



# HIRING A FOREIGN NATIONAL EMPLOYEE

Essential Sourcing & Screening Guide

by Laurie Ruettimann



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# **LAURIE RUETTIMANN**

Laurie Ruettimann is a former human resources leader turned influential speaker, writer and strategist. She owns a human resources consultancy firm that offers a wide array of services to HR leaders and executives.

Laurie sits on the strategic advisory boards at Vestrics and BlackbookHR, two HR technology firms focused on learning analytics, big data and employee engagement. She is also recognized as one of the Top 5 career advisors by CareerBuilder and CNN.



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# INTRODUCTION

Today's HR leaders face unprecedented recruiting challenges. From the skills gap to rising wage pressures, talent acquisition teams are tasked with finding exceptional candidates who aren't readily available in the domestic labor pool.

Many U.S. companies are bridging the skills gap by recruiting from abroad. The global labor pool offers a diverse mix of candidates with a variety of competencies, solving the perennial struggle of finding the right employees for hard-to-fill positions.

Envoy partnered with five recruiting experts to provide tactical insight and guidance on how to source, screen and hire foreign nationals. They addressed the most common questions recruiters have when hiring foreign nationals:

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How do you create a robust foreign talent pipeline?

How do you create job descriptions that appeal to foreign nationals?

What are the most efficient ways to select and hire international talent?

Does your company's culture translate?

How do you overcome reluctance and consider foreign candidates when it's never been done before at your company?



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PART 1

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# GETTING BUY-IN

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# BETTER RECRUITING through data



## **JENNIFER MCCLURE**

Jennifer McClure is president of Unbridled Talent and a sought-after business advisor. She combines her expertise as an executive recruiter with practical strategies to help organizations deliver results.

Jennifer provides valuable advice for talent acquisition professionals who would like to hire international talent but must first make the case for change with their executive leadership teams.



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## **Benchmark** your strategy against your peers.



One effective way to make the case for change is to obtain benchmark data to support your proposal. Local recruiting associations make it easy to talk to a competitor or even someone who is recruiting similar talent. **Ask for help and see if someone would be willing to share market intelligence or trends that help you make your case for change.** In the future, pay it forward and be a source of data for another recruiter who might be interested in doing what you're doing right now.

Change is hard. If your company has never hired foreign nationals, you might anticipate pushback and be unsure how to handle it. Confidence is key. **Make sure your data is rock solid and that you know the ins and outs of your proposal.** Try to anticipate the objections and prepare for positive conflict. It helps to rehearse your major points with a supportive colleague.



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## **Use data** to drive your recruiting plan.

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## Ask for help from an expert.



Hiring managers and C-level leaders don't have time for an hour-long meeting with a vendor who wants to pitch them on services. But as a talent acquisition professional, you know that external expertise is important in making business decisions.

**Ask your hiring managers or executives to participate in a 10-minute call with a vendor.** Focus on the success your competitors are having in the market by hiring foreign nationals. Craft the meeting agenda around market intelligence, and show your leadership team how your sourcing and hiring problems can be solved through smart data analysis.

Many seasoned recruiters operate at a gut level because they think their instincts never lead them wrong. **Don't assume that your recruiting strategy is or isn't working — show it via data. If you don't have supporting evidence, set some goals and track your progress.** Move forward with a proposal to solve a problem with data in hand.



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## **Fact-check** your own sourcing and recruiting strategy.

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PART 2

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# SOURCING AND SCREENING

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# UNIVERSITIES: your untapped talent pool



## **PETE RADLOFF**

Pete Radloff has 15 years of recruiting experience in both agency and corporate environments, and is now a principal technical recruiter at comScore. He's also worked with brands like exaqueo, National Public Radio (NPR) and LivingSocial.

Pete believes that U.S. universities are a pipeline for international talent. And investing in relationships, career services and alumni groups can help you recruit students who are currently in the United States as well as alumni who are working in their home countries.



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## Partner with leading **local schools.**



**Work closely with four or five key schools to hire top-notch international talent in your industry.** I've identified schools

through market data, workforce intelligence and regional economic analysis. I talk to the folks who run immigration programs at those schools, and they make me smarter — they're the experts. And a good relationship benefits all parties.

