

Careers in International Business

The world is a global marketplace creating great opportunities for careers in business, trade, government and non-government organizations (NGOs) for professionals with good business and technical skills, as well as cross-cultural capabilities.

International business (IB) careers can involve:

- Living and working in the US for a company that sends you abroad for business travel, or
- Working for a company that sends you abroad to work for a number of years at a time.

Option 1: Living in the US and travelling abroad for business

Most careers in IB involve living in the U.S. and traveling overseas for weeks at a time. Foreign travel is generally used for:

- Research – to analyze foreign markets, identify market opportunities, evaluate the financial impacts of foreign projects, etc.;
- Identifying and negotiating with foreign buyers, sellers, and partners; or
- Providing consultation services for clients in foreign locations.

Option 2: Living and Working Abroad

Long term work abroad is less common and requires more planning – but it is highly rewarding for the right person. Careers are often with companies selling or buying overseas, multinational corporations, financial institutions, and consulting firms; they involve going abroad to represent the company, manage a foreign subsidiary, direct foreign operations, or provide consulting services.

Companies usually prefer to send employees who are fully trained in their domestic operations before taking a foreign assignment, so starting an IB career usually means starting with a global company and working domestically first.

If your goal is long-term work abroad, you need to demonstrate your potential to be adaptable and self-sufficient overseas. You can demonstrate this with a history of studying, volunteering, and/or working abroad. Experience in working abroad is especially valued by potential employers.

Strategizing to Pursue an International Business Career

1. Possess Good Functional Knowledge

It is important to display good knowledge that provides specific, concrete value to your employer.

Strategies:

- (1) Find a local internship or volunteer opportunity that will develop and/or demonstrate skills that are similar to those valued by your targeted international organizations. If you want to work in international marketing, provide strategic marketing services for a local nonprofit. If you want to pursue development work in a poor country, begin by writing grant proposals for a local nonprofit.
- (2) It is important to have one of the following: (a) an undergraduate degree in a technical field such as engineering or a business discipline such as marketing, finance, information systems, or accounting; (b) significant on-the-job training or experience that demonstrates concrete value-creating expertise; or (c) targeted courses in the MBA program in a business discipline like those listed in (a). In any case, be sure to highlight this on your CV.

2. Possess Strong Cross-Cultural and Personal Skills

The ability to work effectively with others – in one-on-one and group settings – is key for pursuing a career in IB. You also need to be:

- Adaptable – You will often find yourself operating within a foreign context;
- Flexible – Plans and projects often don't work abroad as expected; and
- Innovative – Unexpected obstacles and opportunities are likely in foreign markets.

Strategies:

- (1) Take any opportunities to work abroad – including volunteer work.
- (2) Pursue study- and work-abroad experiences. Consider Xavier's MBA study-abroad classes; talk to your academic advisor; and consult the annual books *Academic Year Abroad* and *Short-Term Study Abroad* from the Institute for International Education (both housed in Xavier's McDonald Library).
- (3) Volunteer for hosting/mentoring opportunities with the [International Visitor Center](#) of the [Global Center of Greater Cincinnati](#).

3. Know the Key Issues/Trends in IB – and for the Sector/Region You are Pursuing

When you converse with mentors, network, and interview, you must display (1) solid knowledge of the political, economic, and social forces shaping the world plus (2) specific awareness of the key issues and trends that are relevant to the sector, company, or region in which you have a career interest.

Strategies:

- (1) Read the weekly *Economist* magazine on a regular basis.

- (2) Read other news outlets and books that address either the business environment or issues in specific sectors you are pursuing or, if you have a regional focus, the region of interest.
- (3) Attend activities of the [World Affairs Council](#) of the [Global Center of Greater Cincinnati](#).

4. Develop a Strategy for Starting your Career

Strategies:

- (1) Prepare a short, focused pitch to explain – clearly and concretely – what you want.
- (2) Develop a CV that highlights your unique (relevant) educational accomplishments and internationally-oriented experiences. If you are applying for a job in a foreign country, use the internet and library resources to ensure your CV is tailored to the local culture. If you are applying for a job opportunity written in a foreign language, respond in that language.
- (3) Obtain a mentor with IB experience and ask questions such as:
 - “Given my education and experiences at this point, what would you do next?”
 - “What strategies to get into international business did you find that were the most successful?”
 - “If you were to do it all over again, is there anything you would do differently?”

