



## ADVICE & TIPS – RUSSIA



Russia is among one of the four fastest growing economies in the world. Although the names of its most successful companies are not yet world famous, Russia is also an outlet for a number of large graduate employers including international law firms CMS Cameron McKenna LLP and Norton Rose, as well as Hewlett Packard, Reuters and KPMG. It is more likely for graduates to join a large international company such as the organisations mentioned above, and be transferred by request to working in Russia, than it is to find a graduate job in Russia by applying to Russian firms.

An increasing number of students from around the world get jobs in Russia each year directly after graduation, and Russia has the highest number of academic graduates in Europe.

- *Typical problems encountered:* while there are no laws to prevent foreign citizens from working in Russia, applying for a visa to live and work in Russia for longer than a year is a lengthy and difficult process, and the country has the highest level of academic graduates in Europe, so there is no shortage of candidates to fill graduate positions.
- *How to improve your chances:* opportunities for experienced UE managers and professionals are good with Western companies in Russia, but opportunities for new graduates are largely confined to teaching and NGOs. English is the main business language leading to a high demand among Russians to learn English and a strong TEFL market.
- *Language requirements:* an excellent knowledge of the Russian language is crucial to your job hunt in Russia, in particular outside the capital city. Russian is spoken throughout the country along with some English, French and German. There are many local languages, notably Turkish and its Central Asian variants. English and Russian are the main business languages. Apart from courses at international colleges, it is unlikely that any degree courses will be taught in anything but Russian.

In Russia, foreigners wanting to work must obtain a permit via the employer offering them a post. However it is possible for an individual to apply for an entry visa in order to seek employment in Russia. The procedure for obtaining visas and work permits can be difficult and time-consuming, typically taking up to several months.

Most expatriates in Russia are employed by diplomatic missions or foreign companies, while teachers are employed by English language schools. Relatively few jobs are available for foreign workers in the local economy. Good knowledge of Russian is required to work for a local employer.

English is in great demand in Russia and many language schools offer jobs for qualified English teachers. Many schools only offer part-time jobs that don't pay particularly well, so teachers often work for several different schools at the same time. Often times a teaching job is a good stepping stone to setting up your own business.

You can find English teaching job adverts online and in the Moscow Times, an English language newspaper. When accepting a job in Russia, it is important that all contracts be

in both Russian and your native language in order to be considered enforceable in a Russian court.

Looking for work in another country requires more than just the obvious CV translation (and even that is difficult in Cyrillic!). You will be confronted with issues that probably didn't even cross your mind when you decided to go for an international career, but don't underestimate the big impact they can have on the outcome of your adventure! Russia is one of the G8, gaining more and more power at the world stage and offering interesting opportunities for graduates. However, note there is very little information available in English.

Although job advertisements appear in the national and local press, personal contacts are the most important way to find a job. Use any contacts you (or your university) may have. Friends, family, former professors, anybody you can think of that might be helpful in getting the necessary contacts established with Russia. Please note that Russian employers consider a good academic background, linguistic and computer skills and an understanding of business as indispensable, but most important are your personality. Therefore, prepare yourself for questions about your professional and personal goals.

Jobs can be found through personal contacts, agencies or organisations based in the UK, or through job advertisements in the Russian local and national press, as well as websites. A great number of job vacancies are advertised online in Russia, so you can apply from anywhere in the world as long as you are willing to arrange travel should you reach the interview stage. (It is unlikely that costs will be reimbursed.)

### **The Application Letter**

The Russian covering letter is an integral part of your job application, and is often a more important tool than the CV for convincing an employer. The style should be formal without appearing too persistent, and it should refer to your present and future plans. Handwritten covering letters are acceptable, but a typed letter is preferable - either way, the letter should always end with a signature.

In general a letter of application should create enough interest to make the potential employer want to look at your application in more detail and hopefully invite you for an interview. Your application letter, however, should not provide too much information about experience and qualifications; this will be provided in your CV.

Russian application letters tend to be short, factual and formal. Illustrate your skills with examples that fit the job. If you know to whom you have to direct the letter, you mention his or her name in the address of the company, if you do not have this information you mention the department (in the address section) to which you are applying. References can be mentioned both in the letter and in the CV. It is advised to send a letter in Russian, preferably handwritten although typed application letters are getting more common nowadays.

### **The Curriculum Vitae**

The key focus of your CV should be to persuade the employer to invite you for an interview. Therefore your CV is a marketing tool, which should be adapted to the market in which you intend to use it.

The CV is usually in reversed chronological order (most recent activities first) and very detailed. At the maximum it is two pages long. The CV starts with your personal details, including name, address, date of birth, your telephone number (with international access code) and e-mail address. You continue with your education, your practical experience, your language and computer skills and the references. Under 'work experience' you mention the companies for which you have worked.

It's becoming more popular to apply for a job via the internet. Be aware of the fact that an electronic CV does not always look the same as the standard one.

Advice on CVs and application methods is available from the various recruitment agencies in Russia, such as The Russian Connection, Job.ru, and those agencies in the UK specialising in Russian opportunities. Most information is in Russian, but some is also available in English.

### **The Application Procedure**

Application interviews are a standard element of the selection procedure for jobs at all skill levels in Russia, as they are the most crucial part of the selection procedure. The amount of interviews varies per job. Make sure you are on time and pay sufficient attention to your appearance. Bring copies of diplomas and testimonials to the interview. Russians greatly appreciate any attempt by foreigners to speak their language and are very proud of their culture. Use this information for your advantage.

On-line applications are nowadays common. In fact, more and more job agencies, but also employers publish their vacancies on-line and provide the opportunity to complete the job application form on-line

There are no rules regarding how many interviews will be held, although it is usually more than one. As in the UK, the type of interview also varies depending on the industry and competition for the vacancy, so if you are not sure whether to expect a panel interview or an informal talk with a future boss, you can call the company to get more information.

### **Where can I work?**

- Major industries: oil, natural gases, metals and timber account for 80% of Russia's exports. Other major industries include IT outsourcing, mobile technology and manufacturing, and banking.
- Industries in decline: traditional farming and textiles.
- Shortage occupations: Western goods and expertise remain in demand, particularly skills in transport, construction, ICT, engineering and teaching.
- Major companies: 13 of the companies listed in the 2008 Financial Times Global Top 500 are Russian. These include gas producers Gazprom and Novatek, Vimpelcom, financial group VTB, steel manufacturers Severstal and Novolipetsk and aluminium exporter Rusal.
- Major cities: Moscow (capital), St Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Niznij Novgorod and Yekaterinburg.

## What's it like working in Russia?

- Average working hours: 40 per week.
- Holidays: typically 28 days per year.
- Average graduate starting salary: 153,720 roubles, around £3,000 per annum (worldsalaries.org).
- Tax rate: Russia has a flat personal income tax rate of 13%. This ranks it as the country with the second most attractive personal tax system for single managers in the world, according to a 2007 survey by investment services firm Mercer Human Resource Consulting.
- Working practices and customs: Russian business is status conscious and hierarchal, and networking is extremely important. An attempt to speak Russian will be greeted warmly and business meetings often begin with a short introduction to each person in the room. Russians are intensely proud of their rich culture and you may be invited to discuss their greatest artists, classical musicians and authors even in business situations, so brushing up on these beforehand could help you fit in.