



Recruiting in the Spanish Job Market - 'hasta mañana'

Spain is hot! The economy is thriving, Spanish players have swiftly entered the global market place and the restructuring of the Spanish economy is progressing ceaselessly. When Spain entered the European Community in January 1986 its economy was boosted. This enabled the country to improve the infrastructure and to conform the economy to EU guidelines. The result of all this was an increased GDP growth, reducing the public debt to GDP ratio, reducing unemployment from 23% to 15% in 3 years, and reducing inflation to under 3%. Nowadays, there remain some challenges for Spain – including reducing the public sector deficit, decreasing unemployment further, and reforming labour laws and investment regulations to a greater extent, lowering inflation, and raising per capita GDP – but the country is gradually taking up a top position in Europe's economic hit parade.

The Spanish graduate market place

Traditionally the Spanish labour market had the highest unemployment rate within Europe and the many frictions made recruiting a tricky

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task. Currently, it is still not an easy market, but it does offer opportunities; in particular for starting positions you are able to find good candidates. According to the Spanish

government, the sectors that have the largest growth perspectives are energy, biotechnology, information technology, telecommunications and the environmental sector. And Madrid, Spain's financial hub, is increasing in importance too. Due to several causes – political influences during the Franco era, huge migration in the 70s and high unemployment in the 90s – the Spanish economy shows a lack of qualified managers.

It's the culture stupid

The organisational culture used to be very hierarchical and bureaucratic, but it is

changing due to the influence of American management theories, a growing number of young managers educated abroad and changes in Spanish society itself. However, some things still haven't changed, detailed job descriptions are for instance rarely used and assessment of staff is rather uncommon. Decisions are still taken at senior management level, often by the senior

executive alone. To ask subordinates for their opinion about certain actions is seen as utter weakness and will bring more uncertainty than enthusiasm in your team. Likewise, a 'compliant' employee is more appreciated than somebody being able to make a change. Many of these things are currently changing, but people still prefer clarity on who makes the decisions and who is the boss. Another important aspect to take into account is Spain's lack of trust in planning, mainly "because no one can predict the future".

Spanish applications

If recruiting in a foreign market it is important to understand how local recruitment habits work. In Spain, for instance, personal contacts are seen as the most effective route into a job. The Internet is increasing in importance as a job-hunting tool, and Spanish employers usually have very attractive job sites. The 'money question' is never tackled in the

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first job interview. Several interviews, up to 7 (!) are not unusual and what someone is going to earn is certainly not discussed in the first interview.

Passport or ID numbers are included in CVs under the heading personal details. All former employers are listed, including tasks performed and responsibilities held. Spanish employers will expect to see translated certified qualifications and copies of diplomas. However, Spanish employers hardly ever request references and testimonials from former employers.

If you want to find out more about recruiting in Spain, Expertise in Labour Mobility has published a guide called "Looking for work in Spain" (ISBN 90-5896-020-X) that might answer all your initial questions about cultural habits during the recruitment process as well as cultural differences in management culture.

About the writer: Nannette Ripmeester is an internationally acclaimed expert when it comes to making a success of working abroad. She is managing director and founder of Expertise in Labour Mobility (www.labourmobility.com), a knowledge broker on issues related to mobility on the international labour market.

Key facts

- **Graduate starting salaries**
For starting positions salaries range from 22,600 to 38,000 Euros.
- **Age at graduation**
23–24 years
- **Working week**
40 hours
- **Holiday entitlement**
22 days' annual leave and 14 days' national holiday
- **Unemployment rate**
10,6%