

AUSPICIOUS EIGHT

TIPS TO BUILDING A CAREER IN CHINA



Many college students and young professionals want to launch a career in China, but don't know how to break into the workforce.

After 20+ years working in NGOs, government and business, we've learned a little about what works – even for those who aren't yet sure what they want to do.

HERE IS OUR BEST ADVICE TO ASPIRING CHINA HANDS:

1. DO A ROTATION IN CHINA



No matter what you want out of your experience in China, the first step is showing up. Make sure to venture outside Beijing and Shanghai, and to explore as much of the Middle Kingdom as you can.

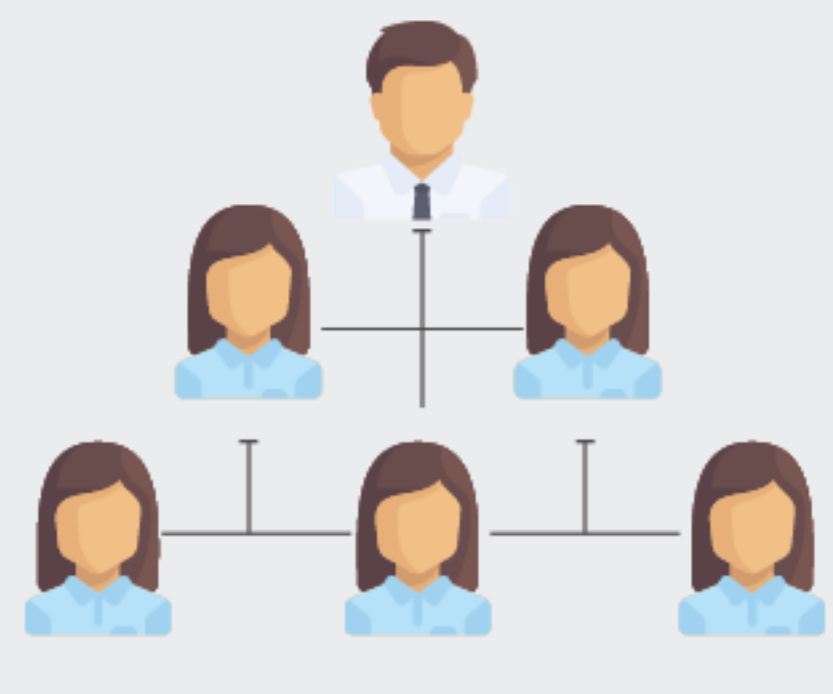
Your everyday interactions will teach you more than any class could – so absorb it all!

2. LEARN THE LANGUAGE

Aim for “functional fluency”: Learn not only how to navigate business meetings, but also to read Chinese language news and social media. These are useful – and marketable! – skills for young professionals.



3. LEARN THE SYSTEM



Those who understand the inextricable link between business and government will have a huge advantage in the job market. Sector expertise is a bonus but rarely is the determining factor for hiring.

NGOs often provide the greatest opportunity in China to work hands-on with a high level of responsibility. If you are unsure of what to do, consider starting here.

But be warned that there is a downside: it is not always easy to parlay NGO experience into government or private sector jobs. It can be done – but the path is not always linear.

4. TRY OUT AN NGO



5. EXPLORE THE PRIVATE SECTOR



In the Middle Kingdom, “business” often means working in government relations on behalf of a big firm.

While there are few entry-level positions for this type of work, this can be a great start to a career as a China hand. Be creative – consider internships or unpaid positions, as well as jobs outside of Tier 1 cities.

6. CHECK OUT GOVERNMENT

Government experience is marketable – at any point in your career and in any country.



7. BUILD YOUR PROFILE



Participate in panels, and get your name on reports and articles. Get your name out there – even if you have to provide research for free.

8. ASK YOURSELF: DO YOU HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOR?

China can be frustrating. Things can move at a snail's pace – until they don't. An entrenched protocol governs how business is done. Meetings can be conducted with overwhelming pageantry. A sense of humor to sustain you through the “bureaucratic shuffle” is essential for working in China.

