

# Why & How to Hire Foreign-Born Talent

## The St. Louis Mosaic Project

By Betsy Cohen, Executive Director, St. Louis Mosaic Project

The St. Louis Mosaic Project is part of the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, with the goal of making our region grow in population and economic/social benefit through retaining and attracting more foreign-born workers. We want to be a growing region and our declining native-born population does not provide enough talent for our work force openings - now or in the future.

We have completed two research studies on the need for hiring international talent in the Greater St. Louis Metro Area. The first showed that local companies and their human resources/talent teams need to better understand why and how to hire international talent. The second showed the talent gaps in our region, especially in the STEM fields, and how the majority of the international students attending our regional universities have STEM degrees that would make them attractive candidates. This leads to three tips for the recruitment and hiring of international talent.

1. If your hiring team says it is seeking the best talent BUT is evaluated on "time to hire," this may restrict your ability to seek some of the best global talent that might need to have a visa opportunity. We have a fact sheet that illustrates the visa process. But why would you go down this path? Four reasons: if you have a global supply chain and need talent who can work with suppliers; if you serve customers with different ethnicities, preferring to speak a different language to build trust; if you are expanding your business into other countries; if you can't find STEM talent in the local market but desperately need to fill STEM jobs.
2. Think about how welcoming your culture is to those who come from a different culture. Do you understand that someone from a different culture, who is very talented, may make a grammatical error on a cover note, who may not speak 100% perfect English, but still communicates extremely well? Do you visually show employees of different ethnicities in your materials and on your website so that those of different ethnicities see that you welcome them? Do you or your leaders need some cultural competency training?
3. The St. Louis region has large gaps in finding talent for STEM jobs and our international students possess many of these skills. Did you know that international students with STEM majors can work for your company for 12 months on OPT (Occupational Practical Training) and then work an additional 24 months on OPT-Extension for a full 3 years? And, during that time you can decide if you want to apply for an H1B visa for the employee and have three "attempts" at the H1B visa lottery that occurs the first week of April each year?

To help you find this STEM talent, St. Louis Mosaic Project is planning the first regional International Student STEM Career Fair for employers in February, 2017. Please let us know if you want to attend.

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**Factoid** Percentage of employers who base their performance appraisal periods on a fixed calendar date.

# 53%

(AAIM 2015-2016 Policies & Benefits Survey)

