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Our Guide to Moving Internationally

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed as a resource for lawyers who are considering an international move. Each move and each location is different but we hope you find it a useful overview. We would encourage you to get in touch directly if you have further questions or if you would like a more detailed discussion around any specific location.



CAN I MOVE INTERNATIONALLY?

In the face of a relatively flat and arguably over-lawyered domestic market, international expansion is now firmly established as a key contributor to current and future growth in a large majority of major UK law firms.

This is reflected in the demand for high-quality lawyers. You need only read the legal press and look at the firms' career pages to see that international hiring is high on the agenda. The question is how you capitalise on it. As a rule, a firm making an international hire will be looking for some combination of the following:

- A minimum of one years' relevant experience (although opportunities exist for top class NQ's)
- A strong track record in a good, well-known commercial law firm (City, international or top regional)

- Relevant specialisms – transactional expertise, international disputes, cross-border sectors
- Language skills – Mandarin/Chinese, Portuguese, Arabic, Russian, major European languages
- Cultural knowledge of the country, perhaps through family or time spent there
- Ability to demonstrate the personal traits to fit into a different working environment/culture
- If senior, evidence of portable clients or at least relevant contacts and experience in that market, whether gained on the ground there or remotely from another location

If you have some of these attributes you will have a strong application; without any, it is likely to be tough.

“International hiring is high on the agenda. The question is how you capitalise on it.”

WHERE CAN I GO?

For **native English speaking lawyers** (without additional languages) this is likely to be dictated by language skills and relevance of experience. Key markets where no languages are required:

- Offshore (Cayman, BVI, Bermuda, Channel Islands, Isle of Man) and Republic of Ireland
- Middle East (Arabic language skills required occasionally but not often)
- Singapore (although Mandarin or Indian dialects both useful, they are rarely a requirement)
- Australia and New Zealand
- Hong Kong (still possible in some sectors but increasingly difficult without Mandarin)
- Africa (still a marginal market but likely to be a growth area as international firms move in)

There are numerous exceptions of course including the English desks of international firms all over Europe, but these are exceptions and we would not recommend making them your primary focus.

Lawyers who speak **multiple languages** will find more options, although location will naturally be dictated by which languages they speak.

- French language skills (to business level)

will be an asset in North Africa as well as France, Luxembourg and Switzerland

- Portuguese and Spanish language skills are of interest not only for those countries but for Latin America (and Latin American desks outside of Latin America) and parts of Africa
- Mandarin language skills will of course be desirable across Asia but increasingly across the world. China is now a focal point and there are Chinese desks operating from London to Sydney to New York
- Arabic language skills are in high demand across the market even if they are usually not an essential

“Location will naturally be dictated by which languages you speak.”

For any roles with an international law firm you should expect that business level English – written and spoken – is essential, and you will almost certainly need to demonstrate good quality experience with an international or highly respected local firm.



SHOULD I MOVE?

Even the most internationally focused lawyers will likely want to know that they have the option of 'returning home' later on in their careers. No longer is this a cause for concern. Contrary to the outdated view that a stint overseas is a 'jolly' before returning to the serious business of the City, most international firms now view it as a major asset.

In fact, a stint in an international office may well be the defining stage of your career. Working in a smaller team you will enjoy far more exposure to clients, take on more responsibility and find yourself at the cutting edge of markets that are centre stage in most

law firms' planning. Furthermore, many firms have sufficiently developed their networks to provide as good – or better – career options internationally as in the more crowded environs of head office. The salient question is more likely to be whether you want to return home, than whether you can.

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WHY DO I NEED A RECRUITMENT CONSULTANT?

Never will a good specialist Recruitment Consultant be more useful to you than when moving internationally. From the very outset we will give you an accurate view on what your options are, the type of roles that come up, the markets that are feasible and the best way to conduct the search. Finding a job in a small close knit market such as the Cayman Islands for example, demands a markedly different approach to a search in London.

arrangements and potentially hotel bookings – a time-consuming task if you are still busy in your day job! And as discussions reach a close, you can draw on our experience to help with negotiating packages and relocation expenses, dealing with visa matters and sorting out start dates.

