

The International Job Hunt: Finding and Securing a Job in the Czech Republic Solar Market

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Contents

- Introduction
- Country Profile: Czech Republic
 - History and Economy
 - Culture
- Solar Industry Profile
- Source of Job Information on the Solar Industry in the Czech Republic
 - Job Search Methods
 - Industry-Specific Resources
 - Country-Specific Resources
- Job Search Strategy
 - Phase One: Prior to Job Search
 - Country and Industry Research
 - CV/Resume
 - Experience and Qualifications
 - Language
 - Phase Two: Conducting a Job Search in the Czech Republic
 - Use Your Network
 - International Interview
 - Follow Up
 - Visa Requirements for the Czech Republic
- Timeline and Budget
- Conclusion
- References

Introduction

“A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.”

– Lao Tzu

To find and secure a job overseas, taking the right first step is crucial. Though working abroad can provide an amazing opportunity to meet new people, to learn about a different culture, and to have new experiences, finding that ideal job is not without its challenges. Especially for recent college graduates, many of whom may have little to no experience finding and securing a professional job, creating a strategy to find the ideal international job will take time and preparation.

An international job hunt often begins by first choosing the career or industry in which the job hunter wishes to work, and then by determining which country may provide the best or most attractive opportunities within that field. The reverse may also be the case, where a job seeker first chooses an area where he or she wishes to work, and then seeks out the best opportunities to find an appropriate job to fit his or her qualifications. For either scenario, fully understanding the dynamics within the country and within the industry of choice is a vital component of finding an international job.

As a soon-to-be college graduate, this paper will help me to explore the opportunities to find an international job that fits my qualifications and interests. Throughout my college career, I have developed an interest and passion for the environment. Recently, I have completed two internships within the environmental field, one working for a consulting business in the recycling industry, and one within a start-up solar company. Both opportunities have given me experience with environmental issues and have helped me to develop an interest in working in a similar company after graduation.

In addition to environmental issues, international travel and education have also been a passion of mine throughout my college career. With study abroad experiences in my background, I have had a glimpse into the culture and practices of a number of different countries. In just a few short weeks, I will have yet another opportunity to complete a study abroad course in a foreign country, the Czech Republic, a country with an interesting past. After emerging out of a communist government and restoring a parliamentary democracy only about two decades ago, the country has gone through immense economic and governmental transformation that continues today. Because the Czech Republic is also one of the most industrialized countries in Europe, it provides great opportunity to learn about business. With a culture that I have never experienced before, I am excited to learn about the country, about a new culture and way of life, and about new opportunities that may exist there after graduation.

To prepare myself and other college graduates for a future international career, this paper will attempt to discover and create a plan to find and secure the right job. I will explore the major sources of job leads within the solar industry and create a strategy to successfully secure a job in that industry in the Czech Republic. To begin, I will briefly discuss some key points in the recent history of the Czech Republic and of the solar industry within the country. Next, I will identify some key sources of job leads within the country and industry. Finally, I will lay out a strategy to find and secure an appropriate job.

Country Profile

The Czech Republic, located in central Europe, occupies an area slightly smaller than South Carolina, and is bordered by Poland, Germany, Austria, and Slovakia. The language spoken is Czech, with many people likely to speak second and third languages (Russian, German, or English) as well (U.S. Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, 2010). Though a member of the European Union, the currency used in the Czech Republic remains the koruna, which equates to just under 1 US dollar for every 18 koruna.

History and Economy

The nation's interesting history includes a period spanning 300 years under the Austrian empire. After losing independence in 1620, the country did not regain its independence until the end of World War I. From 1918 to 1938, an independent Czechoslovakia was a parliamentary democracy. Then Germany invaded in 1939 and held control until the end of World War II (U.S. Foreign Commercial Service & U.S. Department of State, 2008).

After the end of the war and under the influence of the Soviet Union, the Communist party came into power in Czechoslovakia in February of 1948. It was not until the Velvet Revolution in 1989 that democracy was restored in the country. On January 1, 1993, Czechoslovakia divided peacefully to form the independent states of the Czech Republic and the Republic of Slovakia. The relationship between the Czech Republic and the Republic of Slovakia remains peaceful today (U.S. Foreign Commercial Service & U.S. Department of State, 2008).

