

## Job Search Tips for International Students & Trainees

Based on Dan Beaudry's lecture, "What Every International Student & Trainee Should Know about the US Job Search." Sponsored by CAPD, ISO, OGE, and OVPR.

International students seeking jobs with US employers often face a frustrating and daunting search due to their visa status. Many students invest time responding to online job postings. But in reality, around 70% of jobs are filled through informal ways that don't involve advertising.

**Informational interviewing and networking are the keys to getting hired through the hidden job market.** It is important to invest time learning how to build relationships, gain confidence, and effectively convey your value.

**Before beginning your job search,** go to the International Students Office (ISO) and educate yourself on all of your possible work visa options. ISO often hosts employment workshops. Understand what employers will need to do to legally hire you so when the time comes you'll be able to explain the process to the hiring manager. This is helpful as not all employers are familiar with the process. Once you have this background information, turn your focus to other aspects of the job search.

### US Companies and Visa Sponsorship

- H-1B is a limited type of visa that allows US employers use to temporarily hire foreign professionals, usually in specialty occupations.
- H-1B visas are not guaranteed and lotteries occur when demand for employees is anticipated to exceed supply.
- Companies may state outright they don't sponsor H1B visas—but they actually might. Don't focus on who sponsors and who doesn't as it changes over time and the information is sometimes contradictory to what you will see on postings.
- Some companies (defense contractors) definitely won't sponsor visas.
- Many online applications will ask you to check a box stating you will require a visa. But remember: Only applying to online ads is not the best way to approach your job search.
- **Best approach:** Give someone of influence in the company a reason to want to hire you that has to do with your value, not your visa status.

**Note:** There are other ways of working or interning in the US outside of H-1Bs, including CPT, OPT, STEM extensions etc. Learn more about different employment options on MIT's International Students' Office Employment page <https://iso.mit.edu/employment/>. For postdoctoral scholars, you may wish to review [ISchO resources](#).

### Hiring Managers

- Hiring managers are more important to the process than Human Resources (HR). If they see your value, they can advocate on your behalf to HR and negotiate for sponsorship.
- Employee Referral Programs (EFPs) are your friend! EFPs are an important way for hiring managers to find potential candidates for jobs.

## Informational Interviewing and Networking

Networking and informational interviews are key. They will help you find and build relationships with the **internal influencers** who can help you eventually connect with a hiring manager.

- **Informational interviewing** allows you to shed the role of job seeker and have a 1 on 1 conversation with people who are doing something you want to do or are connected to a company that interests you. Focus on building relationships with these influential people.
- **Networking** events can help you meet and learn about people who may be appropriate for informational interviews.
- **Professional associations** are an excellent source for networking and informational interviewing. They often have mentoring organizations, geographically varied chapters, volunteering and student leadership opportunities, and discounted student rates.

### Before Informational Interview

- **Send a short introductory email.** In a few sentences, introduce yourself and explain how you discovered this person and why you would like to talk to them.
- **Request 15-20 minutes** of the person's time.
- **Reach out to 20 people.** For those who don't respond, forward the original message in follow-up email a week or two later and ask if they have thoughts on message below.

### During Informational Interview

- **Begin conversation** with info. on who you are and why you're there (exploring career path).
- **Be your authentic self**, not a job seeker. Listen, don't pitch.
- **Have intelligent questions prepared**—you will reveal your value through your questions.
- **At 15-minute mark**, ask if the person has time to continue.
- **End by thanking the person for time.** Ask if they can suggest other people you could talk to. Send a thank you email. Keep in touch later if you have something specific and relevant to say.
- **Never ask for a job** at an informational interview! This is about relationship building not hiring.

### More Tips

- **Don't** go to job fairs and ask recruiters, "Do you sponsor?" You may screen yourself out.
- **Do** take a close look at jobs posted through CAPD as there is usually more of a relationship with employers seeking MIT talent.
- **If you get a job interview**, that is the time to state your need for a visa (not before). You can explain to the hiring manager the process so they can take care of negotiations with HR.

## **Additional Resources**

### **CAPD Resources**

Networking and Informational Interviews

<https://capd.mit.edu/channels/network-conduct-informational-interview>

CAPD Development Handbook (see Chapter 4 for Interviewing and the Job Offer)

<https://capd.mit.edu/resources/career-handbook>

### **MIT International Students Office (ISO) Resources**

ISO Employment and Visa Information:

<https://iso.mit.edu/employment>

### **International Scholars Office (ISchO)**

<https://ischo.mit.edu>

### **MIT Alumni Resources**

MIT Alumni on LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/school/mit/people>

MIT Alumni Advisors Hub

<https://alumniadvisors.mit.edu>

### **Other Resources for Leveraging Your Network and Informational Interviewing**

The Muse

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/simple-ways-to-keep-your-network-from-growing-cold>

Dan Beaudry

<https://www.powerties.net>