“You can draw on our experience to help...”

We will also be able to give you a good overview of the market in your chosen location(s); who the major firms are, which firms are best at what and crucially, what the 'on the ground' view of the firms are. It is notable to see the way that some of London's most illustrious firms are viewed as second rate in some markets, whilst 'middle ranking' firms who trail in their wake domestically, are considered leaders.

Once the process is up and running we will be there to help you organise numerous meetings, video-conferences, flight





WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?

Once you have decided to consider your options you should start to think about a CV. Most recruitment consultants will be reluctant to talk to you in any detail about specific vacancies until they have seen this but don't let that stop you getting in touch. We will be able to tell you about the market, talk generally about your options and crucially, help you with preparing that CV (more on this below).

Once you have decided to work with us, in consultation with you we will formulate a plan of action and a time-frame for executing it. We can discuss a comprehensive range of firms and can advise you on the best way to approach them. Needless to say you remain in control of which firms reach the target list but it is always worth listening to the consultant's opinion as some firms may have a story to tell that hasn't yet reached the market.

It is also wise to ensure at this stage that you are in complete agreement with your consultant on what happens next. Critical throughout is communication, and both parties should ensure that they maintain regular contact even if it sometimes takes a while to get feedback. One point to remember – if you are working with other agencies always insist that they get your express permission before sending out your CV. In recruitment, like any other sector, there are some who operate in the grey

areas and an agent sending your CV out on mass will not only make it difficult for us to assist you, it also significantly increases the chances of duplication, potentially damaging your application.

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When invitations to interview start to come in, we will be able to advise you on the nature of the meeting and help you to prepare for the questions you are likely to face (some of which will be very different to those asked in a domestic interview). Research is key – make sure you are up to speed on the firm, recent hires, new clients, big news stories – and make sure that you have a clear idea on what the team you are talking to and the Partners you are meeting do. Also make sure you know a bit about the place you want to go and that you are clear in your mind as to your reasons for making the move. This is critical as firms will look out for people taking a rose-tinted view of life in another country.

YOUR CV

Integral to any move is your CV. It comes in all shapes and sizes, and if you ask ten people for opinions they will give you ten different answers, but there are some key guidelines to follow. Within reason, detail is good. Don't worry about sticking to two pages but equally do apply some quality control to what is included. For example, a sample list of transactions should be exactly that, the best ten or so things you have done, not everything you have ever worked on. Also remember that you do not need to go into too much detail on what each transaction involved, an overview of your involvement should suffice.

Naturally, any international experience (even if it is living in a different country entirely), any language skills and any particularly relevant experience should figure prominently.

At the risk of stating the obvious, this is no time for modesty. Look for your achievements and if you are struggling to see what sets you apart from the field, speak to us. It is our job to bring

out the strengths in your application and it is rare that we meet a candidate who has reached any level with any decent firm without having had some impressive achievements.

“Integral to any move is your CV.”

Our advice is to get the key facts and figures down on paper, think carefully about what you have done and what makes you stand out, and then run it past us. We have many years' experience of what the market looks for and we can advise you on how to tailor it accordingly. In fact, if you give us the raw material, we can even format it for you and come back to you with a draft for amendment/approval. Please take a look at the sample CV template on our website for an outline and some more useful tips.

INTERVIEWS

Interviewing for an international move can be surprisingly straightforward. A couple of Skype calls and suddenly you find yourself with a big decision to make! In other cases it can be more drawn out, with some firms preferring to conduct the early stages on the telephone or Skype before inviting you for an 'in person' meeting at the relevant office. Whatever form the process takes, preparation is key. Whilst some interview questions will be familiar and expected, others may be quite different, focusing on the personal reasons for relocating, what your family thinks about the move or what you will miss about home, for example.

We can provide you with a full suite of resources to aid you in this process, including

“Preparation is key.”

advice on general interview preparation, interviewing by video conference, Skype or telephone, and the specific things to consider for an international interview. In many cases we will have had other people interviewing with the same firm/Partners and so we can also provide an 'inside track' on style and what to expect.