The Czech Republic became a member of the European Union on May 1, 2004. The country's recent transition from a communist government to a parliamentary democracy was an important turning point in its history. Since then, the country has undergone ongoing economic transformation. According to the U.S. Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs (2010), the Czech Republic government faces challenges to "complete industrial restructuring, increase transparency in capital market transactions, transform the housing sector, reform the pension and health care systems, and solve seri-

ous environmental problems.”

The Czech Republic economy is one of the most prosperous and industrialized in the region. This is due to a large amount of foreign investment, which has helped to boost productivity and create new jobs; this can be attributed in part to the country’s strategic location, well-developed infrastructure, and skilled labor force (U.S. Foreign Commercial Service & U.S. Department of State, 2008). The major industries include motor vehicles, machine-building, iron and steel production, metalworking, chemicals, electronics, transportation equipment, textiles, glass, brewing, china, ceramics, and pharmaceuticals (U.S. Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, 2010). In addition, the nuclear industry will provide opportunities after a recent decision by the government to support expansion of nuclear power generation (U.S. Foreign Commercial Service, 2008).

Culture

When travelling and working abroad, it is important to be familiar with the culture of the country in which one is traveling. The cultural dimensions of Geert Hofstede and others (2010) provide a widely used framework for assessing a country’s culture. Based on a survey conducted within a large multinational company, IBM, Hofstede was able to collect information from a large number of employees located in many different countries who shared a similar work environment. He used that information to identify the differences in values from culture to culture. Those differences were grouped initially into four categories, or dimensions: power distance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. A fifth dimension was later added, long-term/short-term orientation (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Cultural analysis will enable a person to understand the habits and customs of a population, anticipate behaviors in given circumstances, and prevent many misunderstandings.

By comparing the characteristics of the Czech Republic (CR) to the culture of the United States, we are able to anticipate some existing differences. The rankings by Hofstede and others (2010) consider the scores of all of the countries surveyed in the IBM study and range in number from 1 to 76 for the initial four dimensions, and from 1 to 93 for long-term/short-term orientation. The Czech Republic and the United States rankings are compared in Table 1 below (rankings given as a range denote a situation where one or more countries received the same score).

Table 1
A Comparison of Czech Republic and United States Cultural Characteristics

Dimension	CR Rank	US Rank
Power Distance (the extent to which power distribution is accepted in society)	45-46	59-61
Individualism/Collectivism	28	1
Masculinity/Femininity	25-27	19
Uncertainty Avoidance	34	64
Long-term/Short-term Orientation	18-19	69-71

Note. Adapted from *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*, 3rd ed., 2010, by G. Hofstede, G. J. Hofstede, and M. Minkov. New York: McGraw-Hill.

The most significant differences are observed within individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term/short term dimensions. The Czech culture is more group-oriented rather than individualistic, as the US is. A lower uncertainty avoidance ranking indicates that Czech citizens are more uncomfortable with uncertainty, and likely have more rules and structure in place in their country. The Czech culture is also more long-term oriented, placing importance on actions and attitudes that affect the future (e.g., persistence, thrift, and shame), while US culture is very short-term oriented, valuing actions that are associated with the past and present (e.g., stability, saving face, and respect for tradition) (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

These differences in values can have important implications. A 2008 document by the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service and the U.S. Department of State addresses the environment that Americans

face when working abroad and some differences that exist within the business customs of the Czech Republic. For instance, word-of-mouth reputation is extremely important to the Czech, and news spreads quickly. Czechs are more formal and reserved than their American counterparts, so establishing a good relationship and getting to know one another before getting down to business is the preferred way of interacting. It is important to be punctual for appointments and meetings, and Czechs prefer to dress formally while doing business.

It is necessary for any person hoping to live or work in the Czech Republic to understand other basic characteristics of the culture. He or she can then work to adapt to the culture and understand its behaviors and practices. For example, Czechs use smiling to show amusement or pleasure and not as the social sign of greeting that Americans are accustomed to (U.S. Foreign Commercial Service, 2008). An American visiting the Czech Republic who is unaware of this cultural difference may take the Czech people to be cold or unfriendly, when the opposite may be true. By taking some time to learn about the culture in advance, travelers are able to learn about these differences and then judge or understand the culture more fittingly.

