



HAYS Recruiting experts
in Engineering

GLOBAL MOVEMENTS DEVELOPING OPPORTUNITY

A report on international attitudes
to working overseas

In partnership with:



IMEchE Services Ltd





Greg Lettington
Director
Hays Engineering

Introduction

What are engineers telling us about working in the global market? Worldwide, governments are spending more on infrastructure to ensure that power, water, transport and communications keep up with demographic and economic changes. Increasing demand from emerging economies, combined with a drive for more efficient and longer lasting components, has resulted in a global uplift in manufacturing.

In partnership with the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMECHE), Hays has produced this report to find out what drives professionals to work internationally, and to understand what impact these decisions have on how the UK meets the engineering challenges of the future.

The results provide insight that can help us understand the implications of migration, the factors that lead engineers to work in different territories, and the experiences of many engineers who work and recruit internationally.

Whilst facing the challenges of a UK skills gap, nearly two-thirds of the engineers in our survey have been given the opportunity to work in another country (64%), and 85% would consider a move if offered. While 69% consider there to be adequate work in the UK, only 17% feel that there is enough being done to recognise the work of a professional engineer.

At Hays, we are very proud of the strong relationships we have with the engineering community in the UK and our commitment to providing valuable insights that benefit individuals at every level of their engineering careers.

We hope that the findings from this report will help develop further understanding about the international aspirations and experiences of this professional community.

**I would welcome any feedback that you might have.
Please email me at greg.lettington@hays.com or
call on 07714 066889.**

Methodology

Over 3,500 engineers from around the world, from Affiliate Members to Fellows of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, were surveyed in late 2013. They were asked about their background, industry sector and career ambitions. Many also recorded comments about the way they perceive the status of their industry, and explained how they feel about working in other countries. Their responses illuminate the career aspirations and experiences of a respected profession whose talents are integral to the design, development and manufacture of products in industries such as aerospace, automotive, defence, oil and gas, rail and construction.

The majority of respondents were aged below 60. Of these, 42% were aged between 30 and 50 years old, 15% between 25 and 29 years old, and the remaining 25% were aged 24 or younger. Approximately 20% of respondents were students at the time of the survey.

Regarding their grade of membership with the Institution, 46% of respondents were Members of the Institution (MIMechE), 26% Associate Members (AMIMechE), 14% Affiliate Members (Students or Engineering Technicians) and 10% Fellows of the Institution (FIMechE).

Engineering today

The growth of the engineering population is not keeping pace with the developments in infrastructure and manufacturing demanded by the world's demographic and economic expansion.

Over recent years, reports by the Government, the Institution and other agencies in the UK, state that the challenges of the future require more engineers to enter the profession. However, in schools and colleges, engagement with the STEM subjects – Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths – is not adequate enough to produce the required numbers of skilled engineers.

Engineers can train and develop in a variety of ways. Many people join apprentice schemes, combining work experience with college study. On successful completion of their apprenticeship, Engineering Technician (EngTech) status can be applied for with a professional registration body, such as the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, or another engineering institution, depending on the preferred sector.

With more experience, the professional status of Incorporated Engineer (IEng) may be attained. Those with a Masters-level accredited degree in engineering, as well as the experience and competencies developed in work, may eventually become Chartered Engineer (CEng). Organisations such as the Institution of Mechanical Engineers continue to develop appropriate schemes to accredit the skills of experienced engineers, while maintaining the high standards that distinguish the profession.

International experience

Within many engineering organisations, and particularly in certain sectors, there are considerable opportunities to transfer, or be seconded to another country. Over a third of respondents (35%) have been seconded outside of their home country.

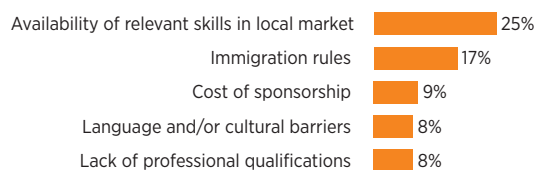
Asked about their current opportunities, 49% indicated that they had been offered a career move to another country by their current employer. However, 85% of respondents said that they would consider a move to another country. This illustrates the potential level of competition for overseas work opportunities. It also suggests there could be more demand from engineers for work experience abroad within their organisations.