THE OFFER

Negotiating an offer can be a fraught process at the end of a long series of meetings. Most lawyers will be confident negotiators but it can be a different matter when it's your future you're negotiating for. Fortunately we have done this many times and can handle the negotiations on your behalf (in close conjunction with you), or if you/the firm prefers to do it directly, acting as a sounding board. Some considerations:

- Recap your original motivations and make sure these are not forgotten as the focus moves onto the financials – moves made solely for money tend not to be the long term solution (unless more money was your sole reason for moving!)
- Equally, beware of moving just because you get an offer. When you have set your heart on a move to a particular place it is tempting to say yes when an offer comes along. We would strongly recommend that you make sure the job, as well as the location, is right.
- Consider, and if necessary ask for advice on cost of living, taxation, accommodation etc. It is crucial that you get a real picture of what the salary equates to. A big pay rise may not mean a big lift in real terms just like a pay cut may actually leave you better off if the cost of living is substantially lower.
- Consider the long-term potential compensation and prospects, not just year one.
- Remember that the firm is also taking some risk in hiring you, so is there room for compromise?
- If you are looking for a big uplift, be prepared to justify why you are worth more, unproven in the market, to the new firm, than you are as a proven entity in your old market at your old firm.

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- Tread carefully when juggling offers. Having a better paying alternative can increase the offer from your preferred firm but can also cause bad feeling if a firm feels it is being used as a bargaining chip.

Communication is vital; ask questions, agree deadlines and stick to them. Taking time to think it through is sensible but stringing people along will rarely benefit either party.





I'M GOING, WHAT NOW?

Ideally, by now you will already have checked your contract and any associated documents to see what potential obstacles could come up. Notice period, restrictions and bonus entitlements for example are all potential sticking points. Next is looking at the new contract – you are probably more expert at this than most but nonetheless check that everything you discussed is reflected in the agreement and iron out any potential grey areas. One thing we would recommend is going through the paperwork thoroughly and coming back with a final list of issues to be resolved, as a drip feed of 'problems' can leave a firm wondering if you are playing for more time.

Alongside this, you should also be making sure that any necessary visa paperwork is in place. In some locations it can be a long and bureaucratic process so the sooner you get started the better. In truth the firm you are joining will probably take care of this and of course we are on hand to help.

And remember, if your offer is subject to a

visa, you are taking a risk if you resign before that visa is granted so speak to your future employer and agree, as much as you can, a timeframe. Only when you are happy with the visa status and contracts are agreed should you make this known to your current firm.

“Next is looking at the new contract”

When it comes to resigning, prepare for the worst – even if a firm understands your reasons once the dust has settled, they might still react badly when the news is broken. It's always best not to burn bridges so make clear in your own mind how you are going to approach it, and what you will give as your reasons, and then stick to them. Focus on the positives of the firm/place you are moving to rather than the negatives of the place you are leaving – even if inside you are already popping the Champagne corks!

ABOUT US

Origin Legal International is a division of Origin Legal, one of the United Kingdom's leading independent legal recruitment specialists. Our international team has around twenty years' experience of placing lawyers worldwide. Divisional Head Jason Horobin was previously head of the International Private Practice division for a major global legal recruitment agency, growing its network from a London base into a global network covering every major legal market in the world. He has recruited into 25+ countries at all levels from senior equity partner to newly qualified lawyers.

"We know our markets inside out."

We recognise that this is a serious commitment and we are determined to ensure that you benefit from a personalised, pro-active service which provides genuine advice and consultation, rather than the commoditised target-driven approach sometimes seen in our industry. Our model relies heavily on developing long-term working partnerships which have to be earned. We know our markets inside out, we are always responsive, our information is accurate and our approaches are discreet and professional.

We do not assume that everyone who contacts us is ready to move and we are happy to help with your fact-finding process with no obligation to take things further. Equally, if you have decided it is time for a change we will gladly meet to discuss your options and tell you a bit more about how we work.

Either way, please get in touch.

CONTACT DETAILS

If you would like any advice on the recruitment market, your options, or simply want to know what is going on out there, please do get in touch. We are happy to speak outside of working hours if more convenient.

In the first instance please contact:

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For more information about Origin Legal and to view our international resources, please visit our website www.originlegal.co.uk



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