Solar Industry Profile

Equally important for a job seeker is researching the desired industry he or she is wishing to enter; for example, the solar industry. Solar energy technology converts energy generated by the sun into a form that people can actually use. Within the market are three common solar technologies: photovoltaic (PV) solar panels, concentrated thermo-solar, and solar water heating. Most research and development within the solar industry falls within the PV segment (Solar Energy Market Segments, 2009), as it provides the most efficient means for residential and commercial customers looking to implement solar technologies. As opposed to solar heating technologies which produce heat, PV produces electricity, which is in high demand.

For a recent college graduate looking to enter the field, the solar industry is a great place to be. Between 2000 and 2009, global demand for solar photovoltaic technology grew at an average annual rate of 51% (Wesoff, 2010). According to a 2010 report issued by the Solar Energy Industries Association, employment in the solar industry was not stunted during the severe economic recession; instead, 2009 saw a growth of approximately 10,000 jobs, to reach a total of 46,000 in the global industry.

The Czech Republic emerged as a leader in the market for solar photovoltaics in 2009 (Solar Energy Industries Association [SEIA], 2010); annual installations of solar energy jumped from 50 megawatts in 2008 to 411 megawatts in 2009. In the international market, the Czech Republic ranked fifth in installations for 2009 and second only to Germany in terms of photovoltaic installation per capita at about 40 watts per person (SEIA, 2010). Because solar energy is more costly for residents and commercial businesses than electricity generated from nuclear or fossil fuels, governments often attempt to reduce this burden by creating a feed-in tariff policy. Brian Coppa (2009) explains: “Feed-in tariffs guarantee long-term payments at pre-established rates for the electricity generated from renewable source.... As a result, a small annual increase in the price of electricity per customer can result in a large incentive for people to install residential renewable energy systems or for a company to build a solar power plant.” According to Jennifer Kho (2009), the Czech Republic currently offers the highest price for solar power supplies in Europe due to the passing of a feed-in tariff in 2005.

Unfortunately for those involved in the industry, the solar boom that resulted from the tariff incentives forced the Czech government within the past year to consider possible restrictive measures. On October 13, 2010, the government announced a new solar tax on operators of PV power plants. This measure was intended to prevent operators of these plants from raising prices too high and collecting extremely “high and immoral” profits (Czech Republic will impose, 2010). Other measures have further “reigned in” the solar industry in the Czech Republic. Contigua (2010) argues that, despite the new restrictions put in place by government, the number of solar plants within the Czech Republic is expected to expand from 9,600 to 21,000 over the next 20 years.

With the growth of the solar industry in the Czech Republic, it is likely that the number of jobs available will increase as well. Though new government policies may play a role in reducing the opportunities, the increase in the number of solar plants expected indicates that job opportunities may still be possible. Even so, college grads and other job seekers may face competition in this job market. The competition will require college graduates to differentiate themselves from other job seekers and to use a variety of tactics for locating the job openings that exist.

Sources of Job Information

Businesses, organizations, and governments use a variety of different techniques to find qualified and competent employees to fulfill their needs. These techniques range from traditional newspaper classified ad postings and industry-related ads in professional journals, to online databases that provide specialized search techniques to locate specific job openings. With so many different avenues to pursue, it can often be an overwhelming and exhausting task for a person to find a new job, especially one he/she is qualified for and willing to consider.

Job Search Methods

Punnet's book on international organizational behavior and human resource management (2009) provides a method for human resource managers of multinational companies who have expanded abroad to seek out new employees. She offers the following classification of potential employees: individuals from the parent country where the organization originated (Parent Country Nationals), individuals from the host country where the parent organization expanded to (Host Country Nationals), and potential employees from neither the parent country nor the host country (Third Country Nationals).

For individuals who wish to work abroad, Punnet's classification system offers a useful way of breaking down a job search. For instance, an American college grad looking for an international career in the Czech Republic could search using the following categories:

- Job openings within American companies that have a subsidiary in the Czech Republic
- Czech companies that are seeking out international employees
- International companies, organizations, and agencies that operate in the Czech Republic.

