

The White-collar Recruitment Market in Asia July to September 2020

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JAC Recruitment Co., Ltd. (Takeshi Matsuzono, Managing Director) provides recruitment services across 11 countries worldwide and serves as the largest recruitment consultancy in Southeast Asia*1. JAC Recruitment has prepared this summary of trends in the white-collar recruitment markets of respective Asian nations for the third quarter of 2020, encompassing the three months July through September. (*1 According to internal research of JAC Recruitment based on comparisons of sales generated by peer companies that engage in recruitment services throughout Asia.)

- **During the third quarter of 2020, the recruitment market mounted a recovery in terms of job listing numbers throughout Asia despite persisting ramifications of COVID-19 in the respective countries amid a scenario of gradual deregulation and apparent moves to lift restrictions on immigration.**
- In Vietnam, the number of job listings increased both relative to the same quarter of the previous year and relative to the second quarter (April to June). Meanwhile, the number of job listings related to Japanese overseas businesses rebounded to levels on par with those of the previous year.
- Meanwhile, concerns regarding prospects of recovery persist amid developments that include more stringent visa requirements in Singapore and plans for substantial restructuring by large airline company in Hong Kong.

Trends in numbers of job listings posted by the JAC Recruitment Group's recruitment consultancies

	Singapore	Malaysia	Thailand	Indonesia	Vietnam	China	HK	Korea	India	Japan*2
Relative to 2019 Q3	67%	82%	82%	45%	116%	57%	62%	82%	74%	95%
Relative to 2020 Q2	120%	148%	149%	150%	132%	107%	117%	117%	115%	153%

*2 These figures reflect job listings relevant to overseas operations of Japanese companies.



Singapore

Recruitment market beginning to show signs of the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic and increasing stringency regarding work visas for foreign nationals

Incremental steps being taken by the Singaporean government toward deregulation are helping to bring about gradual recovery in nation's domestic economy. For the third month in a row the September Singapore Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) released by the Singapore Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management (SIPMM) exceeded the 50-point benchmark, which delineates whether manufacturing is undergoing expansion or contraction. Meanwhile, individual indices for new orders, new exports and production have also improved.

The Singaporean general election in July saw an opposition party gain the most seats ever won by a non-ruling party. Meanwhile, the ruling party has taken action that has involved tightening standards for issuing work visas to foreign nationals twice with the aims of addressing poverty of Singaporean citizens, income disparity and job security, all of which had been campaign issues during the election. Economic recovery and employment challenges are bound to persist as pressing issues in Singapore.

Corporate Recruitment Trends

Recruitment activity among enterprises in Singapore is mounting gradual recovery, yet an increasing number of companies are altering hiring policies and overhauling HR plans. This comes amid a situation where the Singaporean government has tightened standards for granting work visas twice this year, despite previously having done so only once every several years. Particularly given that it has become difficult to hire foreign nationals residing outside of Singapore, demand is likely to increase with respect to recruitment of individuals that include Singaporean nationals who do not require work visas as well as those holding visas designated as Permanent Resident (PR), Dependant's Pass (DP), or the Long Term Visa Pass (LTVP) granted to Singaporean nationals and those with visas for spouses of PR holders.

Candidate Trends

The number of registered candidates who are Singaporean nationals remains largely the same as in the previous quarter given that such individuals are exercising caution as they monitor corporate recruitment trends amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of registered job candidates who are Japanese nationals residing in Singapore remains largely unchanged and there has been somewhat of a downward trend with respect to those from overseas. Professionals registering as recruitment candidates are doing so for reasons that include their having been subject to layoffs amid corporate restructuring due to COVID-19, and also due to closures of business locations and situations where employers have opted not to renew candidates' work visas. There has been a conspicuous trend among those holding the DP visa actively seeking career change and searching for jobs. We are also seeing an increase in registrants who are highly sought after holders of PR, DP and LTVP visas.

