



## *Wang & Li Asia Resources*

# High, Value-Added Skills And Job Functions That Are In Demand In China

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In the face of the global economic crisis, China is still offering strong, growth prospects for businesses and for individuals pursuing career opportunities here: The competition on the talent side, however, is getting better and greater each day. For instance, many professionals in China today have:

- ✓ Strong Company Backgrounds
- ✓ Good Universities
- ✓ Strong Functional Backgrounds
- ✓ An MBA
- ✓ Hard-Working
- ✓ Dedicated To Their Career Advancement/Success

Therefore, the key question for one's career development in China is not so much, "Where are the hot jobs and opportunities?" It is, "How do you attain those opportunities that are most attractive to you?" To do this better for your career advancement and success in this market, you should be aware of the characteristics and capabilities that provide the greatest value-added to for global organizations operating in the mainland.

### **The "Ideal" Candidate**

From our experience in placing high-caliber candidates with leading international companies in China, we have come to determine an ideal candidate profile based on what is consistently sought by our clients. No matter the industry, job function, or position level, we always identify six factors in potential candidates that are common to just about any hiring situation for a global company. They are:

- **High-caliber** – Most of the positions that our company works on for our international clients are at the manager to director levels, which require roughly 5 – 15 years of experience. These are candidates who have the fundamental ability to handle management-level roles and responsibilities in a world-class company.
- **Bi-lingual** - For non-mainlanders who want to know how good their Chinese needs to be, the simple answer is, "The more, the better." Although there are many foreigners working in China who do not speak good Mandarin, the inability to speak Mandarin will eliminate your consideration for a good 95% of the positions and opportunities that are most attractive to those with an overseas background. Today, English skills are not a significant obstacle for many mainland professionals who have worked in international companies for much of their career. By the time they reach management levels, they are quite comfortable conducting business in English.
- **International-oriented/trained** – Although operating in a local business environment and market, international companies here emphasize best practices and management approaches that reflect their success as a world-class organization. As a result, a person needs to not only be able to handle local situations and people, but international ones as well.
- **Affordable** - This is not an issue for most mainland professionals, since compensation structures are essentially being localized to levels that they are accustomed to. On the other hand, the salary expectations of non-mainland professionals are often beyond the budgets that companies have for a role. Overall, employers here are willing to pay for value. But if you want to be paid more than local professionals, then you just need to be able to justify and deliver your value in this market.

- **Track record that shows the ability to perform and get results in China** - This is also not an issue for mainland professionals, where their network of relationships, local market knowledge, and understanding of China's business culture is typically much stronger than those who have spent most of their career overseas. In contrast, many non-mainland professionals must convince employers that they can get the kind of results here that they have achieved elsewhere. For anyone new to this market, there is a significant learning curve to figuring out how to perform effectively here. Although China's professional standards and business practices continue to internationalize, the cultural differences and local mindset present a real challenge for those with limited or no working experience in the mainland. This can also apply to mainland returnees who have been abroad for five years or longer, and whose professional sensibilities more closely resemble those of foreigners.
- **Realistic expectation** – Many mainland professionals tend to overestimate their capabilities to take on higher-level roles, or underestimate the capabilities and qualities that are needed to handle the responsibilities of such roles. Conversely, many non-mainland professionals tend to overestimate how quickly they can perform successfully in this market, or underestimate the complexities and difficulty of doing business in China. In particular, they don't have a strong sense early on of how hands-on, entrepreneurial, fast-paced, and dynamic working in China is.

## **High, Value-Added Skill Areas That Are In Demand In China**

### **Solutions/Consultative Selling Backgrounds**

- Ability to sell large investment, enterprise solutions to C-level decision-makers
- Ability to quantify benefits (e.g. cost savings, efficiencies, improved service, etc.)
- Ability to sell conceptual solutions

Relative to many other markets, solutions and consultative selling is fairly new to China, which has traditionally emphasized relationship and product selling approaches. Solutions/consultative selling requires much greater knowledge of a business and market, and the ability to provide clear analysis and the identification of excellent solutions. Currently, the supply of strong consulting backgrounds in China is being significantly outpaced by the growth and demand in the market. For those with such backgrounds, this is a good time to be pursuing opportunities here.

