

CAREER SPOTLIGHT

How to find a job in Germany without speaking German?

Germany is a country offering a broad variety of jobs and for some of them you don't even have to speak German. During my ten years as a career consultant in Germany, I have supported several customers from all over the world who almost didn't speak one single German word, but just English. Before they asked for my help in order to find a new job in Germany, they managed to live and work here for several years. In the beginning I was really surprised how they succeeded in doing so, but let's face it: most Germans speak at least some English, so you'll find your way through your normal day buying bread, going to the hairdresser or ordering a meal. Sometimes it might be a bit of a hassle, but when all else fails, resorting to "sign language" usually helps.

Of course, it is advantageous if you speak the language of the country where you live because that improves your job opportunities even more and gives you the chance to get integrated much better. But in this article I just want to focus on how you manage to get a job in Germany if you only speak English.

Ready? Let's start with the job areas in which you'll have the best chances of finding a job as an English-only speaker. Recently, I spent several hours on various job boards to find out how many jobs require English alone. For my small mini study which is not scientifically validated, I checked about 2000 job offers in speed reading mode. The bad news first: Many of the jobs required at least a basic knowledge of German, around A1/2 in the European Reference System. But fortunately, there were still many jobs left where you could get ahead with English, and I noticed significant differences between the individual job areas.

What are the best job areas for English-only speakers?

Definitely the **highest number** of job posts in which no German was required were **IT jobs** covering the whole range from software development, cloud computing, frontend, backend, DevOps, cyber security to other IT jobs. Just recently I read an article in the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung" about the managing director of a medium-sized wholesaler who has now introduced English as the working language in his IT department. In the past, this would have been an unthinkable phenomenon in Germany's SME sector.

Second highest number of job posts in Germany for (just) English speakers were **life science jobs especially in the pharma or biotech industry** such as jobs as Pharma-

covigilance or Clinical Trial Liaison Manager just to mention a few. No wonder if you consider that most life science companies in Germany are huge global players. People who major in these subjects at a German university, are used to digging through tons of articles, books and studies in English. For this reason, you will always be surrounded by enough English-speaking colleagues.

Third highest number of job posts were **research jobs**, for example in international research institutes such as Max-Planck (where I used to work long time ago) or at universities. Please note that most positions in this area are temporary. **Number four and five** in my mini study were **global sales and business development jobs** and on the other side of the 'business medallion' **procurement and supply chain jobs**. No wonder, since international customers and suppliers are often based in English-speaking countries anyway.

Do the results of my little mini study align with my experience as a career coach? Absolutely, because most of my English-only speaking clients so far have worked in exactly these job areas. Of course, there are many more jobs for (just) English speakers, but at this point I would like to leave it at the top five which I have already mentioned.

In which industries would English-only speakers will find the best opportunities?

The industries correspond largely with the job areas listed above. The 'top 5' are:

IT industry

Life Science (pharmaceutical, biochemical, biotechnological and chemical industry)

Tech and electronics industry

Automotive sector

Research institutes and universities

Where is it very hard to find a job as English-only speaker?

In all professional areas where you have to have an expert knowledge of German legal principles and regulations, which for the most part are written only in German, it will be extremely difficult to find a job without being fluent in German. This holds true predominantly for jobs in law, accounting, tax and some specific HR-roles requiring a profound knowledge of German labor law. Even as an IT consultant you will have a hard time if you get into companies where your customers are not used to receiving English tech tutorials, for instance in how to enter data in SAP, as is often the case in German small or mid-sized companies. The IT sector may be number one for English-only companies, but in the consulting business, it's ultimately the language of your clients that counts. In fact, in any customer-facing role such as sales, customer service or customer relation-

ship management which consists primarily of domestic, German-speaking customers, fluent German will most likely be required.

How to find a job in Germany as English-only speaker?

You may start in looking for job boards that offer jobs specifically for English speakers, such as

- Englishjobs.de
- Make-it-in-germany.com.

Or type the term 'English-speaking' into the search field of a general job board such as kimeta.de, jobworld.de or just do a Boolean search on Google or LinkedIn (more international than Xing).

From my point of view, however, you have to go the extra mile, especially if you are not one of the super sought-after IT specialists. Here are five tips I would like to recommend to you.

Tip # 1: Contact the hiring managers in the desired job field via LinkedIn or directly.

Tip # 2: Network via LinkedIn and build contacts to interesting companies in general and have in mind that every contact can be the gateway to your dream job.

Tip # 3: Contact headhunters who fill specific English-speaking jobs in Germany. But please be aware that headhunters will only act if you are a perfect fit in a current candidate search since they are often flooded with resumes and have to be very good stewards of their time. Please understand that they can't do extensive consulting or proactive job searches for you.

Tip #4: Consider involving a career advisor in Germany who can support you with your individual job search and application strategy.

Tip #5: Connect with expats from your country of origin and see where they work. You can use LinkedIn or various other expat forums. There is usually a lot of solidarity among expats and you can get one or two helpful tips or other support.

Good luck and all the best for you!

Elke Wagenpfeil

About the author:

The Frankfurt psychologist Elke Wagenpfeil is an expert on all aspects of jobs & careers and a member of the German Society for Career Counseling (DGfK). As a coach, she supports people in discovering their talents and on their professional path. For many years, she herself worked as a human resources manager in an international company, advising executives on staffing worldwide.

www.career-coach.de