



Wang & Li Asia Resources

Pursuing A Summer Internship In China

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Although our limited resources make it difficult for us to line up summer internships, this document will help you in your approach to pursuing a summer internship in the mainland, from identifying job leads from the U.S. to landing here and meeting potential employers.

1) What To Know About Summer Internships In China

Although summer internships are also valued here, given China's faster-paced, less structured environment, few companies make planned recruitment efforts in advance for internships as is done in the U.S. That doesn't mean, however, that there is not the need or desire to hire what a high-caliber, U.S. MBA can offer.

On the plus side, the decision-making ability to bring on board a summer intern can be very quick, especially if you are approaching executives from small and medium-sized companies. In many cases, employers can create an internship for you if you can get them to recognize the value you can bring to their business.

2) Two Key Concepts For Pursuing Summer Internship Opportunities In China

- **Nothing Beats Being Here** – Pursing someone thousands of miles away is not an attractive scenario for China-based employers, no matter how good you are. Even if you have a good phone interview with them, it's doubtful that they'll send you a plane ticket based on just a call. And they're not going to hire you until they meet you face-to-face.

Therefore, if you're serious about finding a job in China, then you need to make the investment to come out and make yourself accessible to employers here (even if it's just a weeklong trip over your Spring Break). *The ability to meet with you face-to-face increases your chances of attracting the attention of employers by many times.* Otherwise, it's out of sight, out of mind.

- **The Kindness Of Strangers** - China is full of outgoing, young professionals with similar bilingual/bicultural backgrounds as your own. At one point, we've all slept on someone's sofa or gotten job leads or introductions from friends of friends and complete strangers. As a result, *people here tend to be very generous and supportive of others who are going through a job search situation that they understand very well.* Many will offer you whatever help they can. To access these resources though, you need to be proactive and clear about what you they can help you with.

3) Preparing For Your China Job Search Trip From The U.S.

- **Tap Into Every Resource Available To You** – In today's Internet Era, there is no excuse for not being able to pursue job leads and contact potential employers in China from the U.S., especially given the pool of contacts and resources available to you that can provide you with information and put you in touch with people and companies in China. *These include alumni, your network of friends, and even friends of friends.*

- **Your E-mail Cover Letter** – You need a well thought out, cover letter that highlights your value and objectives to others, whether you are asking for assistance or approaching them for a job. Beyond expressing your career objectives for this market, emphasize what you can offer an employer that is competing in this dynamic and highly competitive market.
- **When To Start Contacting People Out Here** – *Start contacting people about 3-6 weeks before you arrive to China on your job search trip.* If you contact others too far in advance, your email will likely be pushed to the bottom of their priority list. China is a here and now place where people focus on what will affect them right now.
- **Check Out Helpful Websites:** Check out professional organization websites that target foreigners working in China, such as: Shanghai Expat, Amcham, AsiaXpat, Zhaopin, Britcham, etc. These websites not only provide useful information, they also hold events that can help you get connected with many other professionals in this market.

Job Search Tip: *Of course, Wang & Li Asia Resources is a great source of information and guidance for your China job search efforts. As such, we encourage you to visit our website (www.wang-li.com), as well as contact us just before you make your trip out to China and we'll do what we can to help you make your job search trip a successful one.*

4) **Things To Do When Looking For A Job In China Today**

- **Stay close to your core, competitive strengths and what you have a track record of performance in** – China has long been a very “opportunistic” place to be for many businesses and individuals. Like everywhere else in the world, however, the hiring market here has tightened as well late last year. As a result, it is difficult to make a jump in market and job function or industry at same time.

Right now, you want to highlight to potential employers the things that you have a strong track record in. As you develop your achievements here and as the overall economic situation improves, you will be in a better position to pursue opportunities outside your current area.

- **Clearly Identify The Value You Can Deliver** - *Landing a summer internship in China is about getting an employer to see what you can do for them.* Executives of small to medium enterprises (SMEs), in particular, are typically short of top-caliber resources that can support many of their key projects and initiatives. In addition, they don't get contacted by a lot of top, U.S. MBAs each week, so approaching them with a strong value proposition will often catch their attention. *Particularly for executives of SMEs, the cost/benefit of bringing on a well-trained, highly motivated resource that can conduct research, perform analysis, or develop plans for critical areas of their business is very attractive.*
- **Experience Over Compensation** - If you're just starting to build your China work experience and capabilities, then your main internship focus should be on what you can gain from an internship here, rather than on what you can earn over the summer. Remember that employers can also hire MBA interns from top, local programs, and that middle managers in global companies here typically make from between RMB15K – 25K/month.

When asked what he's willing to pay summer interns from a top U.S. program, one executive's response was, “Well, we'll feed them.” *So if an employer is willing to cover your costs for the summer, then frankly, that's pretty good, especially in this very tight job market.* Again, keep in mind your long-term career objectives and place your emphasis on the experience that you'll gain from your internship. In doing so, the trade off of a lower, short-term compensation situation should be a worthwhile sacrifice.

Job Search Tip: *Beyond what an employer pays you each month, you can also see if they are open to an end-of-internship, performance bonus based on your ability to deliver an outstanding result for the objectives targeted.*

5) **Where To Find Attractive Internships**

Many MBAs overlook SMEs for both full-time and internship opportunities, favoring instead the well-known, Fortune 1000 companies. *Although large multinationals certainly offer a lot of resources and opportunities, many SMEs in China also provide great platforms for young MBAs to learn and develop from. In addition, they are also easier to approach for opportunities.*

For one, many SMEs are founded and/or run by executives who have had successful careers in leading companies, like McKinsey, GE, and P&G. At this stage in their career, however, they've chosen to pursue a more entrepreneurial opportunity that offers potentially greater upsides in this market. Within these platforms, you have the chance to work closely with these established executives on very interesting and critical projects for their business success.

In addition, rather than an administrator or HR person reviewing your internship request (as is usually the case when applying to large companies), your application to an SME is much more likely to get viewed by a top manager who is more flexible and open to considering your internship proposal.

Job Search Tip: *For an internship that can expose you to many aspects of a business where you can work closely with a top executive, offer yourself as an Executive Assistant to a senior manager in an SME. This is not as a personal assistant who does low-level work, but as a Project Manager who can work on key business initiatives that the executive may have.*

Although global economic conditions are extremely difficult today, if there's any place in the world that is still offering dry land economically and from an employment and career development perspective, it's China. The global recession is definitely being felt in the mainland as well at the industry, company, and individual levels. To land a summer internship here, this just means you need to be smart and proactive about how you position yourself and highlight your value to others in China. Overall, however, there are still many companies and executives that can use an MBA from a top U.S. program for the summer, especially for those who are flexible, persistent, and committed to pursuing one in this market.

Best of luck with your China job search trip for a summer internship. We hope to have the chance to work with you as you pursue your ongoing career objectives in the mainland.