

Careers

MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

MELANIE BURGESS

ONCE considered a rite of passage among Aussies, a stint working overseas now seems to be more of a pipe dream.

But despite the pandemic and travel restrictions, Johanna Pitman, chief executive of professional network Advance.org, says now is the perfect time to seek a role internationally.

"With restricted travel, and reduced numbers of skilled migrants and expats in countries like the UK, US, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and China, employers are urgently seeking workers, particularly at entry and mid-career levels, to fill gaps," she says.

WHY GO?

Aside from the opportunity to travel and meet new people, Pitman says the main benefit is the chance to build "soft" skills that will differentiate you for the rest of your career.

"Communicating in a workplace overseas, even where English is the main language, requires attention to differences in assertiveness, hierarchy, and interpersonal dynamics," she says.

"In addition, communicating in English overseas requires constant regulation of language to remove

Aussie slang or references. These subtle communication skills become ingrained and make you much more aware of your audience, and perceptive to their responses."

Pitman says overseas experience on a resume also demonstrates initiative, motivation, independence, maturity and adaptability.

"It is also likely that you get a few rejections along the way or have to try different opportunities before finding something that suits you – all great aspects to building and demonstrating resilience to potential future employers, who will see that you are not afraid to get out of your comfort zone and face new challenges," she says.

Pitman says living among other cultures opens minds to how people from other countries perceive the world, giving you a "global mindset".

"Employers will value your global perspective and your global network of relationships with international friends and colleagues in your field," she says.

HOW TO GET STARTED

1 Choose your destination or field of work: "Australians have access to working holiday arrangements in over 40 different countries or jurisdictions, so this could be a big decision, or an opportunity to cast your job search very wide," Pitman says.

2 Get a travel exemption: Under new rules, Australians need to show proof



Melbourne's Sarah Strugnell is preparing to move to the US for a project officer role with the Australia/Japan Research Centre.

of employment if they are leaving to work overseas.

"This new hurdle means that some (preparation) is necessary to line up a role – and that's a good thing (as) it reduces uncertainty and gets you started before you book anything," Pitman says.

"The old model of arriving overseas, couch surfing with friends before finding a job through a temp

agency or at a local pub, might have been spontaneous and fun, but a more deliberate job search will help you find something that is directly related to your career goals."

3 Identify a role: Pitman suggests doing this through word of mouth, cold calling or recruitment firms and jobs boards.

"Ask friends overseas or your Australian networks to recommend you

for a role or provide suggestions," she says. "(Use) LinkedIn or other social media to approach prospective employers of interest ... (while it) might seem scary, the results are generally outstanding because you can target exactly who you want to work for, with a very minimal investment of time."

She says Australians can apply for international roles through recruiters, through country-specific job boards such as GaijinPot in Japan, or through Advance's international jobs board, which presently lists about 100 positions across the US and UK alone.

4 Position yourself carefully: "When you target specific overseas organisations, know what they are currently doing and the areas that are growing," Pitman says.

"Identify your unique combination of skills, experience and personal qualities, and make it clear how these will benefit the organisation."

Melbourne's Sarah Strugnell is preparing to move to the US for a project officer role with the Australia/Japan Research Centre.

"I am excited about the prospect of meeting others in San Francisco in an online environment and continuing our professional relationship in-person," she says.

"I would also be keen to mentor young scholars thinking about post-graduate study."

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- patrols of the facility perimeter

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