

# EMPLOYER INSIGHTS

## Study Abroad Students: Emphasize Your Curiosity and Open-Mindedness

*Each month, we interview an employer about a key career issue college students—and career services professionals—need to better understand ... from the employer's perspective.*

**The Expert:** Stacie Nevadomski Berdan, international careers expert and co-author of *Get Ahead By Going Abroad: A Woman's Guide to Fast-Track Career Success* (HarperCollins, 2007).

**The Issue:** Employers are drawn to the curiosity—and “the ability to enjoy risk”—that compel college students to study abroad.

*In a recent article you wrote about employers' views of study abroad, you said the following: “What do companies value most in the study abroad experience? Interestingly, they are attracted to evidence of curiosity within global-minded applicants.” What do you mean?*

In the research I conducted for *Get Ahead By Going Abroad*, several traits emerged as critical to successfully working across cultures. Curiosity and open-mindedness rank in the top five among professionals who have lived and worked overseas, and among companies that employ and appreciate these internationalists.

Curious, open-minded individuals enjoy the overseas experience for its breadth of newness and for the sheer joy of operating in an environment that is outside their comfort zone. Dealing with differences in culture as well as in infrastructure—be it while taking classes in a second language or figuring out local transportation—requires the ability to enjoy risk and the spirit of adventure.

The world economy is in flux but one thing is certain: Globalization is here to stay. Companies recognize that they need workers who not only understand international business but can also operate successfully—thrive, really—in cross-cultural situations.

*How can college students who have studied abroad best market that experience to prospective employers?*

Students should be able to explain to potential employers their purpose in choosing the country they selected, demonstrate what they learned, and describe how they can apply their experiences to a position.

In addition, where a student studies increasingly matters to companies. Branching out beyond the typical Western European countries and into China, Brazil, Russia, or India signals an enhanced awareness of growing global economies—and a link to the places most companies are expanding. Moreover, these nontraditional destinations often offer more-challenging situations, intensifying the learning.

*What can Campus Career Counselor readers do to address with their students/grads the issues you've raised here?*

Encourage students to study abroad in developing markets and growing economies. Advise them to research where the hot markets for future growth are within their fields.

Emphasize foreign language proficiency as an element of future career success. It's a big resume booster for those international companies looking to place workers abroad, because they appreciate that language skills go beyond verbal communication and into broader cultural awareness and understanding.

Finally, bring experts to campus to advise students on the complex—and sometimes daunting—world of working and living overseas. Professionals who have done it themselves can share relevant, real-life examples, satisfying hundreds of questions on students' minds.



Stacie Nevadomski Berdan is a consultant and expert on women and international careers, as well as an award-winning author. Having spent the first half of her career as a marketing communications professional living and working around the world, she now focuses on the benefits of feminine leadership within the global marketplace.

Stacie serves as an expert on call for several national broadcast networks and writes regularly for several print publications. She is an engaging and lively speaker, sought after by multinational corporations, professional organizations, and universities around the world.

Using her original research, Stacie highlights how international assignments can fast-track a career, broaden professional capabilities, increase pay, and expand personal horizons. Framing the rationale within today's global marketplace, she gives advice on how to find, land, and make the most of work abroad.

*Fortune* called Stacie's book *Get Ahead By Going Abroad* “a must-read for anyone serious about going global.”

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