

The career opportunities in the Middle East

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Gulf has been one of the first regions in the world to accept migrants from India with open arms and offer lucrative career opportunities. This is much before the IT revolution across the world and the booming BPO businesses, which has brought unprecedented job opportunities in India. The fact that even today, the Gulf region continues to be an attractive

destination is a testimony for the prosperity of the region and growing economies here.

The Gulf region or GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] comprises of six countries: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Sultanate of Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. While all the countries are growing rapidly much beyond the traditional oil sector and offering career opportunities, the most attractive destination continues to be Dubai in

particular and the UAE in general.

The growth of Dubai in the last few years has been phenomenal and is today touted as a top destination for Business and Tourism. Consequently, there are plenty of career opportunities here irrespective of your area of specialisation. However, being in Dubai for last few years I have seen the heavy influx of people from India, who often land here without a proper plan or in-

depth knowledge of the country. This article attempts to give information to a potential candidate seeking to migrate here. The details given here are indicative and the reader is advised to do his own research additionally on all aspects before deciding on the career move.

Opportunities at hand

The UAE economy is well diversified with Oil, Trading, Tourism, Infrastruc-

ture, Manufacturing and Services contributing substantially to the economy. The range of opportunities is wide spread laterally as well as vertically. It's therefore no surprise that we see young graduates fresh out of college moving here as often as people in mid career range, as this land of opportunities, accepts all.

There are also certain new sectors which have opened up in a big way throwing immense business and employment opportunities. These sectors are in Advertising, Media and Publishing through the Dubai Media City, Education through Knowledge Village and Academic City and IT through Silicon Oasis.

The typical positions which seem to have maximum opportunities start right from Receptionists, Secretaries, Sales and Marketing Executives, Junior and Middle level Management positions across all functional areas. However, the degree of opportunities for positions in Sales and Marketing is much higher and a clear bias towards this function is evident. This is natural, because UAE is a major trading center and a market where the 'Consumer is the King'. Performance based commissions are generally high as also profit sharing for senior management personnel.

Basic requirements

While each industry and position does have its own specific job profile, for most positions, it is necessary to be at least a graduate, if not more. Please also note that your educational certificate based on which you seek employment, has to be attested by UAE embassy in India. While Industry experience is required, preference is always for local or gulf experience, which is considered more valuable, even if it is for few years. This should however not dishearten anybody moving out for the first time, in view of the large number of opportunities here.

Cultural fit

There are certain minimum salary requirements for you to sponsor your family including your parents, which must be considered while evaluating a career move.

This is a land of multi cultural environment and people from a large number of countries and dif-



ferent religions live here in perfect harmony. While English is generally well accepted, if you are fluent in Hindi and/or Malayalam, it would be an advantage, especially for careers in sales and Marketing. If you happen to know even basic Arabic, you can be sure to have a distinct advantage. It's good to polish your English, especially if you can get rid of some typical Indian accent.

Grooming

There is no doubt that with a high standard of living, your personality and grooming takes a predominant position in the selection process here. Therefore, do give attention to this factor in general and it would help people at all levels to add some formal wear in your wardrobe [For example suits for either sex].

Please refer an earlier article in this series published by Deccan Herald for further guidance. (How to face a job interview? 11th January 2006, www.deccanherald.com)

Research

Rather sadly, a lot of people land up here without a basic preparation or research. You should do your own research into all relevant factors such as opportunities in your specific functional area, cost of living and other important factors before taking your flight. Apart from checking with your friends and relatives, you can use the web extensively and check various government and other sites including media to get accurate and comprehensive data and information.

Living in the UAE

Standard of Life: Living in UAE is very comfortable and the standard of living is high and comparable to the

best in the world. Other than accommodation, cost of living is low and hence relatively high savings potential. There are best of shopping malls and multiplexes (with Hindi movies released generally two days before in India), public parks and other recreational facilities. The cities are clean and well maintained.

Education: There are opportunities and facilities created for quality education right from nursery to higher secondary schools [Including CBSE/ICSC] and Colleges for higher education.

Health and Welfare: There are adequate number of hospitals and clinics offering the best of medical facilities. The cost is high but affordable since health insurance is mandatory.

Safety and Security: UAE is one of the safest countries in the world even for single women. The Crime rates are far lower than most developed countries including India and the laws are tough and rightly so.

Banking and Insurance: The financial sector has developed well with a large number of local and multinational companies operating to the benefit of the citizens offering insurance, loans and credit cards at competitive terms. Transfer of funds to India is easy, hassle free and currently there are no limits or taxes imposed in India to funds earned and remitted from abroad.

Accommodation: Generally cost of accommodation has been rising and relatively high forcing citizens to stay in distant suburbs. However, the market is now showing signs of stabilising on the cost factor. For single individuals of either sex, there are also inexpensive accommodation options.