No. of job listings
 67% of 2019 Q3
 120% of 2020 Q2



Jun Yilmaz
 Managing Director
 JAC Recruitment
 Singapore



48% more job listings than in the previous quarter, accompanied by a marked shift to higher annual salaries

Malaysia's business sentiment diffusion index (DI) is at an all-time low of negative 57.9 points and the forecast for the subsequent six months (1H2021) remains lacklustre at negative 41.6 points according to the Japanese Chamber of Trade and Industry Malaysia (JACTIM) in its business survey for the second half of 2020 (2H2020), enlisting responses from 178 companies and released September 2. Meanwhile, the employment DI hit double digits for the first time at 23.0 points, indicating a persisting scenario of excess employment. Whereas the employment DI was at negative 12.6 points in the first half of 2018, sentiment that the level was excessive has driven it consistently higher since then. On September 8, some 100 new cases of COVID-19 were reported, with the number having been in the double-digit range since June 2. Since October 1, the number has persisted in a range of between 200 and 600 cases. Since October 9, activity in parts of Malaysia has been subject to conditional restrictions. Meanwhile, factory operations have been suspended and the government has prohibited movement both within the region and beyond. As such, the prospect of COVID-19 adversely affecting the economy seems unavoidable.

Corporate Recruitment Trends

The number of job listings in Malaysia has increased by 48% relative to the previous quarter. This was particularly the case with respect to Japanese MNCs in Malaysia whose number of listings surged by 68%. Meanwhile, job listings were down 18% on a year-on-year basis. This was despite a scenario where the government had placed restrictions on the movement of people in March but subsequently eased those restrictions in June, thereby causing certain corporations that had previously put off or suspended hiring to resume their recruitment activities. As for the recruitment market in Malaysia on a per-industry basis, job listings in the manufacturing sector edged up relative to the previous quarter but were down 60% in comparison with the same period of the previous year. In the information and communications technology (ICT) sector, on the other hand, job listings increased by 16% relative to the same period last year. This was largely due to substantial demand for IT professionals despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is particularly the case among companies shifting to digital technologies, increasing productivity and developing efficient access to markets, which involves drawing on IOT technologies, factory automation (FA) and digital marketing. As for job listings in Malaysia categorized by salary levels, nearly half of all listings have been for positions at the managerial level and above drawing salaries of MYR 7,000 and higher, which is an increase of 8.7% in comparison with the same period of the previous year. This upward trend has been ongoing since 2015 when such positions accounted for 23.4% of all listings. With recruitment having entered into a buyer's market amid the need to cut costs amid the COVID-19 pandemic, companies have been resorting to internal promotions and employment referrals when it comes to hiring people for junior and mid-level positions.

Meanwhile, enterprises have also been facing stiff competition when it comes to recruiting core personnel for positions at the managerial level and above. Many companies have been attempting to secure talent by offering salaries that exceed conventional market levels amid mounting demand for recruitment of staff members involved in developing and breaking ground in new businesses and markets, especially given a sense of market paralysis and dysfunction in the realm of supply chain management. This seems to help explain the increase particularly in job listings at salary levels of MYR 9,000 and above for senior manager and general manager-class positions, which are up by 10.3%.

Candidate Trends

A survey administered by JAC Recruitment on attitudes toward career change among Malaysian nationals revealed that 24% of the 1,538 respondents have begun considering options for changing jobs since the month of April when the government put its restrictions in place. Findings of the survey reflect that the COVID-19 pandemic has substantially influenced reasons underpinning people's desire to change careers.

For instance, following on the first- and second-ranking reasons cited by professionals for seeking a new job, the desire for career advancement and anticipation of higher compensation, number three of the reasons cited was that of changing business circumstances affecting their employers. Whereas that motivation for seeking a new job had previously not been very prominent, it accounted for 18% of the responses this time around. Meanwhile, the survey did not reveal substantial shifts in attitudes regarding career change among Japanese nationals seeking employment, but candidates residing in Japan have been subject to substantial waiting periods when it comes to embarking on employment even after having landed employment due to restrictions placed on travel to overseas destinations and delays in visa issuance.