Of those who recruit staff within their companies, 51% named sector experience as the main reason for hiring engineers from other countries, and 42% explicitly stated they experienced a lack of relevant skills locally from which to recruit. However, when asked why they may not have engaged engineers from other countries, 25% said they find the existing source of local engineers sufficient. Security clearance and immigration rules can be barriers, while language is regarded as a very small impediment to international recruitment.

What are the main reasons you have employed staff from abroad? (Select all that apply)



What are the main reasons you have not employed staff from abroad? (Select all that apply)



“This report demonstrates the growing demand for global mobility and how engineers are adapting to this.”

Joanna Horton

Head of International Development
Institution of Mechanical Engineers

Career development: UK vs overseas

The UK is seen as a great place to work, with 84% of international respondents considering the UK as a potential career destination.

Reasons given for this response were based on perceptions such as the quality of organisations and opportunities (55%), career development (48%) and personal development (42%). 31% believed the UK offered better pay and benefits and 28% elected support for professional registration as a factor.

Given the broader scope of naming those countries which appealed to them as a career destination, 18% opted for the United States, 15% chose Australia, 9% said Canada and 9% selected the UK.

The most popular regions overall were Western Europe, North America and Australasia/Oceania followed by South East Asia. The main reason cited for moving abroad was the experience that living and working in another country brings. This was named as the motivation for 30% of respondents, with better pay and opportunities for career development both at 18%.

The majority (53%) of UK respondents said they would consider moving to another country for work even if the remuneration and benefits were not greater than in the UK. This may indicate that engineers perceive the personal and career advantages they might gain outside the UK as compelling enough to look abroad. Only 17% of engineers believed that the work of a professional engineer is appropriately recognised in the UK.

Almost 90% of those who have tried working abroad had experienced a successful outcome.

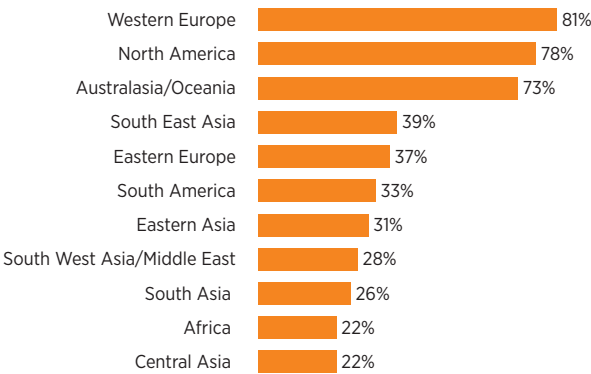
Why would you consider the UK as a potential career destination? (Select all that apply)



If you are considering moving internationally, what would be the main reason behind this?



Which of the following global regions would you consider working in? (Select all that apply)



The status of engineering

Chartered Engineer status is an internationally recognised standard in industry. Almost a third (32%) of engineers said that, when moving countries, their professional registration had supported their career. However, many respondents commented that in practice, other qualifications specific to a country such as Canada or the United States are preferred over Chartership.

Over two-thirds believed there were enough opportunities for engineers to work in the UK. However, a larger majority (83%) thought that not enough was done to recognise the work of professional engineers. Perhaps this was why so many engineers would consider working abroad.

A common theme in respondents' comments was that the status of engineers had become eroded, particularly in the UK. Respondents tell us that the national perception of what an engineer does has been denigrated by the over use of the title across a wide range of jobs that don't require the level of training and competency of professional engineers. Many suggested that an engineer's role is recognised more highly outside the UK and feel that government initiatives in this country had not addressed the issue to date.

The attraction of working abroad, for some, was enhanced by the opportunities and kudos that came in countries where engineers were perceived to be more highly valued by government and wider society.