When a school understands what your company is willing to do for new hires, they will often help you communicate more efficiently with students and alumni candidates.

It's tough to tell what certifications and degrees signify in a foreign country. **Learn how to weigh work experience and achievements by having conversations with career services teams at local universities.** Also, colleges can validate you as an employer of choice.

If I'm a foreign national and unsure of a recruiter who keeps calling me, I'll trust my school's recommendation. I'm not likely to trust recruiters who don't know my academic achievements and just bumble their way through the hiring process.



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Vet candidates with **guidance from the university.**

# Developing **YOUR EMPLOYER BRAND** locally



## **JENNIFER DAVIS**

Jennifer Davis is a senior director of people strategies and HR technology at marketing company Epsilon. In early 2015, she launched the recruiting operation of the firm's new office in Bangalore, and developed a deep understanding of international talent acquisition strategies, career sites, recruiting technology, compliance and the overarching approach that a company should take to enhance the candidate's experience.

Jennifer recounts the strategic approaches she took when recruiting foreign talent for Epsilon.



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## Develop local relationships

before you begin sourcing and screening talent in foreign markets.



At Epsilon, we invested in partnerships and talked to our in-house specialists who knew the market. My company has quite a few foreign nationals in America who have deep expertise in their home countries, so we were able to ask questions on everything from the validity of resumes to the vetting of channels for our recruitment marketing strategy.

**Also, we partnered with a recruitment process outsourcing company that had local resources on the ground.** They gave us insight into the sourcing and hiring challenges ahead, and educated us on what's important to the local market. We worked with a public relations firm who told us how, when and where to advertise our company to get people looking at and talking about our brand.

I've recruited heavily in India, and I learned that Naukri.com is the premier job board. That's where you find seasoned technical workers.

**LinkedIn works well for senior-level management professionals, while Monster is more for junior-level people.** In America, Monster is a generalist job board and for fresh college grads. In India, they call those candidates "freshers" — basically, straight out of college.

**There are other boards gaining reputation locally like Shine and Indeed. Glassdoor gets attention in India as it does in America, and I chose to invest in a corporate page on Glassdoor out of the gate.**



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Make sure  
your **talent pipelines are hyperlocal.**

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Adding recruitment marketing to your strategy is **a solid investment.**



We spent money on sidebar advertising on Naukri.com to drive people to our career site. **We told our company story on LinkedIn. Our PR firm went out and identified specific places where we would get the most attention.** Some of them were tech-related and others were just local publications.

We did more with print ads than we would do in America — like the Indiatimes, for instance. It was big stuff. It doesn't make sense here in the United States, and you wouldn't put out an ad, but there you would. Through our internal Epsilon Community Outreach program, we'll also sponsor charitable events. It's a different, positive way of reaching a larger audience. I've been over to India four times, and in retrospect, I would even do a billboard. It's seen by so many people. The investment is worth it.



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**Think outside the box** when advertising to foreign markets.

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## Remember company culture and **employer brand matters.**



If your employer brand isn't outstanding in America, prepare for challenges abroad. If people don't know who you are, they won't come to work for you.

In many countries, brand recognition matters. Foreign nationals put a lot of pride into working for a very well-known organization because they want to tell their parents, "Hey, mom and dad, I work for a globally recognized brand that is respected and treats its workers well."

You're toast if the parents say, "What's that company?"

We created storyboards and scripts for recruiters to use when speaking with both passive and active candidates. Once a candidate passed an initial screening and was invited in for an interview, we were surprised by how many people proactively researched us. They would come to the interview and know every single thing. That's why we put a lot of time into the creation of our careers website, LinkedIn, Glassdoor and our social media strategy so that people could start forming a positive story of their own and connect the dots. Employer brand is huge.

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## **Tell your company's story** in a concise and targeted way.

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## **Meet your applicants and candidates** where they live and work.



If you're sourcing and screening for talent in a country where you've never been before, get your butt on a plane and get out there. You don't know what the story truly is about until you experience it yourself.

