

7

JPAC Hiring Tips

for Healthcare Companies
Entering the Market





Introduction

International pharmaceutical and healthcare companies looking to expand into the Japan and Asia Pacific market have a challenge ahead of them.

There is a uniquely challenging recruiting landscape in JPAC with a major supply and demand problem. There are very few candidates actively looking for work or responding to job openings. The top talent has a wide range of job opportunities. Many employees will stay with one local company for decades due to cultural customs.

In addition to this, international healthcare companies operating in JPAC have an extra set of requirements in an already tough job market. They require candidates with bilingual skills, cross-cultural understanding and high-level pharmaceutical, medical or healthcare industry experience. It can take many years to cultivate a solid

understanding of the local market and specific industry needs.

Many executives in the Japanese talent pool envision their business life to be inspired by and infused with the spirit of Bushidō. Bushidō refers to a set of ethical principles that originated in Japan's Edo period and was followed by the samurai warrior class. The word "Bushidō" means "way of the warrior," and it emphasizes loyalty, honor, self-discipline, and ethical behavior. Candidates are looking for work places that align with these values and want to feel proud of their company.

To attract and retain the right talent, healthcare companies operating in JPAC will need to tailor their recruitment process to the nuances of the culture and industry. We've compiled our seven top tips for cracking the code on recruiting in Japan and Asia Pacific.

1

Write compelling job descriptions

It's been said that the first ever job description given to a recruiter was created by IBM in 1949 and has been used as a template for most job descriptions since then.

You'd think many decades later that job descriptions would have evolved and yet too often they are generic and filled with jargon. Many companies use templates in their recruitment process and don't prioritise regularly reviewing and updating their approach.

This can lead to job descriptions that have meaningless statements like 'think outside the box' and a list of must-have qualifications and job experience. We all know these typical 'must-haves' don't always indicate future performance. Additionally, this approach can limit the pool of candidates and overlook individuals who may be able to perform the job effectively despite not having the exact experience or qualifications listed in the job description.

What does the candidate need to achieve?

Rather than overly focusing on a list of qualifications and past experience, to attract and select top talent job descriptions should center on what the candidate needs to achieve in the role. This can be done by explaining measurable objectives that reflect the specific needs of the role and the organization.

One of the reasons companies select the wrong candidate is because they didn't consider or articulate what the candidate needs to achieve in the first 6 to 12 months. When picturing what you hope and expect from your candidate within the first 12 months, you will be able to assess their potential during the application phase.

This approach switches the priorities around. Rather than spending the majority of a job description outlining what a candidate must have achieved in the past, it is instead important to focus on the future by defining measurable, achievable, quantifiable and time-bound objectives. This should also transfer into the type of questions asked during the interview process.



Key points:

- Avoid generic job description templates
- Stop using meaningless jargon
- Look beyond a list of qualifications and experience
- Outline what the candidate needs to achieve in the role

Job descriptions in JPAC

Job descriptions are particularly important in a scarce job market like JPAC. You may only have a handful of qualified candidates for any given position, but the pool of options may widen if you aren't overly focused on a specific set of qualifications.'

It's also important to consider the cultural and linguistic nuances of advertising a position in Japan and Asia Pacific. Here are some specific pointers for writing a job description in JPAC:

- **Clear formal language:** JPAC job seekers might be put off by colloquialisms or slang.
- **Cultural awareness:** Teamwork and group harmony is important in Japanese culture. Explain how the position fits into the overall team dynamic and how the candidate can contribute to the success of the team.
- **Company culture:** Including details about company values, mission and culture can help attract job seekers with the same values.
- **Appropriate job titles:** In Japan, job titles are an important way to communicate the seniority of a position within a company.
- **Salary information:** Many candidates in JPAC would expect the job description to be upfront about salary and can help attract the right applicants.

Showing cultural awareness will go a long way in attracting high quality candidates, especially when competing against legacy companies.

Comparing Job Descriptions for a Managing Director of Strategy

Traditional job description	Results driven job description
Has experience leading business segments	Analyze commercial and business development functions and write a 3 year plan and present to the executive.
Lead entire operation including strategy planning, organizational structuring and operations.	Lead a team of 4 members. Analyze the team members' strengths and weaknesses and write an 18 month organizational development plan.
Specialize in strategic planning	Demonstrated experience in past positions where they have written and executed a strategic business plan and can quantify performance.
Has experience in supporting your team's projects	Is able to diagnose business problems and prescribe strategies. Work cross functional with business leaders to ensure strategic plans are aligned.
Manage and lead business proposals	Research customer's needs, creating a comprehensive solution to meet those needs. Developing a detailed plan to execute the solution leading to increased opportunities.