With access to the Internet in addition to newspapers and print sources, and with no barriers in terms of language, the first category is perhaps the easiest one for Americans to explore. Job seekers can consider large global corporations, non-profit organizations, and even the federal government to identify potential job opportunities. The United States government has many branches that require employees to work abroad; the CIA, the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Defense, and the Agency for International Development are just a few. All job postings for the government can be found on one website: www.usajobs.gov. For a college graduate, the website offers unique opportunities to search for jobs based on college major, and also to search for internships, summer employment, and volunteer service within the federal government.

Another source that can be a tool for targeting American companies with subsidiaries in the Czech Republic is a website called Uniworld Online (2010), which has a database of multi-national company information for both American firms operating in foreign countries, as well as foreign firms operating in the US. The database is available for purchase in print form, or a job-seeker can also search the database online for a smaller fee. Search options include selection by country, region, state, keyword, zip code, radius, industry, revenue, and number of employees. Once a list of companies within the desired industry is generated, the job seeker can research these companies, visit a company's website, and even make phone calls to discover any potential job opportunities.

Targeting specific companies, the second category mentioned above, is an effective strategy to find potential job leads in Czech companies. Using Uniworld's database of foreign firms operating in the United States, a job seeker could determine which United States companies have parent companies in the Czech Republic within their targeted industry. International companies that have expanded to the United States are likely to have knowledge and openness to the US culture, and may be open to having American employees work within their parent office to help expand their business in the US and learn more about the US country and culture.

Job opportunities within the third category may likely be for multinational organizations that are looking to expand to the targeted country. This option may be the hardest to target with no specific database providing useful search functions, but by being aware of recent and current events that are happening within the particular industry, a job seeker may learn about any large multinational companies that are aiming to expand to a particular country, with job openings likely to follow. Companies that expand into different countries may be more open to hiring international and diverse employees.

Industry-Specific Resources

For any job hunting strategy, it is important to have a particular industry identified to help guide the search. Listed below are some solar-industry-specific job hunting resources with information about each. The three sources listed require no fee or registration to search open jobs and provide

current job postings and search functions with a variety of selection criteria. Many also offer the opportunity to create a profile, post a resume, and receive notice of postings for which a job seeker may be qualified.

- **Solarjobs.com**
 - o Job seekers can search job postings by region (e.g., Europe), job category, and job type
 - o Job seekers can create a profile and upload a resume, apply to open jobs via the website, and receive suitable job notifications directly to their inbox
- **Renewableenergyworld.com**
 - o The site includes industry news, blogs, podcasts, and a database of companies in the industry
 - o Job seekers can search openings by keyword and location (country, state/province, city, postal code), register and upload a resume, and access an employer directory
- **SEIA Solar Jobs** <http://www.jobtarget.com/home/index.cfm?site_id=4204>
 - o Job seekers can search job postings by keyword, industry (e.g., computer technology, consultant, contractor), state, country
 - o Job seekers can post an anonymous resume, view jobs, receive personal job alerts through e-mail, and create an account.

In addition to the above sources, the following associations offer information about the solar industry worldwide, as well as information specific to Europe and the Czech Republic. Job seekers can use this information to develop an understanding of current trends, as well as the economic and political climates of the solar industry in specific regions. Members of these associations may be target companies to consider when looking for a job in the solar industry.

- **(American Institute of Physics) Journal of Renewable and Sustainable Energy** <<http://jrse.aip.org/>>
 - o Covers all areas of renewable and sustainable energy-related fields
- **International Solar Energy Society (ISES)** <<http://www.ises.com/>>
 - o Provides a network for students and young professionals interested in the solar field, called Young ISES
 - o Provides a platform for information exchange on educational and job opportunities
 - o Publishes the *Journal of Solar Energy*
- **Czech Photovoltaic Association** <<http://czepho.cz/en/>>
 - o Supports the development of the PV market in the Czech Republic
 - o Represents companies and members that comprise 20% of the Czech market share
 - o Offers a list of members to help job seekers determine the major companies that operate in the Czech Republic solar industry
- **World Council for Renewable Energy** <<http://www.wcre.de/en/index.php>>
 - o Is a global non-profit and non-governmental organization
 - o Focuses on developing policies and strategies for renewable energy implementation across the globe
 - o Helps organize the International Renewable Energy Storage Conference
- **European Photovoltaic Industry Association (EPIA)** <<http://www.epia.org/home.html>>
 - o Is the world's largest photovoltaic industry association
 - o Aims at being a single, unified voice for all those involved in the European PV market
- **EUROSOLAR (European Association for Renewable Energy)** <<http://www.eurosolar.de/en/>>
 - o Supports the expansion of renewable energy as a replacement for nuclear and fossil fuels
 - o Membership includes individuals (parliamentarians, scientists, architects, teachers, among others), political institutions, companies, and associations.