No. of job listings
82% of 2019 Q3
148% of 2020 Q2



Nobuaki Onishi
Managing Director
JAC Recruitment
Malaysia



Recruitment market showing signs of gradual recovery despite COVID-19

The Kingdom of Thailand has kept COVID-19 in check partially at the expense of its economy, yet the scenario of the pandemic persisting worldwide is greatly weighing on the nation's prospects. Given an economy bolstered by inbound tourism and exports overall, Thailand is integrally linked to global business conditions. As such, it is likely to take some time before the nation returns its state prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. Most experts predict that the Thai economy will not encounter pre-COVID-19 levels until the year 2022. Meanwhile on the political front, turmoil is mounting as the royal family becomes increasingly engulfed in frequent occurrences of massive public demonstrations and other such developments.

Corporate Recruitment Trends

The number of job listings in Thailand has mounted a substantial recovery and have reached 149% of previous quarter levels. This is attributable to a situation where companies have been returning to their normal in-house work routines after many had previously suspended recruitment activity while resorting to telework arrangements to help ward off community-associated transmission of the virus. Whereas the dire recruitment scenario has improved relative to what had been the worst phase of dismal appetite for corporate hiring, some companies are continuing to take a wait-and-see approach. Going forward, we expect to see Thailand's internal economic situation and recruitment to gradually intensify as economies worldwide start gaining steam while grappling with COVID-19.

Candidate Trends

There is a trend of fewer Thai nationals actively engaged in the workforce due to a prevailing state of economic instability. Job seekers continue to operate in a seller's market, yet employees have been exhibiting less desire to change jobs than is usually the case. Meanwhile, volumes of airmail have increased, which has helped to gradually ease challenges inherent in hiring Japanese nationals residing in Japan and other foreign nationals, which had been virtually impossible before.

However, the employer or the recruit must shoulder costs for using quarantine facilities, PCR testing for COVID-19, and high insurance costs. Against that backdrop, as of early October the Thai government has been engaging in discussions on shortening the length of time required for quarantine. We expect to soon see greater activity involving career changes extending across national borders from Japan to Thailand.

No. of job listings
82% of 2019 Q3
149% of 2020 Q2



Katsuhiko Yamashita
Managing Director
JAC Recruitment
Thailand



50% more job listings than in the previous quarter amid increased hiring of personnel services and IT professionals needed to address COVID-19

It had been possible for companies in Indonesia to allow half of their workforces to remain present in the workplace as cases of COVID-19 transmission began to subside in July. Nevertheless, during the third quarter the situation reverted to one whereby the prospect of COVID-19 completely letting up remained uncertain with the government tightening regulations in September as the virus once again began to spread. Consequently, the authorities limited the number of employees allowed to be present at worksites to 25% of the normal number, with the exception of certain industries. Meanwhile, the government has restricted the movement of the nation's citizens, allowing takeout meals only when it comes to restaurant services. Although the government aims to maintain the consumer price index in the 2% to 4% range, the index fell below that target over the three consecutive months beginning in June. In September, Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati revised the nation's GDP forecast for 2020 amid expectations of negative growth. However, as of early October the GDP forecast cites growth in the 4.5% to 5.5% range in 2021.

Corporate Recruitment Trends

Some workplaces in Indonesia were reopened to employees in the third quarter as the nation eased social restrictions put in place to address COVID-19. Still, some companies clearly remain at the mercy of the virus in that there have been instances where closure has been forced on offices and factories upon discovery of an individual carrying the virus, and where enterprises have otherwise been unable to engage in operations as planned. Moreover, having been subject to various restrictions, certain companies have continued to suspend hiring as they encounter hardships in terms of financial performance, particularly as they incur expenses resulting from implementation of COVID-19 measures and encounter flagging demand both domestically and abroad. There have also been many instances where hiring has been postponed due to absences of employment decision-makers, amid a situation where some expatriate employees have been barred from returning to Indonesia from their home countries upon having left Indonesia as the circumstances surrounding medical care in the nation deteriorate. On the other hand, the number of job openings in the third quarter was 50% higher than in the second quarter as a result of companies increasing their hiring particularly for accounting and sales positions. This is in addition to the need for professionals in personnel services and the IT sector as companies frantically deal with COVID-19.