2

Get the competitive edge with market mapping

Market mapping is the process of researching and analyzing the labor market to gain a deep understanding of the talent landscape in a specific industry, location, or job function. This process is essential for helping recruiters identify and target top talent, gain competitive intelligence, and achieve better recruitment outcomes.

By proactively identifying and reaching out to passive candidates, recruiters can access a broader pool of talent. In a tight labor market like Japan, it can make the difference to the caliber of candidates that you are hiring.

Seek out top talent

In Japan's fiercely competitive job market, identifying top talent is a significant challenge for recruiters. The traditional approach, posting job openings and waiting for candidates to apply, is not always effective. With market mapping, recruiters can identify and reach out to passive candidates—those who are not actively looking for jobs but could be interested in new opportunities.

By proactively identifying and reaching out to passive candidates, recruiters can access a wider network and identify the best fit for the position.

Gain competitive intelligence

What is the market saying about your firm in Japan? How is it perceived in the JPAC market? Market mapping in Japan and Asia Pacific is key to having a winning recruiting strategy.

It provides recruiters with a comprehensive understanding of their industry, including who the top players are, who their competitors are, and how their competitors are attracting talent. This information can help recruiters develop targeted strategies that give them a competitive advantage. By understanding the talent landscape and their competitors' recruiting tactics, recruiters can position themselves (and clients) as employers of choice and attract top talent to their organizations.

Optimize recruiting budgets

Recruiting in Japan can be expensive. Market mapping can help recruiters optimize their recruiting budgets by providing insights into where the best candidates are located. LinkedIn is not a useful platform in Japan. The candidates that apply are often not the "A" candidates. This information helps firms target their recruiting efforts more effectively and efficiently by reducing the time and resources spent on ineffective recruiting methods.

Improve retention rates

Market mapping can help firms improve retention rates by identifying candidates who are more likely to stay with the organization in the long term. By analyzing data on past hires, companies can identify common characteristics of employees who have been successful and have stayed with the organization. This information can be used to develop more effective job descriptions, screening criteria, and interviewing techniques that focus on identifying candidates who fit the organization's culture and values.



Identify skills gaps

Market mapping helps organizations identify skills gaps and plan for future talent needs. By analyzing the current talent landscape, recruiters can identify trends in high-demand skills and experience, and those that are in short supply. This information can help organizations plan for future talent needs and develop strategies for developing their current employees' skills to fill these gaps.

In conclusion, market mapping is a critical process that provides recruiters with a deep understanding of the talent landscape in their industry. By proactively identifying and reaching out to top talent, gaining competitive intelligence, optimizing recruiting budgets, improving retention rates, and identifying skill gaps, recruiters can develop more effective recruiting strategies that lead to better recruitment outcomes.

As the job market continues to evolve, market mapping will become an even more valuable tool for recruiters to ensure that their organizations can access the talent they need to achieve their business objectives.

3

Communicate a clear career path

Candidates want to know that they have a future with your organization and that their career will progress over time. By clearly communicating a career path, the company can attract top talent and retain them for the long term. Great candidates have a five-year horizon and expect to excel.

In JPAC's competitive job market, job candidates are looking for more than just a salary and benefits. They want to know that they have a compelling future with the company.

Career path can't be an afterthought

From the job application to the interview process, opportunities for career progression need to be explained clearly upfront. The candidates need to know that their career trajectory is not an afterthought but a well-considered plan. Explain what is available to them and how you see their role growing or advancing over the next five years. Paint an exciting and realistic future for them that will attract them to join your organization. This can really set you apart from other offers they might receive.

What is the dream at the end of the rainbow? How will the position change others' lives, internally or externally? Why should they not only join your company, but stay?

Employees are more likely to join and stay at a company that presents clear opportunities for advancement and growth. They will report higher rates of job satisfaction, better overall performance, and turnover will be reduced.

Motivate and engage current employees

A long-term outlook goes beyond just recruitment. You need to create win-win opportunities for the talent already in your organization. When employees know what their career path looks like and what they need to do to progress, they are more motivated and engaged in their work. A clear career path gives employees a sense of purpose and direction, and helps them to see how their work fits into the bigger picture.

Recently we saw a highly-performing Business Unit Head offered a smaller Pricing Role after her team merged. Refusing the demotion, she took a call from a headhunter and was quickly snapped up by a new company. Immediately realizing the mistake, they tried to win her back with a Head of Communications role, but it was too late. You need to be strategic and consider the career paths of your best talent, or you risk losing them to a company that does.

Create a culture of career development

Promoting the importance of career growth and development has to go beyond the interview process. A candidate will soon be able to tell whether or not you were genuine about helping them grow and if it is truly a part of your organization's culture. Integrating career development across your company will not only lead to attracting top talent, but also an increase in employee engagement, retention, and productivity.