Country-Specific Resources

Though not targeted at the solar industry in particular, the resources below provide information about job hunting in the Czech Republic and strategies to locate job openings within the country, often with the ability to specify a specific industry or career choice. Job seekers can use the sources listed to search job openings in the Czech Republic based on specific criteria. Many also offer the opportunity to create profiles and upload resumes to a website. The matrix below provides a way to quickly see the options that can be easily found on each website, and to compare and contrast the features of each.

Table 2
Websites for Identifying Potential Jobs in the Czech Republic

	www.jobpilot.cz	www.cvonline.cz	www.monster.cz	www.jobsabroad.com	www.jobmaster.cz	www.jobs.cz	www.pbj.cz	www.expats.cz	Jobs.justlanded.com
Specific to Czech Republic	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Search by Keyword	X	X	X				X		X
Search by Company								X	
Search by Industry		X	X		X		X	X	X
Search by Job Type							X	X	X
Search by Position		X		X					
Search by Education Level		X			X		X		
Search by Region		X			X				
Upload Resume	X		X				X		
Language: English		X		X		X		X	X
Language: Czech	X	X			X	X			

Note. Adapted from websites indicated.

The following resources can also provide additional help for job seekers during their search.

- *The Prague Post* <<http://www.praguepost.com>>
 - The Czech Republic’s English-language newspaper provides information regarding current events, business listings, classified ads, and other important information for the Czech Republic
- *How to Get a Job in Europe* (Sanborn, 2003)
 - This book provides a strategy to find a job in Europe, as well as specific information about each European country and the best sources to locate jobs in each
- *The Riley Guide* (Dikel, 2010) <<http://www.rileyguide.com/index.html>>
 - This online directory of employment and career information provides advice on how to prepare for a job search, how to network and interview, and how to conduct a job search.

Job Search Strategy

These sources to find job leads are numerous and diverse. With so many outlets and avenues to choose from, how does a job seeker decide where to begin? This is the point where creating a strategy and plan to implement a job search becomes crucial. The following components demonstrate a comprehensive plan to find an international job in the Czech Republic.

Country and Industry Research

Researching the country and industry of choice is an important first step; understanding the current political and economic atmosphere within a country may provide important information that could either deter or encourage a job seeker searching within that country. For instance, it is important to be aware of any controversy or political disputes. Safety is important, so any war or conflict would be of concern. It is equally important to know the economic conditions of the industry a job seeker is looking into. In the Czech Republic, with current government legislation passed to restrict the industry, the job hunt may be challenging.

Job seekers must also research the culture they are hoping to work in for two reasons. First, to avoid any confusion and misunderstanding, the job seeker must be aware of cultural differences that may occur in the work environment. Of equal importance is the ability to recognize where the job seeker would be comfortable, or uncomfortable, interacting within the culture of the foreign country. Americans working in the Czech Republic may feel restricted by the rules and regulations, which could affect their performance and their ultimate happiness with their job. Understanding the political, economic, and social nature of the country and industry allows a job seeker to determine if there are opportunities to be found in a place that he/she would enjoy and feel satisfied living and working in.

CV/Résumé

A résumé provides employers with a basic picture of a candidate's abilities and qualifications. Developing a résumé, often referred to as a curriculum vitae (CV), that both looks and sounds professional is a crucial component of any job search. Employers will make their first judgment about a candidate using his or her CV.

