

# Recruiting in China: what to expect

**China is hot — but starting operations in a new market is not easy. Will you move your own people to the new location or will you start hiring locally? And if you hire locally, how do you attract the best candidates and what do these new recruits expect? Nannette Ripmeester reports.**



Kevin Ng, Partner at the Beijing office of Deloitte, is clear about the type of graduates Deloitte targets. "We will only approach the first-tier universities in China to be assured of quality graduates," he says. "We conduct campus recruitment to introduce our firm and the attributes of graduates we are looking for."



University ranking is extremely important in China and is directly related to salary expectations. Graduates from the top universities can command much higher salaries in comparison to the rest of the graduate market.

A survey by the Shanghai Labour and Social Security Bureau conducted in 2003 showed most fresh university graduates in Shanghai earn a monthly salary of between 1,500 Yuan Renminbi (abr. Yuan) and 2,500 Yuan — the city's average is 1,100 Yuan.

Only 1 percent of graduates earn top salaries — they earn between four to six times as much as the rest. Even though there is a wide difference between salaries and graduates from less prestigious universities are expect much lower salaries, Deloitte only targets the absolute top students.

"We make use of various methods such as written tests, group discussion and one-to-one interviews to assess the quality of the graduates. For us technical competence is less important, we focus on their personality," says Kevin Ng.

ICI has taken a slightly different approach. "We have initially focussed our attention on Chinese nationals studying in Europe. Only now we are going to market on-campus in China as well," says Esther Penketh, who is a member of the international recruitment team at ICI, based in the UK.

"Our first experiences in China have made us realise that it works best if we give prospective candidates more information upfront on how to approach the selection process," says Penketh.

"We tell them what we are looking for with regard to the on-line application, the telephone interview and the competencies we seek. Being very clear about the package on offer is also essential," she says.

Kevin Ng agrees how essential it is to invest time and energy before starting to recruit in China: "Market intelligence is essential, be patient and diligent in hiring the right candidate — because it can be quite painful to dismiss a person in

China!”

The following information is useful when dealing with the application process in China.

### **The application letter**

For Chinese graduates an application letter, or cover letter, is not customary. They are more used to application forms.

### **The curriculum vitae**

The Chinese do not use the term CV, but resume. Usually this document lists their education and experience in a very detailed manner.

In China it is not unusual to see a resume of more than two pages. The resume is usually typed, but hand-written documents are still surprisingly common.

Chinese resumes are usually set in a reverse-chronological order, listing the most recent first. Education plays a prominent role and references are not by standard included.

### **The Job interview**

The Chinese are very modest people, and do not like to show off, or over-impress others. Be aware that it might not be easy to get through to a Chinese candidate at a certain level as they are educated to behave in a self-effacing manner.

### **Here are some facts based on the most recently published data (June 2004):**

- Last year, Chinese university graduates faced difficulties in finding a job.
- This year, the job market seems even more disappointing for them – the starting salaries for university graduates in 2004 dropped between 25 to 30 percent, compared with last year.
- The average starting salaries of university graduates is 1,500RMB/month.
- Foreign invested enterprises (FIE) pay the highest salaries.
- Average salaries of governmental bureaus are 1516.7RMB/month.
- Average salaries of state owned enterprises are 1508.1RMB/month.
- Average salaries of foreign invested/owned enterprises are 2040RMB/month.
- Having an academic degree plays an important role in starting salaries;
- College (three-year professional education): 1300RMB/month
- University (four-year academic university): 1500RMB/month
- Postgraduates (Master degree): 3000RMB/month
- Those who graduated from famous universities (with a good ranking) earn 400RMB a month more on average than others from less prestigious universities.

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