Candidate Trends

There have been increases both in the number of job vacancy inquiries and candidate registrations in Indonesia amid rising unemployment in the retail, restaurant and hotel industries due to COVID-19. Whereas a certain number of people seeking career change remain cautious when it comes to switching jobs, there has been substantial appetite overall with respect the desire to change occupations. Japanese candidates residing in Japan who would like to work in Indonesia continue to encounter situations where they are unable to enter Indonesia for job interviews given that they are unable to obtain a visa on arrival or single-entry visa. There have been instances where delays in new visa issuance have caused those changing jobs to postpone travel plans and endure other such difficulties.

No. of job listings
45% of 2019 Q3
150% of 2020 Q2



Chie Kobayashi
Managing Director
JAC Recruitment
Indonesia

The number of job listings has increased in Vietnam relative to 2019 Q3 and 2020 Q2 amid easing of immigration restrictions and gradual economic recovery

Ever since resurgence of COVID-19 in the city of Da Nang in late July, tensions have been high in Vietnam with COVID-19 clusters also having since emerged in the cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh. However, the economic impact such resurgences has been limited relative to that of the second quarter given that the government has not issued orders for a second round of social isolation measures. Meanwhile, many institutions have forecast a rate of GDP growth in Vietnam of around 2%, and S&P anticipates an 11.2% rate of GDP growth in 2021. Vietnam's economy is likely to begin mounting a recovery such as that of last year in the third quarter of 2020.

Corporate Recruitment Trends

The number of job listings in Vietnam was higher overall in the third quarter relative to both 2019 Q3 and 2020 Q2. The increase is largely attributable to a substantially higher number of listings from foreign MNCs in line with the economic recovery in Vietnam, which has been far less affected by COVID-19 in comparison with other countries. Nevertheless, a substantial disparity remains between sectors and occupations seeing job openings and those that are not. For instance, whereas job listings have been prevalent in the manufacturing sector, specialized trading companies, IT and logistics, such listings remain relatively sparse in the textile and garment industry, as well as in hotel, travel and food service businesses. Job openings have increased particularly when it comes to employment relating to electronic components handled by specialized trading companies amid recovery in demand for motor vehicles and electronic products.

Candidate Trends

Vietnamese nationals have been exhibiting a sense of caution when it comes to looking for employment. The reason being is that few job seekers feel that now is an opportune time to change jobs given a scenario of fewer vacancies than usual. Meanwhile, as the end of the calendar year approaches people are normally less motivated to change jobs until companies have paid the Tet bonus, which entities provide sometime around the Vietnamese New Year. However, this year there could be more job seekers actively looking for employment than normal during the fourth quarter amid a scenario where some companies are bound to forego payment of the Tet bonus and year-end holiday season pay rises given that their operations have been adversely affected by COVID-19.

The number of Japanese residents of Vietnam seeking to change jobs continues to increase. Meanwhile, there has been a conspicuous trend whereby Japanese residents of Japan who would otherwise like to work in Vietnam are hesitant to make career changes, whether such employment is in Vietnam or elsewhere overseas. During the fourth quarter, substantial changes in candidate trends are likely to emerge in Vietnam, such that will be contingent on the government's easing of immigration restrictions.

No. of job listings
116% of 2019 Q3
132% of 2020 Q2



Satoshi Kuwata
Director
JAC Recruitment
Vietnam



Regulations on new visa applications and quarantine to persist even after the government eases immigration restrictions

With mainland China having largely managed to contain the spread of COVID-19, some 600 million people travelled during the eight consecutive days of the nation's Golden Week holiday and consumer activity is showing signs of recovery. Although in mid-July China's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) announced that the nation's real GDP growth rate had been negative 1.6% year-on-year in the first half, many experts deem that it will come in at 2.5% for the entire year. The nation is encountering growth with respect to machine tools and other such industries, as well as companies in the retail sector turning to e-commerce. However, it is likely to take time for the nation to get fully back to normal amid prevailing concerns as to the prospect of economic recovery, particularly given tensions between the U.S. and China. Moreover, the job market has not improved amid a situation in June of 19.3% unemployment among those in the 20 to 24 age demographic who have educational credentials consisting of no less than a vocational school or four-year university degree.