In general, the purpose is to explain who a job candidate is, what he/she has done, does now, and can do (Sanborn, 2003). In the United States, we generally include educational background, previous work experience, volunteer and extracurricular activities, in addition to awards and achievements.

Sanborn (2003), in his book *How to Get a Job in Europe*, suggests having a native of the targeted country review the job seeker's résumé, to be sure it is appropriate for employers elsewhere. For instance, employers from abroad often find American résumés to be too aggressive and lacking in cultural sensitivity. In addition, some countries include a picture on a résumé, while others may not. A native of the particular targeted country would be knowledgeable about the social norms that apply to writing résumés and the hiring process in general in his or her country. College graduates are given many resources within their college and university to help in finding a career. Career offices often provide résumé workshops, practice interviews, and one-on-one sessions to help students. Having multiple people review a résumé will catch errors and provide feedback from different points of view. Employees who work in a career office likely have viewed many different student résumés and will be able to give advice on how to make a résumé stand out.

Many positions will also require one or more letters of recommendation from professors or previous employers. Recommenders should be acquainted with the job seeker's capabilities and work quality, so they are able to speak positively and truthfully about the job seeker.

Experience and Qualifications

To find a job overseas, there are steps a college student or job seeker can take to increase his or her competitiveness as a job candidate.

Work experience shows an employer that a candidate has the necessary knowledge and skills. Internships enable college students to gain experience while finishing up college courses. An internship abroad will likely appeal to a multinational company as evidence that the candidate can work in a diverse and unfamiliar setting. Many organizations facilitate work and internship experience abroad. AIESEC, the largest student-run organization in the world, provides work experience in international settings to students, called "traineeships," available for any student in over 107 different countries, including the Czech Republic. Traineeships last from 2 months to 2 years, and are offered in several different categories: management, technology, and education. AIESEC has developed relationships with countries all over the world, including Fortune 500 corporations, to offer internships to students (AIESEC International, 2010).

Studying abroad is another opportunity for students who wish to gain experience abroad and to build their resume. Programs are offered through many universities in addition to independent organizations, such as IIEPassport.org, Intern Abroad, and Studyabroad.com. University study abroad fairs are a good way to learn about study abroad, and many organizations represented at these fairs facilitate study abroad opportunities for students.

A variety of different study abroad programs exist today, from one week faculty-led trips to semester-long opportunities to study at a foreign university. For the student hoping to work in the Czech Republic, a study abroad opportunity will serve to introduce the student to the culture in the Czech Republic, and may help the student to also acquire some language skills. Being immersed in a culture forces individuals to learn language necessary for basic survival, such as how to ask for directions and order food. While studying abroad, students may make connections and build relationships with people that could aid them greatly in the future.

Language

Language is a critical component when thinking about working overseas. Sanborn (2003) argues that fluency is not required, but it is necessary to have enough language skill to perform successfully in the workplace. Multinational companies, especially American companies with a subsidiary in the Czech Republic, may use English in the workplace. This is not always the case. In order to get a feel for language requirements, it is important to do some preliminary research. Using some of the websites listed above to find job postings, a job seeker can determine if a full working knowledge of the language is required; this will also be helpful in determining other required qualifications.

Even if fluency is not required in the workplace, having basic language skills is necessary to be able to survive outside of the workplace. The Czech language may not be commonly taught on college campuses, so students may have to look elsewhere to learn some of the language. Resources like Rosetta Stone and others offered for purchase could be a useful tool to pick up some of the language.

Taking classes in any foreign language, however, may be helpful when looking for a job in the Czech Republic. Learning a foreign language demonstrates to employers that the candidate is willing and capable of picking up a foreign language.

Conducting the Job Search

The next step involves beginning the actual job search. With access to the Internet, much of the job search can be conducted online. Many of the sources described earlier are online. Print sources, such as newspapers and journals, can often be accessed online as well. An important resource to consider is the library, both the local public library and the university library. A university library usually has subscriptions to many professional journals, as well as arrangements to borrow journals from other universities.