Especially for those interested in working and living abroad:

- (4) It is imperative to prepare for interviews by developing and keeping a written outline of your perceived costs and benefits of an overseas assignment. To demonstrate your seriousness to employers (and ensure a fulfilling career), consider the impact of living overseas for long periods on your personal relationships and lifestyle. Living abroad will impact your spouse (and his or her career plans) and children; it may be rewarding for them, but it will not be easy!

5. Network and Identify Potential Employers

First, you need to know if you have specific sectors, functional areas, and/or regions in which you are interested – and be able to demonstrate your knowledge about them (Strategies under Part 3), as well as know your strengths and have a good pitch for contacts (Strategies under Part 4). Now you are ready for your job search.

Strategies

- (1) Use mentors to provide you with contacts *after – and only after* – you know them well (and they know you).
- (2) Keep a journal to keep track of who you have contacted and when you need to follow up. Remember to send a thank you note to anyone who helps you.
- (3) Join and attend activities of the [Global Center of Greater Cincinnati](#) (which houses the World Affairs Council and International Visitors Center).
 - Attend conferences and other activities of the [World Affairs Council](#)
 - Host foreigners visiting the Cincinnati area through the [International Visitors Center](#)

Especially for those interested in working and living abroad:

- (4) Join and become active in a local organization with connections to the country or region of interest:
 - Japan America Society of Greater Cincinnati
 - Greater Cincinnati Chinese Chamber of Commerce
 - European-American Chamber of Commerce-Cincinnati Chapter
 - Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

- (5) Use the Cincinnati USA Chamber of Commerce to identify companies from your target country or region operating here at <http://www.cincinnatiusa.org/pdf/intl/firms.pdf>
- (6) Identify companies on the stock exchanges of your target region or country.
- (7) When considering companies to work for,
 - Decide which kinds of companies to target for employment – considering the match of your skills with their needs;
 - Consider where a particular company has operations and is likely to send you; and
 - Evaluate the company's policies for employees working abroad – and their families - and how much you are expected to live according to the norms of your host country.

Linkages

IB Careers – Global

Working Globally (Wall Street Journal) www.careers.wsj.com Career site for IB (experience required)

Monster Work Abroad workabroad.monster.com Career advice, work abroad resources and the ability to search for jobs internationally; you can post your resume at no fee.

Council on International Education and Exchange www.ciee.org Information about study, internship, and work opportunities throughout the world

IB Careers and Jobs www.international-business-careers.com IB career and job information

Overseas Jobs www.overseasjobs.com Search jobs, view employers and access career information

IB Careers – Regional

Jobs in Japan www.jobsinjapan.com Jobs in Japan.

Iagora www.iagora.com Entry level jobs and internship in Europe

Booz Allen Hamilton www.bah.com Global consulting firm offering jobs across Europe (need experience)

IB Careers – General Information

Goingglobal www.goinglobal.com A realistic assessment of employment trends in business in 24 countries

Transitions Abroad www.transitionsabroad.com Resources to explore information on working, studying, traveling and living abroad

The Riley Guide www.rileyguide.com Comprehensive set of resources on international careers

IB-Related Careers

U.S. Department of State www.state.gov/employment Careers in U.S. diplomatic services plus internships and student work programs

UN and International Organization Employment Information www.state.gov/p/io/empl/11079.htm. Careers with the UN and other multi-government international organizations

DevNetJobs.org DevNetJobs.org Jobs in international development and the environment sector

Idealist www.idealists.org Organizations across the world – for volunteer, internship and job opportunities

InterAction: American Council for Voluntary International Action www.interaction.org Volunteer opportunities for a coalition of U.S.-based voluntary organizations engaged in disaster relief, sustainable development, refugee assistance, advocacy, and education

NGOabroad: Custom Fit International Work or Volunteering www.NGOabroad.com International humanitarian work and customized international volunteer options