

CAREERS & RECRUITMENT

EDITED BY ELAINE O'REGAN e-mail: eoregan@sbsp.ie



Shanghai: the Chinese economy surged ahead of Japan on the back of a manufacturing boom that valued it at close to \$5.8 trillion in 2010

GETTY

China in your name

China, with its booming economy, is the new location of choice for Irish emigrants, but what's the best way to survive and thrive there, asks Claire O'Keefe

Reports last month that China had overtaken Japan to become the world's second-largest economy will come as no surprise to the estimated 3,000 Irish people who live and work there. According to a spokesperson from the Irish embassy in China, the number of Irish people relocating to China has tripled since the recession first hit.

The Chinese economy surged ahead of Japan on the back of a manufacturing boom that valued it at close to \$5.8 trillion in 2010. This represents a massive tenfold growth over 30 years – and Irish people have noticed.

Flourishing economy

Communism has taken on a

new face in China. Foreign investment is replacing collectivism and the economy is prospering. Complete party control allows projects to be fast-tracked, though corruption persists as it did under the national regime and censorship can sometimes be problematic.

"Despite the bureaucratic complexities, expense and time required to establish corporate entities in China, the continued demand for labour is causing severe wage inflation and an affluent middle class is developing," said Fergal Brosnan, managing director of Berkeley Group.

"Economic and demographic forces, rather than political, are driving China."

Irish presence

Cathy Holahan, China market adviser for Enterprise Ireland, said the number of Irish companies setting up shop in China had increased significantly in recent years.

"In the period from 2004/05 to 2011, the number of Irish companies with a presence in China grew from 45 to 120," said Carter Yang, managing director of recruitment consultancy Robert Walters China.

China is one of the four so-called BRIC countries, a group of fast-growing, emerging economies that also includes Brazil, India and Russia.

China's economy is expected to undergo continued growth, with analysts predicting that it will overtake the US as the largest economy in the world some where in 2030 and 2040.

Enterprise Ireland's Cathy Holahan believes that prospects for Irish companies in China are bright.

"We are seeing an overall growth in companies' revenue and personnel as they expand their export markets. Irish companies are seen to provide an expertise and are sought to provide support to [several] sectors," said Holahan.

Carter Yang said there was demand for professional services experience in a number of key areas, including sales and marketing, supply chain, finance, IT and HR.

Strong sectors

Brosnan, a recruiter with an office in Shanghai, said that there were a number of strong, durable sectors in China.

"These include metals, textiles, agriculture, manufacturing and engineering, industries that are located primarily in the cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Suzhou and Guangzhou."

"Pharmaceutical and biotech, construction, engineering, banking, finance and petrochemicals are the industries where there are job opportunities for Irish professionals," said Brosnan.

"The typical jobs are project managers or directors, programme managers and engineers in different fields, such as mechanical, chemical and automation as well as risk managers and compliance professionals."

Hiring activity

"According to the 2011 Robert Walters Salary Survey, hiring activity was particularly strong in the banking and financial services, as well as the retail and luxury sectors last year," said Carter Yang, managing director of recruitment consultancy Robert Walters China.

China is one of the four so-called BRIC countries, a group of fast-growing, emerging economies that also includes Brazil, India and Russia.

China's economy is expected to undergo continued growth, with analysts predicting that it will overtake the US as the largest economy in the world some where in 2030 and 2040.

Enterprise Ireland's Cathy Holahan believes that prospects for Irish companies in China are bright.

"We are seeing an overall growth in companies' revenue and personnel as they expand their export markets. Irish companies are seen to provide an expertise and are sought to provide support to [several] sectors," said Holahan.

Carter Yang said there was demand for professional services experience in a number of key areas, including sales and marketing, supply chain, finance, IT and HR.

Teaching

Gary Hester is marketing manager of ChinaJobs Ireland, a start-up that helps Irish people to find teaching jobs, secure visas and find accommodation in China.

"A candidate earns €800 a month, which is once and a half more than Chinese teachers, despite teaching being considered a good job in China," Hester says. "The opportunities are there too. We even had an enquiry from a university outside Shanghai looking for



Fergal Brosnan of the Berkeley Group

someone with a Masters in Economics to come and teach economics through English."

Some English teaching companies offering work in China include Aston Educational Group, English First and Web International English.

In addition to graduates, Hester said that there were job opportunities in China for candidates who did not have a third level qualification.

"Teaching in China can attract chefs and office workers who don't have university degrees. Unlike South Korea and Japan, university degrees aren't completely essential in China," he said.

Living in China

Thirty-one-year-old Fiona McCormack is a Montessori teacher and co-owner of Paddy O'Shea's in Beijing.

McCormack moved to China to teach English when she was 23 years. Now, eight years on, she is a successful businesswoman and chairperson of Irish Network China.

"Working in China very much has a 'work hard, play hard' vibe and you are exposed to people from all over the world on a weekly basis," McCormack said. "China offers people opportunities that don't exist in your own country in the world. Here, you really can't expect to get anywhere unless you try."

She said anything you are willing to take a risk on, you name it, it is here and easily accessible.

"If families choose to come here, the advantage is that your children will grow up in a diverse culture and learn a second language, which is fantastic, but for singles, Beijing is great for them. There is an amazing party lifestyle and great groups to join like Beijing GAA and Beijing Escapade."

"A candidate earns €800 a month, which is once and a half more than Chinese teachers, despite teaching being considered a good job in China," Hester says. "The opportunities are there too. We even had an enquiry from a university outside Shanghai looking for



Cathy Holahan of Enterprise Ireland

only to sustaining a career in the local market, but also to live in China and understand its culture," said Yang.