Property: Expatriates can now own property in designated areas and projects which come along with the attraction of a residence visa. This has led to a boom in the Construction and Property market.

Hotels and Restaurants: There are hotels and restaurants to suit every budget and taste. Indian cuisine is popular and there are restaurants offering different cuisines including Malabar/Chettinad/Andra/Udupi. Cost of food in restaurants in general is affordable at a very high quality.

Climate: UAE has extreme heat in summer and a surprisingly mild and pleasant winter. The summer between April-October is hot and humid but does not make a much difference since the life style permits mostly an air-conditioned environment whether you are at office or home or driving. Pollution here is at very minimum level and is a pleasant change from high and unbearable pollution levels in most of Indian cities.

Driving and Traffic: Cars are widely used here and by a recent estimate one in four own cars. Car manufacturers from across the world compete and the cost of cars are much cheaper than in India. The traffic in UAE in major cities such as Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi is dense like in any metro, but disciplined and always moving. The traffic here moves on the right and one need to attend driving classes to take a license. The Indian driving license is not valid here.

Taxes and Duties: UAE is a tax free economy which is a very big attraction. There are no income taxes, sales tax, octroi etc and is a free economy with products coming from every part of the world often at prices lower than in India.

Getting a Job: In order to get a job to match your profile, you need to take a combination of various actions. There are a large number of placement consultants and most of them have a facility to register on their website. You could also check their websites frequently for opportunities. The local newspapers have appointments supplements coming up practically everyday which can be referred.

For very junior levels and temporary jobs, one can refer the classified sections of the newspapers. You can also place free ads in the classifieds offering your services. However, there is a limitation to the progress you can make sitting in a remote place and you should be lucky to get placed in India, for UAE.

In general the above applies to other Gulf countries too. For travelling to UAE, you would need a passport with ECNR and a valid visa. Please approach your travel agent or the UAE embassy for further information and guidance. Emirates is a major world class airline operating from many Indian cities including Bangalore and can also give you valuable information.

With globalisation, the world is getting smaller and opportunities better. If you have the right skill sets, determination and attitude to succeed, no one can stop you. Go ahead and decide your destiny. The future is in your hands.



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Interview Tips - What Motivates You?

"What motivates you?" is another one of those soul-searching interview questions where your answer will depend on your background and experiences. It can really catch you off guard unless you've thought about it before the interview. Contemplating when you have been most satisfied in your career will not only help you answer this question, but it will also help you focus on what you want in your next job.

Two candidates answer the motivation question, reflecting their values and what is important to them.

The first one says, "In my previous job, I worked directly with customers and their problems. What I liked was solving problems and helping people. Sometimes it took a lot of effort on my part, but it was very rewarding when the customer appreciated the service."

This answer reflects the candidate's interest in helping people and the satisfaction he gets in finding solutions.

The second candidate says, "Two years ago, I was involved in a project I was really excited about. The team I was working with had to come up with innovative ways to market a product that was not received well by consumers. It took lots of effort and long meetings, but we met our deadline and launched a terrific marketing campaign. It was really a motivating experience."

This candidate likes thinking outside the box and being part of a team. He loves a challenge and works well with pressure and deadlines.

Prepare Your Script

Writing out your thoughts will help you think about times when you felt energized by your work, times when you looked forward to going to work. For a source of ideas, refer to your resume. Which tasks did you list? Were they the tasks you enjoyed most and felt most motivated doing?

A statement on your resume might be:

• **Project leader:** Led a team in coordinating and monitoring the progress of projects to assure the flow and completion of work on schedule.

What was it that was motivating about this experience? Being in charge? Being the source of information? Controlling the flow of work? Making sure the standards were in line with your work values?

By making a list of motivating experiences from your last two or three jobs, you will begin to see patterns of projects and tasks that stand out. Analyze what you did before. Do you want more of this type of responsibility in your next job? The answers to these questions will give you insight into what stimulates you as well as possibilities for fulfillment in future jobs with similar responsibilities.

Additionally, by focusing on times when you were energized by your work, you may become more enthusiastic about the job you are seeking.

There is no such thing as the perfect answer to the motivation question. Your answer will be based on your own individual experiences and analysis. Ultimately, this exercise will help you reveal to the interviewer what turns you on in your work. Even if you are not asked this question, your preinterview thinking, analysis, and scripting will help you be more focused and in control of what you want in your next job.

Top 6 Questions about Writing a Resume

Certain questions pop up again and again, representing time-honored uncertainties of resume and cover letter writing. We've consolidated the 10 most common ones and tell you how to handle each:

What Are the Different Resume Styles?

The three most common are reverse chronological, functional (AKA "skills") and combination (AKA "hybrid" or "modified chronological"). Here's a definition of each style:

• **Reverse Chronological:** With a focus on work history, a reverse chronological resume leads with education or work history and provides comprehensive employment history information. Reverse chronological resumes best suit those with a steady work history who are not changing careers.

