**TEXT**

**LIVING ABROAD**

In today’s competitive job market, not spending time abroad can seriously damage your chances of climbing the career ladder. It is no surprise then that more and more graduates and professionals are looking for opportunities to live and work in a foreign country.

With record numbers of workers hoping to relocate, it is no longer enough to have done a work placement abroad or to speak a foreign language. This is no longer something that makes you different, It is something employers expect.



But even if you are a strong candidate, the application process for foreign jobs is far from straight forward. The EU has introduced the Euro CV to standardise application procedures throughout Europe, but it is assumed that a culturally adapted CV is better. What do I mean by that? For example, in the UK, it is customary to add hobbies and interests at the bottom of the page. In Italy however, that information is not necessary.

When you write your CV it is also a good idea to check whether a photo is necessary and whether an English-language CV should be written in American or British English. Another point to think about is whether or not employers will recognise your degree subject, especially when you have studied a subject, such as Wireless Network Systems, which doesn’t necessarily translate into another language and culture.

You also need to consider the cover letter, the first thing that an employer will read. Approaches differ from country to country: get the CV right but the cover letter wrong and you destroy your chances of getting shortlisted for interview because the cover letter is the first thing that an employer will read. The British usually write long letters to draw attention to relevant sections on the CV, the Italians want one or two sentences and the French expect candidates to handwrite detailed letters which may be analysed by handwriting experts.

When it comes to interviews, make sure you know about the importance different countries place on language and speech. For example, the French use short sentences and hate silence, while Scandinavians have a deep respect for pauses. You may think these points are not important but by not paying attention, you are showing that you do not respect the culture of the country you wish to work in.

Making a mistake at the interview is something Sarah Hall knows all about. She is from Liverpool in the UK and has worked an Germany, Sweden and Spain.

My advice is be aware of culture clash. In Britain there is usually a maximum of two interviews. In southern Europe they will call you back for a third or fourth interview. I lost a very good job in Spain when I thought they weren’t serious. I withdrew my application because they asked me to go for a fourth interview. Looking back, I now realise they were doing as they always do. I behaved wrongly.



It’s important to working culture. Adapting a similar style of dress to your co-workers, eating the kind of food they eat, enjoying similar activities – these things help to win trust and respect.

Think of yourself as a cultural chameleon, mirror the kind of messages you get about communication and appearance. People like people who remind them of themselves. And nobody likes what they don’t understand.