There are a number of ways this culture can be cultivated, here are some:

- **Set career objectives from the outset:** As was stated earlier, this needs to be part of the communication and process from the very beginning. Map out what the next 12 months will look like. Explain where they could be within five years.
- **Help employees develop new skills:** This could include training programs, mentoring, coaching, cross-functional projects, job shadowing and leadership development. Identify how individual employees need to develop in order to meet their career goals and objectives and align growth opportunities accordingly.
- **Implement regular performance evaluations:** Keep employees informed on how they are progressing and what they need to do to take the next step. By committing to regular evaluations you are also communicating to them how dedicated you are to their advancement.
- **Salary information:** Many candidates in JPAC would expect the job description to be upfront about salary and can help attract the right applicants.

It's vital in the competitive JPAC job market that you effectively show candidates that you will offer them career progression. This will set you apart from the competition and allow you to keep the best talent for the long haul.

4

Establish local connections

International pharmaceutical and healthcare companies in Japan need to work hard to get connected. Japan has a unique business culture, and building relationships and trust is important in this market. The business culture across JPAC emphasizes long-term relationships which can make it hard for international companies to attract talent and establish business connections.



Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)

There is also a different set of regulations in this industry that you may not be used to, which is another reason to work hard at establishing local connections. For example, the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) provides foreign investors with abundant information on all aspects of doing business in Japan and also offers expert consultation services and even free temporary office space throughout the country.

JETRO can give specific insights into the market such as “the pharmacy dispensing costs account for 7.6 trillion JPY of the steadily increasing national healthcare costs due to the aging of the population. In response to this, the government is working to encourage NHI drug price reductions and curb rising drug costs. At present, NHI price revisions are carried out every two years, but in his speech on October 26, 2020, Prime Minister Suga emphasized that he plans to revise NHI prices every year. Although the domestic pharmaceutical market has been shrinking due to price reductions resulting from these NHI drug price revisions, sales of new drugs, such as anti-cancer drugs, have been expanding against the backdrop of the increasing number of cancer patients due to the aging of the population”

Other local partners

Clinical research organizations such as CMIC, Labcorp and PRA are all partnering solutions. If your company wishes to conduct clinical studies in Japan, they can serve as the required In-Country Clinical Caretaker (ICCC) and commercialize a new product, and as the Marketing Authorization Holder (MAH) or connect you with a strategic licensing partner

5

Choose the right recruiting partner

In such a difficult job market, most international healthcare companies entering JPAC will look to a recruiting partner to help find exceptional candidates for new positions. This allows organizations to access a larger pool of talent, leverage local industry knowledge and focus time on other business activities.

Your recruiting partner should match your company's culture, passion and values. They must have a deep understanding of the JPAC talent market and the nuances of the pharmaceutical and healthcare industry. It's important they also have access to a wide network of qualified candidates who may not be actively seeking a new job but would be open to a new role if presented with an exciting opportunity.

International companies might notice that the fees are higher in Japan than in other markets. Often, there is little difference between the fees of a local company and a retained global firm. The limited supply means that even the global firms are acting as contingency firms.

In Europe and America, recruiting companies focus on winning business from clients. In Japan, the focus is on meeting, interviewing, and gaining the trust of candidates. As such, you need a firm with a sound market knowledge, and the ability to map and understand the market with vigor, speed and professionalism.

Your recruiting partner is your voice in the market

In a limited pool of candidates you may only get one shot at the best and brightest in the market. You put a lot of trust in a recruiting partner to reach out to potential talent and encourage them to apply or accept. This is why choosing a firm that understands the cultural differences between West and East is important, to ensure that the job application process is handled in a culturally appropriate way while still understanding the unique hiring needs of an international company.

Hope is not a strategy

Struggling to source the right talent can be a massive hindrance to a company's growth and success. Too often we have encountered executives in the Japanese healthcare industry who have a major recruitment problem and they lack a consistent plan or strategy for finding the solution. After all, hope is not a strategy.



At Morunda, we once met with a president of a company who had been trying to hire a Regulatory Affairs Director for some time with no luck. It was clear that their approach had been little more than shots in the dark.

We outlined 9 steps to help them find their star:

- 1 Meet with key stakeholders to understand what the position requires over the next 12–24 months. What is the person going to have to achieve in the short term?
- 2 With those key stakeholders, create a compelling message for candidates that highlights the company's strengths, both worldwide and in Japan. Our experience shows that candidates are interested in reporting line, management responsibilities, the company's pipeline and career growth. We will search for aspects of the business in Japan that are remarkable, unique and attractive.
- 3 Determine the best people to interview candidates during the first meeting. We want to present the company to the candidates in the best possible light. First impressions count; we want to demonstrate the position's importance to the candidates.
- 4 Organize a 10–15 day window to conduct the meetings. We've seen many great candidates lost because of a slow and non-focused interview process. It is important that everyone who has "buy in" to make the hiring decision be on the same page. Our motto here is "strike while the iron is hot."
- 5 Search the market for the best possible candidates and present to the company a target list and, finally, a short list of candidates. Morunda will meet and thoroughly screen the candidates before they meet with the company.
- 6 All the candidates will receive a consistent, targeted message. We will keep the position confidential until a candidate is interested in the opportunity. We want a limited pool of candidates to get the right message!
- 7 Morunda will guide the candidates through the process, troubleshooting and negotiating the conditions of the offer.
- 8 Once we have selected a candidate, we will present an on-boarding strategy.
- 9 Upon acceptance of the offer, work with the candidate to ensure a smooth transition. We will follow up continually with the candidate to ensure that he or she has the support they need to succeed.