Corporate Recruitment Trends

Whereas a majority of job listings currently available are those that involve filling vacated positions, a growing number of Japanese MNCs in China are slated to begin recruitment drives next quarter. This includes an increasing number of listings for specialists in the pharmaceutical industry, which occupies a growth area in the Chinese market, and listings for professionals that handle services for the medical industry in areas that include logistics, trading companies, and consulting. We are also seeing more listings seeking talent in the fields of IT and digital transformation (DX) against a backdrop of a shift to online business which has been accelerating since the outbreak of COVID-19. Many companies seeking such employees are not requiring second-language skills, but only Chinese language and professional competency, given that limiting the field to Japanese-language speakers would impede recruitment due to a shortage of such candidates. When it comes to listings seeking Japanese nationals, some companies are requiring candidates that already have a work visa for China due to difficulties encountered in obtaining new visas and the inability to conduct face-to-face interviews with such candidates.

Candidate Trends

The number of people looking for new jobs tends to decrease every year as the Chinese New Year approaches. The number then tends to increase after bonuses have been paid. This year, however, many Chinese candidates have been taking a cautious approach when it comes to career change, in that they are holding off until they see economic recovery unfold throughout the entire year. As for Japanese residents of Japan seeking employment in China, such expatriates and their family members had previously remained in Japan due to travel restrictions. However, many are now successively entering China amid a scenario where the Chinese government has been easing immigration policy and airlines are increasing the number of flights between Japan and China. On the other hand, arranging short-term visits to China for the sake of taking part in interviews still poses challenges. For instance, applicants for new visas must obtain invitation letters and even business travellers are required to quarantine for two weeks upon entering the country.

No. of job listings

57% of 2019 Q3

107% of 2020 Q2



Maika Koyanagawa
General Manager
JAC Recruitment China
(Shanghai)



Signs of recovery in job listing numbers begins to emerge toward the latter half of the quarter

In July, circumstances surrounding COVID-19 became more severe in Hong Kong as the epidemic emerged for a third time. Although the Hong Kong economy had been poised to move in a positive direction, the third wave sparked renewed concerns regarding the prospect of further deterioration of the employment environment amid a prolonged economic downturn and return of uncertainty ahead. By mid-August a measure of serenity was gradually restored as the third wave of the epidemic began to subside. Then in September, a shift back to normalcy ensued despite controls on border crossings and social restrictions remaining in place. However, the likelihood of major airline company in Hong Kong substantially restructuring their operations now seems certain, which has given rise to concerns about the extent to which such restructuring will affect Hong Kong society.

Corporate Recruitment Trends

Even though the job market continues to face challenges, signs of improvement are beginning to emerge. For instance, the number of job listings in the third quarter of this year was up by 17% in comparison with the third quarter of 2019 when job listings were down by 38% year on year amid a scenario where protests in Hong Kong were steadily intensifying. Moreover, since mid-August employers have been submitting new job listings and resuming their postings of those listings that had been temporarily on hold.

This is attributable to a situation whereby employers that had been taking a wait-and-see approach have since been able to pinpoint which positions they should fill or otherwise leave vacant as a result of being able to set recruitment strategy, which has involved assessing the extent to which COVID-19 is likely to affect their business operations. The recruitment environment is now one of a buyer's market overall, marked by a tendency for employers to curtail offers made to prospective employees, particularly with respect to salaries, working conditions and other such benefits.