“The UK needs to realise that it is competing in a world market for engineering talent.”

Colin Brown
Director of Engineering
Institution of Mechanical Engineers

Profile



Sean Cain

Process Engineer
Shell

What attracted you to a career in engineering?

I've always been connected with this line of work. From a young age, the subject matter and principles appealed to me. As a child I would go with my dad to his office to look at the projects and feel at home in the environment of a hands-on industry.

What are the qualities of an engineer in your role?

You need to understand the whole process when you're working on a platform. I'm involved in the maintenance of mechanical equipment, and all staff need to be dynamic, think quickly and identify solutions; communicate effectively and work extremely well as team members. The first principles are essential. We work up to 18 hours per shift, which demands massive commitment. Also, safety is paramount, so you must be focused at all times.

What are your thoughts about working abroad?

A lot of people view a secondment as a short-term assignment, whereas I see it as a lifestyle change. If I had the opportunity to move to Australia, I'm sure it would be a wholesale move, for the rest of my life. The prospect of working on 'greenfield' projects in Australia really excites me. The equipment, funding and expenditure are higher; and it's appealing to think of working on a relatively new platform at this stage in my career: the learning and the new developments are very attractive.

Will your training and experience serve you well abroad?

The primary resource in Australia is gas rather than oil production, and that's where my skills are. I feel there is a demand for engineers like me who have a background with such a strong international employer as Shell. I hope that I will be able to take up a position in Australia within this company at some point in the future, as I hope to remain with Shell for many years to come.

What does your professional registration with the Institution give you?

Becoming an Engineering Technician (EngTech), has been a very positive aspect of my career and development. I use the learning and support that membership of the Institution brings. My training and development with Shell, hand-in-hand with my academic progression and connection to the institution, are a valuable combination.

What's your perception of engineering within the UK?

Professional engineers in other countries, for example in Italy, are regarded as highly as doctors, for example. In the UK nowadays, the term 'engineer' is used very loosely, and has ceased to reflect the learning commitments, and the challenging nature of the industry. Oil and gas is, in my opinion, a well-paid industry, but there is a huge amount of sacrifice involved in working off-shore. I think employers and engineers acknowledge and value the achievements of Chartered Engineers but it is important for all engineering organisations to promote the qualities, achievements, and the commitment that engineers make, and to talk about the ways in which engineers help all aspects of society.

What does the future hold for you?

Working in Australia is my long-term goal. I've spent six years working on the platform, and now my manager and I are discussing where I'll head next. I may move into a technical role at Shell's base in Aberdeen in the summer. That will help develop my skills as well as connect with others: the perspective that I've gained on the platform will be really useful to share with those who have not yet had that hands-on experience.

“My training and development with Shell, hand in hand with my academic progression and connection to the institution, are a valuable combination.”



Conclusion

With engineering playing a key role in many of the countries in which we operate, we are well placed to understand that engineering is truly a global market. Obviously, levels of demand and the skills sought vary from country to country, but generally opportunity is plentiful for individuals looking to work in the UK or abroad.

And this opportunity is a good thing. Individuals can benefit both personally as well as professionally by working overseas, and UK firms can benefit from those relocating from abroad. However, the UK needs to be seen as a desirable place to work to encourage international engineers to relocate.

The on-going demand for engineers in the UK has been greatly discussed. But if this increasing demand is not met, the industry will be unable to provide the basic infrastructures we depend upon, as well as creating and selling the products required to drive the economy forward.

Currently, engineering in the UK is an attractive prospect to those from overseas, ensuring that UK projects have the engineers needed in the short-term. Initiatives by organisations such as IMECHE encourage the younger generation into a career in engineering, which will facilitate in the increasing long-term requirements within the sector.

But if the very engineers who work in this market today feel that their role and the value they add isn't recognised, then we run the risk of exacerbating our skills shortage with more engineers relocating overseas.

Recommendations

The report highlights a number of issues for the mechanical engineering industry in the UK, not least the willingness of professionals to relocate in order to better their career and create what they perceive to be a better life for themselves.