**Roles:** All types of consulting Business development, channel and partner management

**Industries:** IT, mobile internet/telecom, business consulting, business services, media/marketing services

### **People/Team Development and Leadership Skills**

- Willingness to give away your knowledge and expertise
- Committed to making others on your team successful
- Ability to motivate and empower team members
- Can nurture and instill world-class standards/best practices in team members

Although many mainland professionals perform well at the individual contributor levels, many have difficulty transitioning into leadership and management roles, where the model of success shifts from what they can deliver individually to one that is rooted in the concept of, "your team's success is your success." Many overseas-trained professionals offer more developed leadership skills and stronger, well-rounded soft skills (e.g. people skills, communication skills, team-orientation, initiative, sense of accountability, etc.). Therefore, those able to build and lead teams are in a good position to stand out and attract opportunities in this market.

**Roles:** Sales management, department managers/heads

**Industries:** FMCG/consumer products, IT/telecom, consulting, business services

### **Ability To Identify, Assess, And Deliver Solutions And New Opportunities**

- Professionally mature as a strategic thinker, leader, and executer
- Knows how to build and utilize key resources
- Can create new business advantages and/or opportunities for a team/ organization

Many mainland professionals are known to be strong analytically and good at breaking down problems, but not necessarily good at fixing problems or delivering solutions. Those with the ability to not only assess situations, but also deliver solutions are highly sought in this market. In particular, there is a need for people who can handle key front-end, business development roles within China's growing consumer, retail, and business services sectors.

**Roles:** BD, sales management, operations management, senior and executive management level roles

**Industries:** IT, mobile internet/telecom, consulting, business services

### **Project Management and Implementation Capabilities**

- Combination of strategic/analytical and hands-on/implementation abilities
- Can gain buy-in and support across an organization at all levels
- Can lead and manage major projects that deliver significant results

Those with strong project management capabilities are also highly sought in this market as the operations of multinationals in China are still in the process of evolving and maturing to match their global practices and standards. This includes strong project leaders and project managers who can drive and deliver key company and business initiatives at an international-caliber level, who are in short supply here.

**Roles:** BD, channel/partner management, consulting management, senior management-level roles

**Industries:** IT, mobile internet/telecom, consulting, business services

### **Ability to Instill World-Class Standard and Best Practices In An Organization**

- Can represent the standards and best practices of an international-caliber professional.
- Able to coach and mentor others to raise their international caliber
- Able to support and deliver an organization's unique, competitive strengths an business approach

The top management of global companies in China pay a lot of attention to developing those things that allow their operations here to compete as a world-class company. As a result, they seek staff who are not only able to help execute those business approaches and best practices that are proven at an international-caliber level, but who can help those around them to develop and match the standards of a leading international company.

**Roles:** Sales management, department managers/heads

**Industries:** FMCG/consumer products, IT/telecom, consulting, business services

## **High Demand Job Functions And Industries**

### **Business And Strategy Consulting**

- The business growth of most consulting firms are being restricted by resource limitations, not market opportunity
- Severe talent shortage at the middle management level and above in this industry
- Engagement delivery standards and expectations are growing among clients
- Engagements with local companies are being targeted by many firms, but are very tough/demanding

### **Supply Chain And Global Sourcing**

- China has become the supply chain center for most of the world's major manufacturing organizations
- Current talent is strong in negotiations and sourcing, but not in thinking at a strategic and integrated process level
- Also strong at an execution level, but not in developing best practices and processes to international standards

### **Retail, FMCG, And Consumer Products And Services**

- A fast-growing middle-class with an increasing appetite and sophistication for new products, services, and user experiences.
- China's economy shifting from an export-driven to consumer-driven economy.
- Huge backing by the government to increase consumer spending through infrastructure development and support of SMEs in China

### **IT And Engineering Management**

- Mainland IT and engineering professionals good as individual contributors, but not so developed as team leaders
- Technical skills are good, but weak in communications, people skills, and business/management sense
- IT/engineering management roles today requiring much greater interaction/communications with overseas parties.

### **Financial Services Industries**

- An active market for VC/PE investments, but from a career perspective, highly unstable as investment sentiment for China goes up and down
- With WTO in full effect since the end of 2006, commercial banking is a big, long-term growth area for international banks
- I-banking activity typically active in China, but positions in international banks mainly driven out of HK and other overseas offices

### **Organization And Staff Development**

- Companies are investing more resources into developing their future management and organization culture here.
- Few people in China with the combination of organization/management sense, consulting/coaching backgrounds, and leadership abilities.
- Organization development consulting and leadership training are huge need areas in China today

Despite the current, global economic downturn, *it is still a great time and great place to be in China for career opportunities.* China's growth economy and environment is still offering excellent opportunities to those who are capable and committed to this market. Mainly, attaining your success here comes down to your ability to build and demonstrate your capabilities and achievements for this market.