Candidate Trends

The aforementioned developments are obviously beginning to affect job seekers in Hong Kong as well. Meanwhile, respective companies have been forging ahead in making various strategic decisions, particularly in terms of downsizing, relocating, and withdrawing from the market. As such, there have been a certain number of job seekers who have embarked on their search for employment upon having been compelled to resign from jobs or amid uncertainties about the future of their current employers. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate has been increasing and the recruitment environment has begun shifting to that of a buyer's market. Amid that scenario, we are seeing an increasing number of candidates who seek to maintain the status quo or who are even willing to accept offers encompassing annual incomes that are lower than those in their previous positions. This is certainly a trend that is unprecedented in the Hong Kong market. Meanwhile, some seeking to make a career change are refraining from actively seeking new employment given that they would like to wait until COVID-19 concerns subside.

No. of job listings
62% of 2019 Q3
117% of 2020 Q2



Kengo Atsumi
Managing Director
JAC Recruitment
Hong Kong



Corporate activity showing signs of rebound amid increase in exports and partial resumption of Japan-SK business

Whereas cases of COVID-19 escalated again in August, the virus is now showing signs of subsiding with the arrival of autumn. South Korean exports by monetary value for the month of September have apparently turned positive relative to the same month of the previous year, rebounding for the first time since the outbreak, according to preliminary analysis of import-export trends for September 2020 by the South Korean Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (MOTIE), released in October. In addition to export gains achieved by semiconductors, general machinery and motor vehicles, South Korea's top three export categories, exports of bio-health products and computers also marked substantial increases, up by 79% and 66% year on year, respectively. Moreover, business flows between Japan and South Korea have been resuming since October 8 and are poised to fuel economic momentum between the two nations going forward. South Korea's real GDP growth is projected to decline at a rate of 1.3% in 2020, according to the 2020 Economic Outlook report released by the Bank of Korea in August.

Corporate Recruitment Trends

South Korea's recruitment market has recently been mounting a gradual recovery, with the number of job listings up by 17% year on year in the third quarter. There has also been an increase in the number of urgent job openings amid a scenario where there are no longer many companies that have put a freeze on recruitment due to COVID-19. Companies that engage in business involving facilities and components with respect to semiconductors and rechargeable batteries have been particularly active when it comes to recruitment. Meanwhile, Japanese MNCs in South Korea have been taking a flexible approach in carrying out their recruitment efforts. For instance, such companies are increasingly conducting remote interviews online in part due to challenges interviewers are apt to encounter in travelling to South Korea, out of consideration for candidates, and on the basis of company policy.

Candidate Trends

The South Korean job market normally comes to life subsequent to the Chuseok ("autumn eve") holiday period as job seekers go into action, but this year recruitment activity has slowed relative to last year. However, some professionals have been compelled to search for new positions as their companies struggle to deal with ramifications of COVID-19. Meanwhile, given that major chaebol conglomerates may reduce their volume of hiring during their autumn season open recruitment drives, this situation poses opportunities for companies with plans for recruitment of fresh graduates to hire high-calibre talent equipped with substantial second language skills and fluency. Companies should promptly initiate their recruitment drives given that the job hunting season has already begun for university students slated to graduate in February 2021.

No. of job listings
82% of 2019 Q3
117% of 2020 Q2



Yuichiro Tsuchiyama
Managing Director
JAC Recruitment Korea



Signs of recruitment activity gradual resuming after easing of mandatory lockdown

Economic activity has greatly stalled in India amid a scenario where the government instituted a COVID-19 lockdown restricting numerous business operations other than those involving daily necessities. Consumer spending has also largely stagnated as a result of authorities having heightened restrictions compelling people to remain at home. Meanwhile, India's real GDP growth over the months April through June 2020 declined at a rate of 23.9% in comparison with the same period of the previous year, according to the nation's government. That constitutes India's lowest rate of GDP growth ever.

