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# Go abroad, get hired: Corporate recruiters value study abroad experience

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The benefits of a semester abroad don't stop at the foreign experiences and cultural experimentation. Besides the countless Facebook pictures in front of the Eiffel Tower and Big Ben, students who study abroad also acquire marketable skills that are becoming more sought-out by corporate recruiters as we continue to move toward a more global economy that requires business travel and a broad spectrum of knowledge.

"Global corporations highly value study abroad programs, both due to the characteristics and personality types the programs foster in candidates, such as independence and self-awareness, but also the experience living abroad," said David Lucey, recruiting manager for marketing company Epsilon. "Exposure to different cultures, thought processes, and ways of doing business will add to a student's knowledge base and experience."

In response, career services departments at colleges across the Boston area are leveraging the study abroad advantage during this difficult job market, preparing presentations and pamphlets advertising these distinguishable qualities. "The hope is that the behaviors and skills gained abroad will be translated into those that the students will apply to their careers and, specifically, the position for which they are interviewing," said Janet Ehl, associate director of Bentley University's Undergraduate Career Services.

Other skills that students develop while studying abroad -- "flexibility, problem-solving skills, and cross-cultural communication skills, to name just a few," said Natalie Schlegel, director of Bentley's Cronin Office of International Education -- come into play not just on the job but also during one of the most daunting parts of the job search: the interview.

"[Students who study abroad] return better prepared to respond to interview questions with compelling examples of how they were able to adapt to new situations, succeed in a foreign classroom without frequent feedback, and develop lasting relationships with locals," Schlegel said.

Your frantic experiences using your one year of Spanish classes to translate directions on the Metro taught you to stay calm in stressful situations (like an interview), and that time you negotiated for hours to reach an agreement with Italian business students despite the language barrier is a top-rate example that'll rescue you from that awkward silence following the ever-popular "describe a time when you..." questions.

"We conduct mostly behavioral interviews, and the candidate will many times use examples of their experience abroad to answer those questions," said Lucey. "Confidence and independence are extremely important attributes that resonate throughout the interview process. Candidates who have studied abroad generally embody these characteristics and relate them to their time abroad."

However, despite the overwhelming success that students who have studied abroad have with recruiters, there are a few aspects of the programs to keep in mind.

"Not all study abroad experiences are equal," said Ehl. "When interviewing students, companies pay careful attention to how the student describes their semester abroad; the rationale for choosing the location, university, etc.; and what the students state they gained from the experience."

Companies also consider a student's level of independence while abroad.

"We find it very impressive when a candidate tells us they went to their study abroad program alone, versus with a friend or a group of friends," Lucey said.