# INTERVIEWING FOREIGN NATIONALS: it's all in the prep



## **CARMEN HUDSON**

Carmen Hudson wears several hats. She is currently a principal consultant of sourcing and social media strategy for Recruiting Toolbox; founder and CEO of Tweetajob; and co-founder of a national conference for tech recruiters, Talent42. Carmen draws from over 15 years of recruiting experience, with a strong focus on helping organizations attract, source and recruit top talent.

Carmen has extensive global experience, and she offers advice for recruiters and hiring managers who want to improve their foreign national interviewing process.



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Conduct  
**extensive  
research** on  
the front end.



Successful interviews of any kind stem from preparation. Whether it's a domestic or an international candidate, hiring managers must get to know the person in front of them. People spend five minutes with a resume when they should spend 20 minutes with it.

The biggest mistake recruiters make is that they don't set the hiring criteria before an interview. We end up deciding whether or not we like this person along the way versus articulating what we want to hire for, what the job requires and then figuring out if the candidate in front of us matches those requirements.

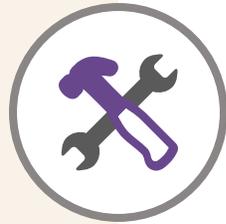


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**Define your  
hiring criteria**  
before you talk  
to candidates.

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## Make sure **skills don't get lost in translation.**



We judge people based on where they went to school or where they worked, but we may not exactly know the reputations of those institutions. So if you aren't sure of a school's standing — or whether or not a foreign company provides a valuable and translatable work experience — Google it. Or talk to recruiters in your industry who hire similar talent.

It's not uncommon for me to hear from hiring managers who struggle with candidates and communication skills. They pass on excellent candidates because it's difficult to understand someone who is not a native English speaker. My advice is simple: Set your hiring criteria and know what's required regarding communication skills. Get candidates comfortable by talking about an experience that's important to them. And practice listening to people with accents by expanding your personal and professional network.

If you're still struggling to understand a foreign national, dig deeper. Figure out whether or not the candidate needs an accent reduction class or if there are other communication challenges. You can do this by sending an email and asking follow-up questions that require written answers.

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## **Recognize** your own comprehension **challenges.**



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Don't forget to **set company culture expectations.**



The candidate experience is a universal experience.

**Everybody wants to know what it's like to work in your company and be treated well during the hiring process.** All applicants are very interested to know what's expected of them from a job perspective, and they want the process to be transparent and move quickly. So try to quantify your culture in the job descriptions. If you push out several applications a month, say that. Talk about the pace of your organization and whether or not collaboration is essential. And don't forget to talk about your company's vision and values, too.

I'm not a big fan of video interviewing.

**Send someone over to meet the candidate.**

Do the work.



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**Meet candidates in person.**

PART 3

# RETENTION

# CULTURE, INCLUSION and RETENTION



## **TIM SACKETT**

Tim Sackett is the president of HRU Technical Resources, an engineering and IT supplemental staffing firm that works with leading organizations. Tim advocates for transparent communication and talking about culture and organizational values long before an international worker joins a company.

Here's his take on how HR and recruiting professionals can manage culture and assimilation for foreign nationals entering the U.S. workforce.



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Make sure your **employer branding strategy** is more than window dressing.



**Showcase your company's culture through videos and social media accounts.** Ask real workers to talk about what they love about your company. You can film these videos or share social updates in multiple languages. You can publish your job descriptions in multiple languages and direct candidates to your social media accounts.

**Once you make a commitment to hire a foreign worker, build an onboarding program that goes deep into your work culture and workplace expectations.** Ask your hiring managers and colleagues to collaborate on this project. Start by asking them to share one quick tip that will help this new employee. Then, as part of the onboarding program, encourage the new employee to share his or her story.

**For example:**

How did she get to this point in her life?

What does she love to do outside of work?

What's one thing she wants people to know?

What's the best way to offer her feedback?

A smart onboarding program starts on the right track by setting expectations.



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Create a **people-centric onboarding program** to aid in the transition.

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Be candid and **create an open dialogue** with your existing workforce.



Start with your existing workforce. If you want to create a culture where foreign nationals succeed, facilitate a lunch-and-learn.

**Create a safe space where people can talk about their concerns, fears or even hopes. No questions are off-limits.** Bring in a local professor or business leader with firsthand experience as an immigrant to talk about what it feels like to be an outsider who joins the American workforce.

