MARKETING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Incorporating Study Abroad into Professional Resumes and Interviews

Not only is study abroad a valuable enhancement to your academic career at Pitt, it can also set you apart when applying to jobs and internships. Learning to capitalize on the skills and experience you gained while abroad will improve your ability to market yourself to potential employers. Use this guide to develop an effective resume and prepare for a successful interview experience!

WHY IS YOUR INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE VALUABLE TO EMPLOYERS?

When exploring career opportunities, it is important to remember that the world now operates in a global marketplace with a global workforce. Even when working domestically, international travel may be associated with a position based in the states. Similarly, many local companies have operations overseas for which you may be hired for an international position. In any position, you may interact with foreign companies or clients, and you will be expected to work well in cross-cultural environments.

Marketing Study Abroad in a Resume

As a study abroad alumnus, your experience has provided you with invaluable skills and experience in the following areas:

- Leadership
- Cross-cultural sensitivity
- Adaptability to new situations
- Foreign language (if applicable)

Your study abroad experience may be listed under the "Education" or "Relevant Experience/International Experience" headings on your resume.

- ***Tip***: Use the position's job description to determine the knowledge/abilities sought by the hiring organization and cater your resume and international experience to the position.
- Include accomplishments abroad and acquired skills:
  - Language
  - Relevant coursework/projects
- Don't forget to include:
  - Volunteer work abroad
  - Independent research
  - Leadership roles/involvement in student organizations at a foreign university

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Marketing Study Abroad in an Interview

Professionalism is key! Be sure to talk about study abroad from a perspective that highlights what you gained from the experience and explain how it might relate to the position at hand. Recall skills you noted on your resume, including:

- Cross-cultural communication
- Foreign language acquisition
- Adaptability
- Openness to new environments, etc.

Avoid talking solely about the fun you had while abroad and remember to frame your stories in a professional context! Be positive, avoid complaining, and focus on your successes and accomplishments while abroad – not insurmountable challenges. Also, remember that your interviewer may have never visited the country where you studied, so avoid potentially unfamiliar language or references.

Behavioral Interviewing Questions: Using Study Abroad in Your Response

What is behavioral interviewing?

Behavioral interviewing is the newest method used by hiring managers to evaluate job applicants. This interview technique asks the respondent to describe their behavior in past situations, in an effort to determine the individual's likely actions in a hypothetical on-the-job situation in the future. When responding to an interview question in this format, you will frame your answer using previous examples from work, school, and especially your study abroad experience. See the sample question below for an example.

Behavioral Interviewing – sample question:

Interviewer: "Tell me about a time when you found yourself in an environment that was completely unfamiliar to you, or out of your comfort zone."

Interviewee: *"I completed a semester abroad in Spain my senior year of college, and I had never been out of the country before. It was an amazing experience because I was immersed in a culture that was completely foreign to me. My goal for studying abroad was to master the Spanish language and gain an understanding of local customs, as well as learning cross-cultural communication skills. During my time there I started an investment club that grew to 18 members where we spoke only Spanish. This helped me learn the language better from native speakers, as well as improved my understanding of financial transactional language and concepts."*

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S.T.A.R. Technique
for Behavioral Interviewing Questions

Situation
- Explain situation.

Target
- Describe what you sought to achieve.

Action
- Describe the steps you took in response to the situation.

Results
- Describe the outcome, consequences of your actions (positive or negative – but focus on the positive), what you learned, and what you might do differently in a similar situation in the future.

Tips for Success in Any Interview
- Research position/organization extensively beforehand.
- Prepare responses to answer questions as to why you are the best candidate for the position and why you want to work for the organization.
- Prepare well-researched questions for interviewer (about position, organization, or industry – generally avoid specific questions about salary)

International Employment Resources
U.S. Government: www.usajobs.gov
- *U.S. Department of State*: www.state.gov
- *United States Agency for International Development (USAID)*: www.usaid.gov

Local nonprofits with an international focus:
- www.idealist.org
- www.deweykaye.com/jobswatch/ (Pittsburgh region)

Development-centered jobs:
- www.devnetjobs.org
- www.devex.com

Jobs in study abroad
- *National Association of International Educators*: www.nafsa.org
- *Institute of International Educators:* www.iie.org

Pittsburgh jobs: www.imaginepittsburgh.com

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