Whereas the nation had been adding some 90,000 new COVID-19 cases per day over consecutive days at the outset of September, that rate of increase peaked in the middle of the month. As of October, the nation had maintained the world's second-highest number of COVID-19 infections, having reported more than 6.7 million cases overall. Nevertheless, authorities have been taking steps since August to ease the mandatory lockdown in areas other than Southern India and other locations still encountering critical rates of transmission. The government has been seeking to stave off further economic stagnation by shifting to a policy that entails placing precedence on economic activity and adapting to a new "with-corona" era. To such ends, authorities have re-opened major shopping centres and put metro services back into operation.

Corporate Recruitment Trends

Whereas at one point nearly 80% of companies in India had suspended hiring amid an uncertain outlook due to COVID-19, the Indian economy is now gradually regaining momentum as authorities ease up on the mandatory lockdown. Amid this scenario, more than a few companies have started to resume their recruitment drives in order to meet rapidly recovering demand for motorcycles and other such two-wheeled vehicles. Corporate recruitment activity has been returning particularly among companies seeking to redouble efforts for hiring candidates. This includes those who are to fill positions relating to production management and quality control, Indian nationals who speak Japanese and are capable of bridging the communication gap between management and front-line workers, and labourers.

Meanwhile, when it comes to recruitment of Japanese nationals, we are seeing some instances where companies will conduct a series of online interviews with candidates and then adjust dates on which new hires are to join the company, amid a scenario where visa issuance timelines remain uncertain. Companies have been showing flexibility particularly when it comes to back office positions where arranging remote work for a new employee would not cause disruption. For instance, some companies are allowing for new hires to join the enterprise prior to their departure from abroad and then later having them travel to India upon having assessed circumstances surrounding the epidemic.

Candidate Trends

COVID-19 has fuelled an increase relative to last year in the number of prospective job seekers who would like to work overseas in hopes of developing a career that is not contingent on corporate India. However, such prospective job seekers normally do not immediately accept offers for jobs overseas, but instead tend to take a long-term view with respect to developing their own careers, which involves comparing their current positions with job descriptions associated with overseas employment. Meanwhile, among Japanese nationals who would like to take up employment in India, we are seeing an increasing number of job candidates who would like to develop unique and valuable skills by exposing themselves to professional environments achieving substantial economic growth. However, more than a few prospective candidates have been taking a cautious approach in that they intend to decide when to make career changes partially based on circumstances unfolding with respect to COVID-19. Many Indian professionals looking to change jobs are seeking favourable work environments and terms of employment, yet also harbour anxieties regarding their present occupations often amid scenarios where they have been facing reductions in salary and restructuring due to COVID-19.

No. of job listings

74% of 2019 Q3

115% of 2020 Q2



Kazuo Komaki
Managing Director
JAC Recruitment India

Companies are taking a stringent approach to recruitment amid a scenario where the number of new job listings has recovered to levels of the previous year

Japan has shifted to a phase during which it aims to strike a balance between allowing for economic activity and preventing viral transmission in addressing the COVID-19 outbreak. Accordingly, authorities have been gradually easing restrictions since the beginning of July with respect to aspects of life that include travel extending across prefectural and metropolitan borders, business operations of eating and drinking establishments, and the holding of large events. Nevertheless, Japan's consumer market has not been faring well. For instance, during the nation's Obon holiday week in early August very few passengers were seen boarding the Tokaido Shinkansen bullet trains, which were no more than half full at any given time. Moreover, results of a survey revealed that sales revenues have decreased by more than 20% relative to 2019 levels at roughly 80% of eating and drinking establishments nationwide. On the other hand, according to the Business Outlook Survey released on September 11 by Japan's Cabinet Office, the Business Sentiment Index (BSI) for the three months of July to September was at plus 2.0, thereby turning positive for the first time in four quarters. Japan's exports have also rebounded and are back to around 90% of pre-pandemic levels, driven by exports to China, and domestic production of many companies is nearing normal levels. Meanwhile, online communications are gaining greater acceptance among companies in Japan now that enterprises are increasingly turning to online means of managing overseas locations as well as conducting business talks and interviews.

