



Recruiting Your Chinese Staff in UK

Despite the obvious and seductive lure of developing a commercial relationship with China – a country where skills are high and wages are low and which has hung up the ‘open for business sign’ research among UK companies shows that many are fearful of what might lie in store for them citing the double whammy of culture and language as the two main stumbling blocks.

“And yet,” says Ting Zhang, CEO of China Business Solutions whose company undertook the survey, “the simple expedient of recruiting a Chinese national in this country could overcome that reticence and pave the way for valuable business partnerships.”

There are around 60,000 students studying for first and post graduate qualifications in the UK and many of those are in no rush to return to China and are eager to experience Western style business practices.

“Those students, as you would expect, will be fluent in Chinese. They will also have an appreciation of the cultural nuances so feared by many UK companies,” says Ting adding: “Another benefit is that before they come to the UK, many will have had a university education and work experience in China, with some personal network in China through family and friends.”

So how can companies tap into this vast pool of Chinese talent?

Many can be reached through the universities themselves which are likely to have Chinese Student and Scholarship Associations funded, at least in part, by the Chinese Embassy.

“It is also possible to adopt a ‘try before you buy’ approach by offering temporary placements to students before deciding to offer them a permanent post,” says Ting.

Obviously, students arriving from China to study in the UK will have scant understanding of how UK businesses operate and therefore it makes sense to consult with a specialist before contacting your local university.

“You must be clear about what you want and what your expectations are and these must be tempered by what the prospective employee will expect from you. Talking to an expert can help pull these issues into focus and they should be able to help you with the subsequent recruitment process and be available thereafter.”

Your new Chinese employee will be able to offer reassuring advice on the cultural pitfalls that can unseat the unwary, like the protocols of phone contacts or the best ways of chasing up late deliveries. It goes without saying that Chinese technical employee can do a better job explaining complicated technical details to your Chinese partners.

They will be invaluable when your Chinese counterparts visit you. They could well help with the corporate entertaining side of your guest’s visit.



“Your Chinese business partners will be impressed that you have taken the trouble to recruit a Chinese national and they are always happy to see a Chinese face in a unfamiliar environment,” comments Ting.

Work visas are also an important element to consider. There are different approaches open to an employer and employee. Two common ones are the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme (HSMP) and Work Permits.

An HSMP is based on points and a minimum of 75 are required to qualify. Holders can work for any employer in the UK.

An employer must make the application for a Work Permit and once accepted, the employee is only allowed to work for that employer. If they change jobs they must re-apply.

Another option is the International Graduate Scheme which allows a student to remain in the country and work for one year after graduation.

If you have a part time position that require Chinese-speaking skills then it is worth noting that students can work for up to 20 hours a week during term time and full time during vacations.

“If you decide to go down the recruitment route and have carefully mapped out your needs then you can look forward to a Chinese employee who has a strong work ethic coupled with someone who is diligent, honest and ambitious, both for themselves and for you,” concludes Ting.

ChineseTalent.com, a China recruitment service provided by China Business Solutions Limited, is the first and most established service of this kind in the UK. Since its inception in 2003 it has served many UK companies in their recruitment needs for Chinese speaking professionals and graduates. For more information call 01223 421966, or visit Chinesetalent.com.

Published on Overseas Trade magazine, July/August 2007 Issue.