

go east

young man, go east

the Hong Kong job search

by Joanne Pawluk



You're eager to find work after hearing those glowing reports on the job situation in Hong Kong. What do you do next? Where do you start? What are your prospects?

Your Job Prospects

Although Hong Kong has a reputation for being a good place to find work, the job market has changed in the last two to three years. The result is that it's more difficult to find work, especially for those who cannot speak Cantonese or Mandarin.

Hong Kong is being flooded with job-seekers, both expatriates and former Hong Kong residents, unable to find work in their own countries. Canadians are the fastest growing expatriate community in Hong Kong, increasing 18.8 per cent in the last year to 19,000 people. Altogether, there are more than 300,000 expatriates in Hong Kong, about one third of whom are from Western countries.

With the run-up to 1997, Hong Kong and international companies are looking to 'localize' their staffs. Although few analysts predict that foreign workers will disappear from Hong Kong after 1997, localization is a cost-effective and practical strategy with well-qualified bilingual or trilingual residents who may have studied abroad and have knowledge of the Asian market.

Employment analysts predict this trend will continue. As Hong Kong companies expand their China operations, new employees must be able to speak Cantonese and Mandarin. At the same time, the recession in North America and Europe has reduced the need for employees with expertise in these markets.



However, Hong Kong is still probably one of the best places in the world right now for most job seekers. Although it takes most people two to four months to find a job, it isn't unheard of to find a job during a two week vacation. Hong Kong is an international business centre with a large foreign community and work permits are relatively easy to obtain. Hong Kong employees are often given more responsibility and scope at their work than they would have had in Canada. Hard work is rewarded with rapid promotions and pay increases.

Presence is Crucial

Prospects for finding work in Hong Kong from Canada are slim. However, if you choose to look from Canada, your best bet is to approach Canadian companies with an office in Hong Kong. You can also send your résumé to companies in Hong Kong directly, but this is unlikely to be a successful strategy unless you

have a very specialized skill in high demand.

Most jobs are recruited locally, so if you're not already in Hong Kong, you should arrange to come for a visit. When you arrive, you will be given a tourist visa, which allows you to remain in Hong Kong for three months.

Bring your employment letters, a professionally prepared résumé, degrees and diplomas, transcripts, portfolio and other proof of your educational and work background. Bear in mind that Hong Kong employers are not restricted by the same human rights legislation prevalent in the West and are accustomed to receiving résumés with a photograph and information on age, marital status and nationality.

Before You Leave Home

- ✓ Do your homework first. Find companies in your area with offices in Hong Kong. Try to talk to someone at that company and ask for a contact person in Hong Kong.
- ✓ Check with the Hong Kong - Canada Business Association, Chambers of Commerce and other business organizations for information and contacts.
- ✓ Check your local library for *The South China Morning Post*, the largest English-language newspaper in Hong Kong. Take a look at the over 160 pages of job ads to see if your background and skills are in demand.