Professional journals within the solar industry, such as the *Solar Energy Journal* published by the International Solar Energy Society, may include recent news and research regarding the industry, including information about industry growth within specific market segments or specific areas. Professional journals may also provide actual job postings. The postings are limited, however, and may not include openings within the country of choice or any for which a recent college graduate may be qualified. The best resources to begin a job search are online search databases, both country-specific and industry-specific. These resources allow a job seeker to search for jobs using defined criteria, such as location, required experience, and type of job.

The key to finding many job opportunities is to use a variety of different resources when conducting the search. Do not limit the search to one or two online databases, but include print as well as electronic sources. Keep abreast of any current news in the industry and country in order to be aware of any companies that might soon be expanding and looking for employees. Reading local newspapers and industry journals is a way to keep informed.

Organization will be a crucial component to the job search. A spreadsheet can be a useful tool to record any job openings and to update any progress made in applying for a job. Sanborn (2003) recommends keeping a daily planner and to plan ahead the tasks that should be completed the following day.

After locating any job openings that are of interest, sending customized résumés and cover letters is the next step. It is important for the job seeker to follow the guidelines on the job posting for submitting the résumé. Employers often ask for a cover letter along with the résumé. A cover letter should be customized for the specific job. It may be helpful to research the company and mention something specific about the company within the cover letter. By customizing the résumé and cover letter, a job seeker can highlight specific qualities and experiences relevant to the open position.

Use Your Network

People are one of the greatest resources to discover connections and pick up tips and advice. LinkedIn.com is a social networking site geared toward professionals (LinkedIn Corporation, 2010), which may identify connections a job seeker may have with employees of a specific business. If a job seeker was interested in working in an American multinational corporation that had operations in the Czech Republic, LinkedIn would be able to tell the job seeker if he/she is connected to any employees within that company.

College students also have the benefit of networking with professors and career counselors. Professors in a student's field of study may be able to identify qualities that employers in that field are looking for. They may also be able to connect students with professionals. Career counselors can also offer help to find and secure the ideal job.

International Interview

If an employer is interested in a candidate, he or she will often request an interview with that person. An interview may be conducted over the Internet. One program, Skype, which has both audio and visual components, allows individuals to call from one computer to another free. Speakers and a web cam may be necessary for the audio and visual components, though many laptops come equipped with those components. Job seekers looking to use an online tool for an international interview must consider the time differences within the two different countries. The Czech Republic is six hours ahead of the U.S. Eastern Time Zone. Job candidates should be flexible when setting up interview times with employers online.

If an online interview is not a possibility, a candidate may have to consider travelling to the country for the interview. This may be costly, but will also benefit the student by giving him or her a chance to see the country, meet people, and get a feel for the culture. In the Czech Republic, for example, the job seeker could use the opportunity to travel to the Czech Republic for the interview, to perhaps pick up some of the language and customs of the culture, and to explore living arrangements should he or she secure a job in the country. If the job seeker has an opportunity with multiple companies in the Czech Republic, he or she could use the one trip to interview with all of the companies.

Follow Up

After an interview is conducted, it is important for the candidate to follow with a thank you note, a professional way to show genuine interest in the company and the job, and to thank the interviewer for his or her time and interest. It is often appropriate to follow up with a phone call. Keeping in contact with the employer allows a candidate to keep the employer thinking about him or her and to show courtesy. By building a relationship with the employee, the employer may feel more confident about hiring the candidate. If the candidate is not given the job, having a relationship with the employer may create an opportunity for the job seeker to get feedback from the employer and learn how to improve.

Visa Requirements for the Czech Republic

The logistics of traveling abroad are also a concern when it comes to international interviews and an eventual move to a foreign country. A passport is required to travel to the Czech Republic and must be valid for at least three months after the trip. A visa is required for any traveler who plans to stay in the Czech Republic for longer than 90 days (U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs).

To work in the Czech Republic for a long period of time, a person must obtain a work visa, which requires the following (Ministry of Foreign Affairs):

1. Completed application form
2. Two recent passport photographs
3. Passport
4. Proof of the purpose of the stay (a notarized copy of a work permit issued by the Employment Administration Office in the Czech Republic, or the original confirmation from the same office the employer had applied to for your work permit)
5. Proof of accommodation (a document issued by an employer in the Czech Republic verifying accommodations for the duration of the stay, or an original statement from the owner of an apartment or a house stating his or her ability and willingness to provide the accommodation, or a lease agreement)
6. Criminal history background (a notarized affidavit confirming that you have never been indicted and sentenced for a felony of any kind)
7. Proof of medical insurance.

