



Written by Yashna Ray

IS CROSS-BORDER MOBILITY A TREND?

As a leading executive search firm with operations across the APAC region, we are often approached by candidates looking for roles overseas. However, what might not be apparent, even in the current buoyant market, are the very specific requirements needed to overcome any barriers to making a move overseas. In this article, we will discuss several factors that affect the hiring process for overseas candidates— with a focus on moving from India to the most popular location choices: Singapore, Hong Kong and London. There are a number of tangible and intangible criteria a

Educational Qualifications

A law graduate from a top-tier law college in India will surely have a competitive advantage, however, this only checks off the academic requirements. Due to the breadth of operations, law firms often ask for a UK or US law qualification as mandatory, and at Aquis Search, we increasingly see a high preference for dual qualified candidates when hiring for cross-border roles.

Year of Experience (PQE and Industry Background)

We seldom see junior lawyers (<6years PQE) move overseas; partly due to the limited value they can add. In order to justify the financial commitments of hiring overseas talent, companies look for specific skills or management expertise typically found in more seasoned lawyers. The training time and cost involved with junior hires is high, therefore firms wanting to recruit from overseas look for experienced professionals who have proven success and can demonstrate they can work both autonomously and within a team.

Common requirements to consider when applying for roles overseas

Educational Qualifications

Years of Experience

Visa Requirements

Skills Required

Adaptability

candidate must fulfil before being able to secure a role within a global law firm or corporation.



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Visa Requirements

While visa eligibility may not be an issue for all overseas candidates, it remains the biggest challenge for most of them. Companies tend to be reserved when it comes to visa sponsorship, however, most companies are open to sponsoring candidates that have a strong value proposition for the firm. Candidates required to change region due to an internal promotion rarely face any difficulty, but proves to be more difficult with external hires as the prospect will have to demonstrate they are worth the extra. Countries, such as Singapore and UK often have their own employment laws that mandate a role must be advertised to local talent first, and all efforts made to secure a hire from within the country before a visa will be granted for an outside applicant.

Skills Required

One area where overseas candidates may be at a disadvantage is their ability to speak the local language. Language skills undeniably play an important part of the application process, but it is evident this is particularly true for certain firms. Despite being listing as a 'desired requirement', most firms understand the difficulty in working in a country or region without fluency in the local language. Thus, they typically opt for local candidates with sufficient language capabilities

Learning the local language can greatly help jobseekers aspiring to move abroad, especially if they are proficient in both reading and writing. It also helps the candidate in building a rapport when they interact with their stakeholders in the region. The legal skills acquired by the job seekers in their home country are transferrable and hence learning the native tongue can truly create a level playing field.

Adaptability

In addition to the tangible requirements, one critical, intangible element candidates will be tested on is their adaptability to the culture and ethos of the target firm and region. This can be fundamental when considering overseas candidates as the impact on performance could be huge if they aren't accustomed to the culture or are hesitant to adapt to it.

In-house counsels are typically more flexible due to their exposure to different working environments whereas private practice lawyers generally have a regional focus which reduces their interaction with global teams. This is an important aspect of taking on a role overseas and should not be overlooked — lawyers in this situation should try to study and comprehend the culture to be better prepared for the job.

About the Author

Yashna is a Senior Consultant at Aquis Search, with the legal and compliance team in Mumbai. She recruits professionals for local, regional and global corporate governance roles including private practice lawyers, in-house legal counsel, company secretary and compliance.

She has experience working with clients to provide recruitment services and market intelligence across various sectors including financial services, media, pharmaceuticals, information technology and manufacturing. Prior to joining Aquis, Yashna worked in a boutique consultancy firm on legal recruitment in the in-house market in Mumbai and as a Trade Union Advocate in London.

Yashna holds an LLB (honours) from Cardiff University, United Kingdom, and a PGCE in Human Resource Management from Middlesex University, London. She is fluent in English, Bengali and Hindi, and conversational French.

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Our clients are members of a global network of prestigious financial institutions, leading UK and US law firms, regional market leaders and Fortune 500 organisations. Clients' recruitment briefs are successfully met by our team of experienced, multilingual consultants. Professional integrity is the key value on which our client relationships are built and the majority of our business is from personal referral. This is a testament to the high level of professionalism for which we are known.

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