

How to Handle the Visa Question in a U.S. Job Interview



One To World's
Employment Workshop
for
International Students
A Campus to Career Program

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Handling the Visa Question in the U.S.

Job Interview

Many students fear discussing visa matters in a job interview, thinking that they might not get the job if the employer knows they are on a nonimmigrant visa. Knowing what to expect in a job interview before going into it will help you. Some employers specify that they will only interview U.S. citizens or permanent residents. If an employer specifies this condition, nonimmigrant visa holders should not apply. If, however, an employer does not specify this, a nonimmigrant can assume that he/she is eligible not only to apply but to be hired if found qualified for the job. You should confirm this assumption with the employer to be sure. They may not have thought about it.

**Remember to contact your college's
Career Services office for helpful information also!**



Learn About your Options to Work in the U.S.

While nonimmigrants may not have unlimited rights to work in the U.S., they do have several legal provisions to do so. F-1 and J-1 students, for example, can work legally under certain conditions. Also, many nonimmigrants are eligible to obtain H-1B status, which permits temporary professional employment for up to six years. Talk to your International Student Adviser or your sponsor about how to gain authorization to work in the U.S. before going on a job interview. Being informed of your options before the interview will allow you to be more confident in the job interview.

Focus on Your Skills and Qualifications for the Job

The important thing to remember in an interview is that the employer wants to hire the best person for the job. If you are a nonimmigrant with superior qualifications, the employer will want to hire you. If you are tense in the interview when the question of employment authorization comes up, your tension will come across to the employer through your body language, and the employer might incorrectly suspect that the major reason you want the job is to get a working visa and/or green card. If, however, you focus on your special skills and qualifications in the interview and handle the visa question calmly and matter-of-factly, the employer, too, will focus on your skills and qualifications and consider the visa question to be minor.



Follow these Guidelines for Visa-Related Questions in an Interview

- 1) Go to your interview with some knowledge of your legal options. Do not pursue a job that you know your visa will not allow you to take. (For example, J-1 students who are subject to the two-year home country residency requirement should not interview for jobs that would require them to work beyond the 18-month maximum allowed for J-1 Academic Training.) If you know your eligibility and exactly what is involved in getting H-1B status or Practical Training authorization, you will be able to say confidently in the interview that visa matters can be worked out. Consult your International Student Adviser about this issue ahead of time.
- 2) If your interviewer asks about your visa, answer directly and honestly, but do not feel you have to go into great detail about it. The more nervous you seem about it, the more suspicious and worried the interviewer will be about it.
- 3) If your interview is coming to a close and the visa issue has not yet been mentioned, it is a good idea for you to bring it up casually. You can say something like, “By the way, I am on a student visa and will need to discuss that with you if I am hired. My International Student Adviser has explained how all my legal options can be dealt with.” By bringing up the topic yourself, you are showing the employer that you have nothing to hide. By being honest, you have not only addressed the issue, but, if the employer has not considered the issue and does not wish to hire you, you have not wasted your time during the short hiring cycle.
- 4) Focus on your special skills and qualifications for the job. This is the main thing your employer wants to know. How will the company or organization benefit if you are hired?

5) If you still feel worried about your visa, or if your interviewer seems to hesitate when you mention that you are on a nonimmigrant visa, remember that as an international student you actually have certain advantages over other U.S. students. Most international students do not think of it in this way, but it is true. Consider the following:

- ◆ You have spent the last several years living and studying in a totally foreign culture. This means you have already demonstrated you can succeed in unfamiliar situations. An employer wants to hire someone who will adapt well in a new job environment.
- ◆ You are statistically one of the very few people from your country who uprooted themselves to come to the U.S. for an education. This means you know how to take initiative. U.S. employers like that in their employees!
- ◆ If your native language is not English, you have successfully pursued an educational program in a foreign language. This means at least two things. One is that if your company has branches or offices overseas, you may be useful because you have demonstrated your ability to perform successfully in a foreign language. The other thing it means is that you had to work harder than native speakers of English to be successful in your academic program. Therefore, you have demonstrated that you can work under adverse conditions and are persistent in reaching goals you have set for yourself.

All of these characteristics are highly regarded in the culture of the U.S. workplace. They are qualities you should be proud of and should emphasize in an interview.

ABOUT ONE TO WORLD

One To World, a non-profit organization, was founded in 1977 by International Student Advisers to introduce international students to New York City's extraordinary resources and facilitate their adjustment to U.S. life. One To World has expanded to help students and Fulbright scholars take a more active role in the community. One To World also coordinates Global Classroom, providing international students the opportunity to speak in New York City public schools, day-long and overnight community visits, and other programs introducing international students to various facets of U.S. life and culture. Funding is provided by grants from the United States Department of State, college and university dues, and contributions from corporations, foundations, and individuals.



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*One To World creates global learning opportunities for students, educators, and the community
in New York City and beyond.*