Completed applications and documents should be sent to the Consular Section of the Embassy of the Czech Republic. Visas are issued for one year and must be renewed up to three months in advance of the expiration date.

Prior to arriving in the Czech Republic, a person working abroad must also consider transportation. According to justlanded.com, every Czech town has its own public transport company. Buses and trains are available to take passengers anywhere in the country. If an American would like to drive a car while in the Czech Republic, he/she must obtain an international driving permit and carry that along with a US license. International driving permits can be obtained at any AAA office, and require a valid US license, two original passport photos, and a fee of \$15.

Timeline and Budget

Creating a timeline and budget is an important component of the overall job hunt strategy. The chart below demonstrates a job search strategy for college students looking to work in the Czech Republic after graduation.

Table 3

A Job Search Strategy for College Students Seeking Work in the Czech Republic

Task	Timeframe	Cost	Notes
Arrange Internship	Within the last two years prior to graduation	None	An internship will help a job candidate demonstrate required knowledge and skills.
Complete Language Course/Program	Throughout college career	Varies depending on type of program	Learning Czech will greatly enhance a student's resume if he/she wishes to work in the Czech Republic. Learning a language other than Czech is also beneficial.
Create Resume	1 year prior to graduation, with continuous updates	None	This will allow time to receive feedback and input, and create a polished final resume.
Apply for Passport	1 year before graduation	\$135 fee	Process time is 4-6 weeks. Passport will be needed for travel and to apply for visas.
Obtain Passport Photos	Same as Passport	Approx. \$8/ photo	4 photos will be needed, two for the passport application and two for the visa application.
Research Industry/Country	1-2 years prior to graduation	None	Researching will allow students to identify opportunities.
Begin Job Search	1 year prior to graduation	None	Use all available resources (see examples above), submitting resumes and cover letters, and keeping a log of all job search activities.
Conduct Face-to-face Interview in the Czech Republic	As needed	Approx. \$2300	Plane ticket to the Czech Republic: \$1200 Hotel accommodations for 2 weeks: \$700 Food and expenses for 2 weeks: \$400 A two week timeframe allows the student to schedule multiple interviews, to explore the country, and to get a feel for the culture. Internet programs, such as Skype, provide a less costly method if the employer is willing.
Apply for Visa	Upon job offer, processing time is approx. 3-4 months	\$141	Visa must be applied for after a job offer is accepted. Visa applications require documentation of the job, as noted above.

This budget and timeframe cover the costs and time needed to complete a job search. Once a job is secured with an international employer, it is important for the candidate to consider the costs associated with the move, as well as the relevant exchange rates and cost of living differences within the particular country. The website <www.expats.cz> provides information on available housing and cost of living differences, in addition to other information that will help to make the transition to the Czech Republic easier. Examples of estimates provided on the website include these estimated expenses (the current exchange rate is approximately 18.60 CZK to \$1):

- Apartment (monthly): 7,000 CZK
- Utilities (monthly): 2,800 CZK
- Loaf of bread: 21 CZK
- Month-long transportation pass: 550 CZK

Many resources help prepare students and job seekers to gain knowledge about what it costs to live in another country, and it is important to consider these costs ahead of time.

Conclusion

International jobs can provide college graduates with the experience of a lifetime. Finding opportunities to have that experience is not always easy. By taking the time to research a country and industry in which a student wishes to work, he or she can become aware of the opportunities that exist and can prevent a lot of wasted time searching for jobs that are just not there. By researching the Czech Republic, I was able to learn that the solar industry in the nation recently saw significant growth, but that growth may decline soon due to new limits on government incentives. With that understanding, I am able to anticipate that the job hunt will be more competitive, and that I may need to invest more time and energy into my job search if I want it to be successful.

Developing a strategy ahead of time will help to organize and prepare students for a successful job hunt. It is all about preparation. Using the resources available to obtain the right credentials, knowledge, and plan to find a job will increase the chances of finding that ideal international job in the end.

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