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July 13, 2008

E-Careers Boost Employment Opportunities Abroad

For many American professionals moving abroad, the traditional path of career transition in a foreign country has been fraught with a variety of challenges including legal impediments, cultural and language barriers, and differing business practices, among other obstacles. For longer-term residents abroad, it has often been difficult to maintain continuity with employers and professional affiliations in the U.S., and to explore career change opportunities on a local basis.

New Frontier Work Abroad

The new frontier of “E-Careers” is quickly transforming the working environment for American professionals abroad, and greatly expanding the range of opportunities available in the private and nonprofit sectors. In the past, employment abroad was largely defined by physical presence and face-to-face contact, but the new emerging “E-Career” environment is comprised of American professionals in a variety of fields with technology savvy skills working on a virtual basis worldwide. The “E-Career Toolkit” generally consists of a laptop computer with high-speed internet service including wireless capabilities as well as web-based voice communications services (“SKYPE”, etc.), real-time messaging services (“Yahoo Messenger”, etc.), and cell phone service with global reach i.e., international roaming service. In addition, some “E-Careerists” rely upon web-based conferencing programs and data exchange services that allow for the real-time exchange of drawings, models and presentations. An increasing number of “E-Careerists” overseas are also developing their own personal professional online “Blogs” and “Podcasts.” Self-employed E-Careerists often rely upon computer-based voice communications (“SKYPE”, etc.) as the vehicle for delivering a variety of online services to clients worldwide such as “E-Coaching”, “E-Tutoring”, “E-Training”, etc. Overall, “E-Careerists” utilize a wide variety of web-based technologies and programs to perform their work, and to communicate effectively with a geographically dispersed community of colleagues, clients, and global offices. Given the current rapid pace of advancements in communications and internet/web technologies, “E-Careerists” must continually stay abreast of technology changes and improvements, and update their “E-Career Toolkit” on a regular basis.

Private Sector E-Careers

In the private sector, E-Careers fall into two broad categories as follows: Online employment opportunities in a variety of disciplines from established companies, language schools, educational firms, etc. that are advertised through conventional channels including the web, online publications, and print editions of newspapers, etc.

Some examples of advertised online employment by discipline are:

Education and Teaching:

Aimfor A Tutoring:

<http://www.aim4a.com/tutors.php>

E-Sylvan:

<http://www.esylvan.com/About/AboutCareersTeachers.aspx>

Travel Writing:

Transitions Abroad:

http://www.transitionsabroad.com/information/writers/travel_writers_guidelines_transitionsabroadcom.shtml

Escapeartist:

<http://www.escapeartist.com/Travel/Writers/>

Film/video Production

Geobeats:

<http://www.geobeats.com/>

The other category of E-Careers is “self-designed” online employment opportunities that are the result of an individual’s creativity, entrepreneurial talents, and networking. Such opportunities include small business start-up abroad leveraging E-Commerce web-based services, and other remote employment opportunities with existing companies, academic institutions, media companies, etc. Just as is true of the conventional job market in the U.S., the majority of E-Career opportunities are not advertised.

Nonprofit sector E-Careers

There are a wide range of virtual employment opportunities in the nonprofit sector offered by leading NGO’s, international organizations, and local nonprofits. Generally speaking, large well-established nonprofit organizations and NGO’s have formal online volunteer programs, and some offer computer-based training and support/feedback as well.

Some examples of nonprofits with formal online volunteer programs are:

U.N. volunteer program:

<http://www.onlinevolunteering.org/index.htm>

Idealist:

<http://www.idealist.org/>

Volunteer Match:

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/search/index.jsp?k=virtual+volunteer&submitsearch=Search&v=true>

Pearls of Africa:

http://www.pearlsof africa.org/online_volunteering.html

At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that some of the most interesting and rewarding virtual volunteer opportunities can be the result of individual initiative working with a nonprofit without a formal online volunteer program.

Virtual Internships for Professionals

A variation on virtual volunteer opportunities is a “virtual internship”. While this area primarily attracts college/graduate students, interesting opportunities exist for more experienced professionals as well.

Example of an online internship:

USJournal:

<http://www.usjournal.com:80/en/about/internship.html>

Getting Started E-Careers

Training and professional development plays an important role for those interested in starting and/or maintaining an “E-Career” abroad in the private or nonprofit sector. A wide range of computer-based high-quality courses, tutorials, webcasts, and webinars are available that can facilitate this process. Most of this training is made available from the U.S. government and/or nonprofit sector and is available on a non-cost basis by signing up and receiving a password.

For example, if you are thinking of exploring your own online business and/or offering a web-based service from overseas, don’t overlook the resources of online “E-Mentoring” available from online volunteers in conjunction with “SCORE”, an affiliate of the U.S. Business Administration (SBA). SCORE volunteers include American professionals with significant international work experience.

SCORE Volunteer Network (Small Business Administration/SBA)

<http://counseling.score.org/AvectraScore/Secure/SearchCounselor.aspx>

How to develop an online presence: Small Business Administration(SBA)

<http://www.score.org/presentations/concentric/index.html>

Business Start-up: Institute for Economic Development/UTexas at San Antonio

<http://utsa.edu/sbdcregional/regmodules.cfm>

If you would like to learn about different aspect of the volunteer environment including online volunteering:

Corporation for National and Community Service (tools and training for volunteer and service programs)

<http://my.nationalservice.org/learning/servlet/PortalMain>

Service Leader:

<http://www.serviceleader.org/new/international/articles/2004/03/000211.php>

Training to manage volunteer programs, recruiting, management, etc.

<http://www.volunteermatch.org/nonprofits/learningcenter/>

E-Careers Looking Ahead

Looking to the future, internet/web-based technologies can be expected to become ubiquitous in the daily lives of Americans abroad, and E-Careers are likely to become the norm in the international workplace. For those who did not grow up in an internet/web culture, some effort will be required to stay current with new emerging technologies. Young Americans (aka “Millennials”), on the other hand, can be expected to ease into global E-Careers without difficulty. Overall, the E-Careers trend represents an exciting new career management resource for Americans worldwide offering employment opportunities in the private and nonprofit sectors, entrepreneurial options, training and support, flexibility, and geographic mobility.