• **Functional:** Functional resumes often are used by job seekers with issues such as job-hopping, extended employment gaps and career changing.

• **Combination:** This style is a good choice for most job seekers, because a qualifications summary at the top allows for a quick sell and entices hiring managers to continue reading. Should I Keep My Resume to One Page?

Not necessarily. The one-page resume "rule" no longer applies. New graduates with limited experience might only require one page, but experienced professionals often need two pages or more. For a two-page resume, make sure your strongest credentials are on page one.

What Tense Should I Write My Resume In?

Write previous jobs in past tense. For your current job, write accomplishments in present tense and job responsibilities in present tense.

Should I Include Salary Information On My Resume?

No, unless you are writing a federal resume. Indicating your salary history or requirements could eliminate you from consideration. If the employer requests salary requirements, acknowledge the request in your cover letter with a line like: "I would be happy to discuss my salary requirements after mutual interest has been established." If you feel pressed to give a number, provide a wide range to give you some wiggle room for future negotiations. You can also create a salary history sheet, a separate document that outlines your earnings history.

Do I Need to Send a Cover Letter with My Resume?

Yes. A well-written cover letter is a chance to market your credentials and demonstrate professionalism.

How Can I Hide Gaps in My Work History?

While most employers prefer applicants with no employment gaps, very few job seekers offer a perfectly steady work history. You can't change the past, so focus your resume on what you offer. If you participated in activities such as volunteer work, self-study or formal training while out of work, include them on your resume. If long-term gaps are an issue, consider a functional resume style, which emphasizes relevant skills while downplaying work chronology.

How Do I Write a Resume to Change Careers?

Your career-change resume should highlight your qualifications that are most relevant to your new career goal. You may have transferable skills, training, hobbies or other important credentials that will interest hiring managers. A good starting point is to research jobs by searching jobs on Monster and look for qualifications frequently mentioned in ads. Write down your matching qualifications, and work them into your resume.

Do The Work You Want To Do

Do you jump out of bed on Monday morning eager to face the day - or when the alarm goes off, do you groan, roll over and hide your head under the duvet? When you come back from holiday are you refreshed and raring to go, full of new ideas and enthusiasm for your work - or do you spend your first week back daydreaming about or planning your next holiday?

For many people, work is a necessary evil - it's what we do to allow us to afford to do fun things in our leisure time. Sure, sometimes we get a buzz out of a busy workload or a successful presentation, but a lot of the time we probably wish we were somewhere else. In fact, most of us feel like this most of the time. Recent research found that 60% of us would have chosen a different career if we had our time again; 40% of people openly admit to having "drifted" into their job.

But it doesn't have to be like that. Imagine the alternative - you enjoy your work just as much as you enjoy your leisure time, it gives you a buzz and you'd do it even if you weren't being paid for it. Find the job you love, and you've effectively given yourself a 7-day weekend! Think about it - the average person will work 40 hours a week for the best part of 40 years - nearly 80,000 hours of your life. So doesn't it make sense to spend your working time doing what you want to be doing?

And there's the rub - most people don't know what they really, really want to do. That's partly because we are conditioned from an early age to aspire to what those around us - parents, teachers, peers, the media - define as a good job or career, and partly because most of us never take the time really to get to know our own talents and desires.

But it's never too late to take control of your future and find your unique vocation.

Here are some tips on how you can:

• You can't find out what you want until you find out who you are. What are your values? What's most important to you? What are you passionate about? What do you really want out of life and how do you want your friends and family to remember you? Taking the time to think about the things that really matter to you is a good starting point for finding your ideal role.

• Don't expect your ideal job to jump up and hit you straightaway. It might, but it probably won't. Take time to muse, to think laterally, let your imagination run riot and let your intuition speak to you. Try to visualise your "ideal life" - if money was no object, or you knew you couldn't fail, what would you really love to have a go at? What's holding you back?

• Think about what you want from your working life. What are the most important aspects of your current job - is it the money? Your work colleagues? The working environment? What features of your current job would you hate to lose or love to ditch?

• Don't assume that to find your ideal job you have to change careers completely. Think about the aspects of your current job that you enjoy. Is there scope for you to negotiate spending more time on these sorts of tasks and less on the stuff you hate? Maybe you could negotiate a few days' "work experience" in other parts of the company. Changes don't always have to be drastic to be effective.

• If you conclude that the only way you could be happy at work is to be doing something completely different, somewhere completely different, don't jump straight in. Find a way of building a bridge to your new career. Network: find someone who might give you some work experience, or take you on part-time. And don't be afraid to think imaginatively - the working environment is more flexible now than it has ever been, so allow yourself to think outside the "9 to 5" box.

Finally, remember that, in the final analysis, it's your life, your career, and your unfulfilled potential if you don't find and follow your dream. So go for it - you owe it to yourself.

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