

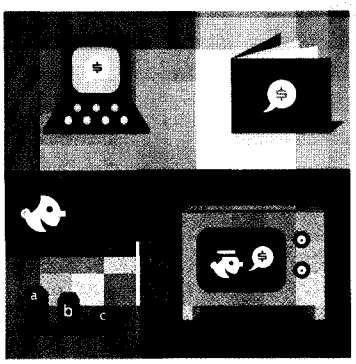
Netwatch By Jim Carroll

Your guide to business & accounting on the Internet

Have CA, will travel

The specialized nature of the chartered accountant's role has meant that we can be called upon to provide services in another country for a short period of time, either as consultants, practitioners or employees. And like other business professionals, CAs may also consider moving to another country to pursue their career aspirations.

Cross-border employment, however, is not a trivial matter. Traveling to another country, which once seemed very straightforward, has become more complex since September 11, as anyone who has recently been abroad knows all too well. That's particularly true when visiting our neighbours to the south — more than a few of us have faced the queries of US immigration agents, who want to know the details of our plans in the US and demand extensive paperwork to back up our claims.



Regardless of where we are going in the world, there's bound to be a unique work visa required or some other immigration hoop to jump through. The rule of thumb is, you'd better make sure you know what's involved long before you go. Fortunately, when it comes to visa, immigration and other country-specific issues, the Web is a godsend.

One of the most common cross-border situations we might find ourselves in is temporary or permanent employment in the US. There are a variety of visa categories your position might fall into, and it can take some time to get the proper paperwork together. To learn what you need, have a look at the Canada to US Business Immigration home page, which I consider to be one of the best websites related to US visa issues. Established by Buffalo, NY, lawyer and immigration specialist Joseph Grasmick, the site provides extremely detailed information on the US immigration process, as well as what's required to work there on a temporary basis.

There are many other sites that contain similar in-depth information, but be careful, since you can't be certain about the quality of material you may find. And as always, a website is no substitute for proper legal advice.

Another useful starting point is the government site of the country where you plan to work, which will usually contain specifics as to any visas required. Let's say you're going for an employment stint in Hungary: you'll find the Hungarian Embassy site has extensive information to help you on your way. Ditto for the British Immigration and Nationality Directorate.

Visas are but one aspect of working abroad — safety, crime and other living conditions are also of importance as you make your plans. No doubt there are many country and city guides you can find online that are similar to those tourist books you've been eyeing. You can also check out the country-by-country travel information made available by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which provides detailed, up-to-date information on some of the considerations you might face. Here, you'll find everything from crime statistics and health risks to economic and business challenges. Bon voyage!

Jim Carroll, FCA, is a well-known keynote speaker, author and columnist. He can be reached via e-mail at jcarroll@ jimcarroll.com or log on to his website at www.jimcarroll.com

CROSS-BORDER INFORMATION

Law office of Joseph Grasmick
www.grasmick.com

Embassy of Hungary
huembwas.org/InfWorkVisa.htm

British Immigration and Nationality Directorate
www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk

Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (travel reports)
www.voyage.gc.ca/destinations/menu_e.htm