The willingness of individuals to relocate is largely driven by the demand for their services and the lack of emerging talent overseas. However, this demand is also a real issue in the UK. More must be done to introduce, foster and retain the very best talent within mechanical engineering and make it a desirable industry from a very young age. This represents both a threat but also an opportunity for the industry and the wider economy and there are four areas which we believe need to be addressed with some rigour. Fulfilling the workload that engineering currently faces will create a momentum of its own, and will ensure that engineering is seen as a desirable career which attracts the best talent to the industry.

Perception

More effort must be made to promote the profession as a lucrative and fulfilling career. There is excellent remuneration available throughout the industry, with recognition for a job well done and this goes hand-in-hand with the fulfilment that can come from delivering projects that are of genuine value to society. Organisations must make a concerted effort to promote their employee brand, the opportunities and career paths they have available.

Immigration

Restrictions are in place for good reason, but they have certainly impacted on the ability to attract the very best global talent to the UK, whilst some of our most talented individuals move abroad. The industry should call on the Government to look more closely at how it enforces immigration restrictions for professional, qualified engineers when it is impacting on the country's ability to deliver projects.

Higher education

There is still an issue with the lack of talent entering university to take engineering qualifications. The Government should be encouraged to consider offering subsidies to those who are considering taking an engineering degree and make learning some of the key skills far more obtainable. Similarly, organisations should take time to consider whether they are offering the level of support required to aspiring professionals as they make their way through university.

Promotion of success

Successful projects, with a high level of mechanical engineering requirement, are being delivered nationally but many slip under the radar and the intricacies of them remain far from the public eye. A more robust approach should be taken to promoting the high quality work delivered by the industry's talent through broadcast media, print or the internet.

Summary of findings

35% have been seconded to another country.

49% had been given the opportunity to work internationally.

The most sought after regions to work in were Western Europe (**81%**), North America (**78%**) and Australasia/Oceania (**73%**), with the most desired countries to live in were the United States and Australia.

84% of international respondents would consider the UK as a potential career destination.

30% cited experience of working in a different country as the main reason behind wanting to move internationally, followed by career development (**18%**) and better pay (**18%**).

Only **11%** of those surveyed had been unsuccessful in attempting to work abroad.

Whilst **69%** of UK respondents believe there are enough opportunities in the UK, only **17%** think enough is being done to recognise the work of professional engineers here.

53% of UK respondents would consider a move to another country even if pay and remuneration were not greater than in the UK.

About The Institution of Mechanical Engineers

The Institution of Mechanical Engineers, founded in 1847, has over 105,000 members worldwide.

It is a professional registration body and a learned society, providing conferences and seminars on industrial developments; educational fairs; networking opportunities; scholarships and grants; and supports engineers' progression from Affiliate and Associate students and apprentices, to Members and Fellows of the Institution.

Among its many professional and industry-linked initiatives, the Institution partners the UK's Bloodhound Supersonic Car project: to design, build and drive a car capable of 1000 miles per hour; and runs the highly successful annual international competition, Formula Student, which has played a substantial role in steering many university graduates into the motor sports industry. Regional committees host and support local engineering-based events, and a vast army of member volunteers, who are dedicated to inspiring school students and young people to engage with engineering, work hard to promote the achievements of engineers of the past and anticipate the developments of the future.

About Hays Engineering

As recruiting experts we make it our business to understand your world of work. That's because recruitment is our lifeblood and naturally this runs through everything we think, say and do.

Our consultants are dedicated to specific industry sectors and professions. They combine local knowledge with an unrivalled understanding of your particular sector to offer a truly expert and bespoke service.

We go beyond mere skills and experience and consider cultural fit, carrying out an in-depth assessment of each candidate.

Talk to any one of our specialists and you'll discover a firm belief that the right person in the right job can transform an organisation. In a world where engineers are hard to find, we provide access to a recruitment partner that knows where to find the experts you need when you need them.

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