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# GOING GLOBAL

## America: land of opportunity?

This month in Going Global, **Matthew T Grant** reveals for those Aussie marketers hankering to hit the big time, the reality of breaking into the US marketing industry.



For marketers seeking overseas experience, the US is an attractive destination. Home to some of the world's best-known brands, from Coke to Nike to Microsoft, as well as one of the world's largest and most developed marketplaces, it would seem an ideal place to take one's career to the next level.

Indeed, the US has a lot to offer marketers from every discipline. To take advantage of the many opportunities, however, it's important to be aware of those elements of work and public life that make the US different from Australia and many other developed companies.

Before going any further, I want to emphasise that you will need a visa to work in the US and that the process can be complex and time-consuming. The good news is that, in addition to the H-1B visa which allows people from other countries to work there, the US Government has created a special E-3 visa expressly for Australian citizens. Similar to the H-1B, a US employer must sponsor the E-3 application and the applicant must have a job-relevant bachelor degree or equivalent job-relevant work experience. You can contact the US Consulate for more information.

It would also be helpful here at the outset to paint a portrait of the salary landscape for marketers in the US. First off, the US is a very big place and salaries vary as you get away from the major metropolitan centres of New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Houston. While one shouldn't shy away from some of the smaller, though growing cities such as Atlanta, Denver or Portland, the type of work available in these areas will tend to be more regional except when they happen to be home to corporate headquarters (such as Nike in Portland or CNN in Atlanta).

At a glance, here are the median salary ranges you can expect to find based on marketing speciality. It should be noted that these are just salary figures; total compensation may exceed this amount by as much as 30 percent, especially for top-level positions:

Speciality	Entry level	Mid level	Top level
Advertising/marcom	US\$35K	US\$58K	US\$68.5K
Product/brand mgt	US\$69k	US\$75.5k	US\$89K
Market research	US\$40K	US\$70K	US\$110K
Public relations*	US\$42K	US\$60K	US\$121K
General marketing and events	US\$33K	US\$60.8K	US\$100K

(Data source: Aquent/AMA Compensation Survey of Marketing Professionals 2006, [www.marketingsalaries.com/aquent/Home.form](http://www.marketingsalaries.com/aquent/Home.form). \*Data source for PR: [salary.com](http://salary.com).)

Whatever salary level you are aiming at, you need to get the job first, and that means making your way through the hiring process. It goes without saying that US companies will probably not want to hire you sight-unseen, which means that you will want to get to the US in order to interview in person. Of course, once you get an interview, your most important asset will be your professional experience. Having credentials from an established agency or multinational corporation will certainly help, but they will not be sufficient. Employers in the US are also very keen on academic achievement and particularly want people with a degree (bachelors, masters, etc.). Because the educational system in the US differs from that in Australia, you may have to translate your degree into its local equivalent.





The 'bachelor of commerce' degree doesn't exist in the US, for example, so you would need to refer to that as 'a degree in economics'.

Though it may come as a surprise, the fact that you are from Australia and have an accent that Americans tend to find charming will work in your favour. At the same time, a word of caution is advised. Americans can have a strong sense of political correctness and interviews can be relatively formal. Indeed, there are laws governing the types of questions that can be asked – concerning age, ethnicity, religious background, etc. – and you will be discouraged from divulging such information in the interview.

Once you do start working in the US, in order to distinguish yourself, you will want to adopt the work habits of those around you. As a rule, Americans tend to work longer hours than their counterparts in the developed world. On top of that, there is less state-mandated vacation time with the typical employee getting a mere two weeks off a year, as opposed to the four to six that workers in many Asia Pacific and European countries enjoy.

This brings me to another topic: social welfare. While the American worker will, in addition to vacation days, usually receive an allotment of 'sick days with pay' for the

year, it is also the case that health insurance is viewed as a 'benefit', rather than an entitlement. Employer-funded health insurance is considered part of overall compensation, but many companies only cover the employee himself, extending coverage to dependants at a cost. Furthermore, unemployment benefits are contingent in part on the way your job ends with certain forms of 'job separation' (quitting to take care of an ill spouse, termination for deliberate misconduct, etc.).

Speaking generally, there is an ongoing demand for marketers in the B2B space, especially for those with niche experience with science and technology products. In both B2B and B2C companies, there is a growing need for marketers with interactive experience with email marketing management, search engine marketing and optimisation, and online advertising. Furthermore, as the web becomes more and more inseparable from marketing and commerce more broadly, there is an acute shortage of people well-versed in data analytics, web analytics and business intelligence.

At the end of the day, one shouldn't overestimate the differences between the US and Australia when it comes to marketing. Being able to read a balance sheet and think about marketing from a financial perspective

matters there as much as it does here. Businesses want people who can not only execute on the tactical level, but also understand the value of strategic planning and, moreover, know how to do it. Finally, 'integration' is the catchphrase of the moment so having experience with a range of marketing activities – interactive, print, PR, research, advertising, etc. – and knowing how to deploy and coordinate a variety of tactics and campaigns is exceedingly valuable wherever you are.

If you are curious about working in the US, you should start by going online and exploring the possibilities. You can always scour the job boards like Monster or Career Builder to find out who is hiring what, but the greater power of the web lies in the realm of networking. There are a number of blogs and online communities devoted to marketing, particularly in the interactive, SEO and analytics space. Showing up on those sites, submitting comments and contacting the authors is a great way to start networking without ever leaving home.

Finally, don't forget that coming from Australia makes you unique over here in the US. Keeping the accent and presenting yourself well will set you apart and quite possibly take you to the overseas job of your dreams. **M**