

BUSINESS ENGLISH UNIT 1

READING

Chinese internships impress employers



What is the most important information in your CV? Your school or university? Your degree subject? Your grades? The answer is: none of these. According to the Confederation of British Industry, 80% of employers first look at the experience and skills you acquire on an internship.

Work experience is now an essential part of a university education. But competition for places in Europe and the US is fierce, so more and more students are doing their internships in China. As the second biggest economy in the world, China has lots of opportunities for interns to acquire experience. It also offers the chance to learn a new language and to demonstrate the ability to live and work in a different culture.

'It was very difficult to find an internship in the UK,' says Shaun Duggan, a graduate in business studies, 'so I decided to go to Shanghai. It was the best decision of my life! After a year in China, I'm more independent, more confident and better at working with people who are different from me. When I came back to London, I had three interviews. In each one, we talked about my experiences in China for most of the time, and all three companies offered me a job.'

So how difficult is it to live and work in China? Julia Barton works for an agency that sends students to work in multinational firms in Beijing. 'There are four

essential skills for working across cultures. First of all, you need intercultural sensitivity, that is to say, the ability to see things in different ways, and to understand how your own cultural values are different from other people's.'

A second important skill is managing uncertainty. Barton gives the classic example of attitudes to time. 'Americans and the British always want quick decisions. But Asians generally prefer to take more time rather than make the wrong decision. Multicultural teams need to be patient and live with uncertainty.' Thirdly, successful interns adjust their communication to the local style. 'Chinese organizations are hierarchical,' says Duggan. 'Everyone respects the boss. You need to think carefully before you speak, and to be diplomatic.'

The fourth skill that impresses employers is the ability to build relationships between people from different cultures. Sandra Kay describes her experience in Beijing. 'In China, team spirit is very important. We always had lunch together, and we often went out together after work. Now I work in an international team in Paris, and I encourage everyone to do things together. My manager is impressed because the working environment is friendly and productive.'

Reading for detail

3 Read the first three paragraphs again and choose the correct answers.

- 1 The most important part of your CV is
a) your qualifications b) your work experience c) your references.
- 2 It is hard to get internships in Europe because
a) there are more and more universities b) there is competition for places
c) Chinese students want internships in Europe.
- 3 Shaun went to China to
a) learn the language b) acquire cross-cultural skills c) find an internship.
- 4 Shaun is satisfied with his internship because
a) his experience impresses employers b) he is financially more independent
c) he loves talking about Shanghai.