Corporate Recruitment Trends

Japan's ratio of job offers to applicants for August 2020 had dropped to a six-year low of 1.04 applicants per job offer. Moreover, the offers to applicants ratio has plunged by more than 0.4 points over a half-year period, relative to its level of 1.45 applicants per offer in the month of February 2020. On the other hand, the number of new job listings filed with JAC International Japan is now largely on par with previous levels, after having rebounded substantially from the April to June quarter during which the number of listings plunged to 63% of previous year levels (employees of Japanese MNCs overseas). Meanwhile, employment statistics compiled by JAC Recruitment Japan mainly pertain to managerial professionals and specialists in respective fields, with findings varying somewhat from ratios of job offers to applicants representing Japan's entire labour market. Our data in that regard pinpoints conspicuous trends with respect to job listings.

For instance, companies in Japan's manufacturing sector have been seeking candidates who are capable of enhancing support systems that help make subsidiaries overseas more autonomous, and who are also capable of addressing risks likely to emerge in the post-corona era, such as with respect to supply chains, legal affairs and taxation matters. Companies are also seeking talent in the digital realm with respect to candidates in R&D in terms of facilitating collaborative efforts internationally in pioneering fields of business such as computer-aided software engineering (CASE) and Internet of things (IoT) technologies. However, many such prospective employers have indicated that they desire to take their time in hiring truly high-calibre professionals, thereby suggesting that they regard such recruitment as a matter of importance rather than one of urgency. As such, we deem that it will take a bit longer for the recruitment market to mount a recovery measured on the basis of the number of candidates hired.

Candidate Trends

During the July to September quarter, the number of new job seekers in Japan (registered professionals with overseas business experience) increased to levels of 109% relative to the previous quarter and 120% relative to the same quarter of the previous year. Amid that scenario, we have noticed a conspicuous tendency among job seekers to take a cautious approach in terms of deciding whether or not to make career changes depending on situations at hand. One factor underpinning that trend is seemingly the notion that people now have more time and opportunities to seek consultation regarding career change given that employees are working from home and there is greater prevalence of tools for online communication. Employers should approach hiring efforts premised on the assumption that they are likely to encounter substantial lead times extending from the candidate recruitment phase to their joining the company, amid an employment market offering ample options in terms of there being many professionals equipped with knowledge and experience in the aforementioned highly specialized fields, overseas business and other such areas.

No. of job listings
95% of 2019 Q3
153% of 2020 Q2
(Employment involving overseas business operations of Japanese companies)



Kenji Sahara
Global Recruitment
Support Division
Manager
JAC Recruitment Japan

Note: We may intentionally seek a lower number of employment listings in certain national recruitment markets due to factors that could include changes in business sentiment or strategies being taken with respect to a certain country. For instance, we may opt to focus on listings for positions offering high annual salaries or on those in specialist categories. As such, trends that we have stated in terms of increases or decreases in numbers of employment listings do not directly reflect actual economic performance achieved by the respective countries.

■ JAC Recruitment Co., Ltd.

Established in 1988, JAC Recruitment is Japan's largest recruitment consultancy listed the First Section of the Tokyo Stock Exchange. Its recruitment services focus on employment needs with respect to specialists and managerial roles, enlisting a dual-approach business model whereby individual consultants work simultaneously with employers and job candidates. One of JAC Recruitment's strengths is that of arranging placements of professionals equipped with international business experience. As such, more than half of its revenue is generated from placing global talent in the international business operations of foreign MNCs and Japanese companies in Japan. JAC is a global recruitment consultancy currently operating in 11 countries with 24 offices. Brands under the company umbrella include JAC International specializing in recruitment involving foreign MNCs, C.C. Consulting which operates the CareerCross recruitment website, and JAC Recruitment Asia offering recruitment services in the UK, Germany and eight countries throughout Asia.

In Japan: (Corporate website) <https://corp.jac-recruitment.jp/en/>
(Recruitment website, in Japanese) <http://www.jac-recruitment.jp>
Elsewhere in Asia: <http://www.jac-recruitmentasia.com/>

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