It's both naive and shortsighted to assume that your employees know anything about people who've come to work in America from countries all over the world. If it's important for your workforce to know the difference between Pakistan and India, help them learn through online tutorials and video modules.

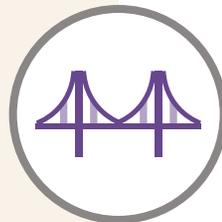


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**Ensure inclusion happens through education.**

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Clue into ways to **bridge the gap between cultures.**



America is a fan-driven culture, and we love cheering on our favorite sports teams. We are not unique in that way. Sports brings so many people together from all over the world. Your new employee might be a cricket fan. What's her favorite team? Can she teach your American office what the heck cricket even is? Also, does she have any interest in learning about American football or attending an NBA game? Leverage the universal love of sports to create a work environment that is fun for everyone. Sharing regional cuisines is another method of participating in cultural understanding and appreciation.

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PART 4

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TALES FROM HR

# A RECRUITER'S PERSPECTIVE

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## JASON CAIRES

I see our immigration process from a holistic perspective. I'm here for it all — from identifying somebody who might require visa sponsorship, all the way through the green card application.

Learning the ropes of hiring international talent can be a trial-and-error process. Early in my career, I didn't understand the different types of visas and the sponsorship implications. I was unaware of the complexity and the different types of employment authorization documents, so I made my fair share of mistakes and learned some hard lessons along the way.

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“ Learning the ropes of hiring international talent can be a **trial-and-error process**. Early in my career, I didn't understand the different types of visas and the sponsorship implications.”

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Now, my sourcing strategy is clear. I look for the best available talent in the market. I try to identify those who merit the position, and I hire people who are the strongest based on technical skills and cultural fit.

In my opinion, the technical workers on our team from outside the United States are not separate from everyone else. We celebrate events and holidays that are part of the cultures represented within the pack. If somebody has a holiday they want to celebrate, we get behind it. I think it opens our eyes to how different cultures operate and it unites our workforce.

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“ In my opinion, the technical workers on our team from outside the United States **are not separate** from everyone else.”

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Recruiting in the global economy is not a game for the faint of heart, but I've been doing it long enough to know that I want to be part of something greater. We're changing people's lives, granting exciting opportunities, and growing the Coyote community. The best part about my job is that I get to do a lot more than just recruit. I get to move beyond a staffing perspective and have a much more vested interest in people's careers. It's very rewarding for me.

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CHECKLIST

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The Ultimate Checklist

FOR **SOURCING**  
AND **SCREENING**  
**FOREIGN**  
**NATIONALS**

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Incorporate these tactics to start building your global talent pipeline.



## **Partner with an economic modeling firm.**

Before you post a requisition on an international job board, seek data to validate your assumptions. Contact economic modeling specialists who can help you understand in-country labor markets.

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## **Invest in local relationships.**

Get yourself over to your targeted country. Learn about the culture. Speak to communications experts at local universities. Don't assume that your traditional methods of recruiting top talent will apply in foreign markets.

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## **Up your interviewing skills.**

The stakes are so much higher with foreign workers. A new job often means a completely new life. So take your time reading a CV. Formulate thoughtful questions that will help you select the best candidate for the role based on knowledge, skills and organizational fit.



## **Be mindful of cultural differences.**

Research the cultural norms for the foreign national you're interviewing, and use that context to understand any differences that you notice. Don't draw immediate conclusions about your candidate's competence based on his or her accent, intermittent eye contact, dress or deferential body language.

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## **Become proficient in the language of STEM.**

Nobody is asking you to have a minimum of two years' experience with C#, XAML or another programming language before you hire technical talent. However, the most successful recruiters and HR professionals invest time in learning more than just industry lingo and jargon. There are continuing education opportunities for non-technical people to become proficient in the language of STEM. Opt for industry-specific training over traditional HR training classes.

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## **Get others involved in the recruiting process.**

Build internal bridges and engage in knowledge-sharing by asking non-HR colleagues to help you source and screen foreign nationals. Teach a programmer or developer how to screen candidates, and you will have an extra pair of hands on your next recruiting project.



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