that are on growth path with international development plans.
- The biggest culture shock in arriving in NZ is scale - companies, budgets and markets are much smaller. You 'know' this will be the case before you arrive, but experiencing it is something else. You will need to adapt and

find creative ways to make smaller budgets and less resource go much further. What a team may do in a larger market, one individual will do in NZ.

- *Are you coming back to perhaps start a family, be able to spend time at the beach after work or partly because it's got harder to get / keep a job overseas? Please have a real good think what you can offer because people with 'real' experience from overseas are in reasonable supply to be honest. Consider what 'real' value to my business your offering. I nice for you to re-engage with the NZ lifestyle, but that's why I am here.*
- *Overall it is about accepting and adapting to the new culture. Start with observing, learning and not over-expecting things will be as you are familiar with.*
- *Network, use family and friend connections. Use a recruiter who specialises in migrants*
- *First find a job*
- *Get Visa ahead of arrival - needs to be greater support for business people - Don't use independent advisers. If possible, visit before relocating - try to meet relevant employers (not just agents) and employees of relevant businesses, helping you to relate to job opportunities when they arise. Keep in touch every 30 days. Soften any English accent. Don't over commit \$s to NZ - sadly the returns aren't guaranteed. Be passionate but cautious. Be flexible: think of ways to de-risk employers decision, with reviews after six months. Cost of living in Auckland is more than you may imagine. And finally....head to Palmerston North, and leave any fishing rods at home!*

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