Brosnan agreed that the first preference for many local companies in China was often to recruit local candidates who were bilingual and who had experience of working in multinational corporations.

Pay and perks

Yang said local employees in



Carter Yang of Robert Walters China

China typically offered salary bonuses, comprehensive insurance plans and high salary packages to expat candidates.

"Local expatriate hires run between €18,000 and €30,000 a year," he said. "If you are hired from overseas, you can expect to earn between €60,000 and €75,000 a year."

Brosnan added that networking or "Guanxi" was widely used in China as a means to find work.

"Many jobs are never advertised, but are filled via personal

referrals from friends or family," he said. "Academic qualifications, personality relationships, integrity and respect are keywords in Chinese business relationships."

Labour laws

Fiona McCormack said expats working in China were generally treated well, but warned against a complacent attitude to local labour laws.

"Many people say contracts within China are not worth the paper they're written on, so you do need to be careful," she said. "Labour laws don't really favour expats if they are working for a local company, but most companies still offer perks to their packages like housing, flight allowance, insurance and visas."

The Labour Contract Law in China requires that contracts be put in writing within one month of employment commencing. It gives options to employees whose rights have been violated and covers issues like severance pay, probation periods, dismissal and non-competes clauses.

"Expatriate or foreign em-

ployees legally employed by a China-based entity will have what are known as foreign talent employment permits," Yang said.

"They are required to submit a contract translated in Chinese. This is the contract that is binding according to PRC law."

There are also some Chinese norms to be aware of in the workplace.

"Chinese companies usually ask for the incumbent's personal information, including age and marital status, as they believe these are factors that will impact on the employee's work and performance," he said.

On the subject of tax, Fergal Brosnan said employees who lived and worked in China for a period of more than 183 days a year, would be liable to pay Chinese taxes on all income received while in the country.

"Personal income tax is charged on a sliding scale, ranging from 5 to 45 per cent," he said. "If an employee also receives income from overseas, they will be taxed in China on their worldwide income with a tax credit given against any tax already paid in other countries."



Jane Lorigan is managing director for Ireland with Irish-owned online recruitment company Saangroup.com. Established in 1995, Saangroup employs 800 people in 19 offices in locations around the world.

The company operates websites for recruiters and career seekers in Ireland, Britain, Europe, China, India, the Middle East, South Africa, Central America and the Caribbean. It is headquartered in Dublin and recorded revenues of €25 million in 2009.

What are the main responsibilities of your job?
I have overall responsibility for Saangroup.com's operations in Ireland. These include the market leading recruitment websites IrishJobs.ie, Jobs.ie, NJobs.com and the online dating website BusyBefriends.com.

What are your professional motivations?
I constantly look for ways to improve the service we offer our customers – both companies and site visitors. I've started with nothing and keeping my team motivated

and happy. It is a straightforward approach, but one which has helped us to become the market leader in Ireland and allowed us to grow the business through a very difficult economic period.

How would you describe your work style?
I am open to new ideas and constantly adapting. I talk to everybody and I listen carefully.

What rates as your best business decision?
It was the decision to move back to Ireland, even though I had a successful international marketing career in London. I joined IrishJobs when it was a young, entrepreneurial and dynamic company, which allowed me to grow quickly with the job and I haven't looked back since.

What is the most valuable professional lesson you have learnt?
Many people are paralysed by the need to make a decision, because they are afraid of making a mistake. The result is that they procrastinate. Don't let the fear of getting it wrong stop you from making decisions. If you get it wrong, learn from it and move on.

Who do you most admire in Irish business?
Being from Cavan, I have admiration for Sean Quinn. He started with nothing and built a world class business.

literally digging it out of the ground. Cavan has always been relatively deprived and living there has never been easy. The border region is generally overlooked economically and, before the Quinn Group, there were few companies queuing up to locate there.

As a result, the career path for many young Cavan people meant moving to Dublin or, more likely, moving abroad. Sean Quinn stayed true to his roots and targeted his investment in the region.

As he diversified into hospitality and insurance, he provided further career opportunities for people previously unheard of in the county.

While I may disagree with some of his more recent business decisions, I have great respect for the lasting service he has done for Cavan.

What are your expectations for Irish business in the months ahead?
Recruitment is very sensitive to any fluctuation in the economy. It slows at the first sign of a downturn and it picks up again when confidence returns.

On IrishJobs and Jobs.ie, there has been an increase in hiring activity among international and export-focused companies. It has been a tough time for companies focused exclusively on the Irish market.

However, it would appear that the worst is now behind us. The number of jobs adver-



Jane Lorigan

tised on our sites in Ireland has increased by 26 per cent since April 2009 and compensation is also up.

The potential is great and the future is exciting.

What is your ultimate professional goal at this point?
I remember a job interview in my 20s where I was asked the classic question, "Where do you see yourself in ten years?" At the time, I answered that the job I would have in ten years time probably hadn't been invented yet.

I was right. I don't know an ultimate professional goal, because every day opens up new opportunities. Saangroup.com is a fast paced and dynamic company in the online space.

The potential is great and the future is exciting.



Shortlist Consulting offer a unique advertised recruitment service to clients including:

- Full online and print recruitment advertising service
- Professional, consultative and confidential service
- 'Own' your shortlist, make multi-hires - all for one fixed fee
- No 'Temp to Perm' fee
- On average 50% less than contingency recruitment costs

To learn more about how we can be of assistance to you with your next recruitment campaign contact us at:

www.shortlist.ie or clarakenny@shortlist.ie
Alternatively you can call Clara on 01 866 66 00
or Text 'shortlist' and 'my' with your name and company name to 3155