Get help securing stand-out talent,
book a discovery call with Morunda today.

6

Top talent follows top talent

What do top executives in Japan's pharmaceutical industry and the world's leading sports coaches have in common? They are constantly seeking talent and searching for the best available team. Pete Carroll, head coach of the University of Southern California Trojans football team, once stated, "Recruiting is the lifeblood of any program, so you can't put anything above that."

During an industry event, a US company executive conveyed to us their concern regarding a shortage of talent in their organization. They asked to be notified of any excellent candidates in the market, regardless of their function, as they could create a position for them if they were the right fit. We were reminded of this quote:

"If I were running a company today, I would have one priority above all others: to acquire as many of the best people as I could. I'd put off everything else to fill my bus."

- Jim Collins, Good to Great

In 2007, The Economist magazine surveyed 600 multinational company CEOs with businesses in Asia, revealing that a shortage of qualified staff was the biggest concern for companies in China and Japan. At Morunda, our data reinforces these findings. We surveyed US pharmaceutical companies and found that the average time to complete a search at all levels was 92 days, with candidates starting 30 to 60 days after receiving the offer letter. However, director-level positions took an average of 201 days to fill.

A European biotech company HR director shared that they had met with over 30 candidates for a specific position and had yet to extend an offer after three years. Smart companies are always in recruiting mode, while others try to find creative ways to fill their open positions.

Building from the top down

One recruitment strategy is to build from the top down. Focusing energy, time and money on securing the right senior candidates serves a function now, but also that executive hopefully has the charisma and drive to build or attract a team full of younger talent. Top talent will follow top talent.

When an organization has a reputation for hiring and retaining the best employees, it becomes a desirable place to work. Talented individuals want to work alongside other talented individuals, learn from them, and contribute to a high-performing team.

When top talent is present, it creates a positive and motivating work environment. Top performers tend to have a strong work ethic, a desire for excellence, and a drive to succeed. These qualities can be contagious and inspire others in the organization to strive for the same level of success.



Be careful who you hire

Just as top talent attracts top talent, the opposite is true. A company that has a reputation for an underperforming workforce can deter great candidates and attract lower quality applicants. This demonstrates the importance of being very discerning in the hiring choices that a company makes.

While you need to act quickly if you're interested in a candidate, it's also important to not just hire someone for the sake of it. It is better to wait than make the wrong decision. It's also important to invest in your hiring process, prioritize retaining top performers, and create a positive work culture that fosters growth, learning, and development.

The ripple effect

Another reason to focus on hiring stand out executives is that these types of talent bring with them their own networks, which can include other top performers in their industry. When talented employees are satisfied with their work environment, they are more likely to refer their peers to open positions within the company. This not only saves the company time and money on recruiting efforts but also increases the chances of finding the right fit for the job.





7

Make a job offer that will get accepted

If you have found the right talent the last thing you want to do is fall over at the last hurdle! Every day, recruiters around JPAC speak to candidates to pitch positions and close deals, and sometimes offers are rejected. No matter the market, one thing that is consistent is that the best candidates, the ones the client wants, are often not actively looking to change jobs.

The problem of loss aversion

Many candidates are what Nobel Prize-winning author Daniel Kahneman (Thinking, Fast and Slow, 2013) describes as “loss averse”. Numerous studies have suggested that losing something is twice as strong psychologically as the thought of gaining something. The phenomenon of risk aversion leads candidates to evaluate outcomes comprising similar gains and losses because people prefer avoiding losses to making gains. The pain of loss is so great that it can outweigh the gains.

Loss aversion implies that one who loses \$50 will lose more joy than the pleasure another person will gain from acquiring \$50. Therefore, some candidates may see a 10% increase in salary as not sufficient to compensate for the fear of losing the job they are currently in.

The theory of loss aversion can also help explain the endowment effect that many candidates experience. The endowment effect describes how people place a far higher value on what they have in their hands than on an identical good that they do not own.

It’s true that people make decisions based on emotion that they justify with logic at a later date. The takeaway here for recruiters, line managers, and HR personnel is that the offer we present can easily be seen differently from another person’s point of view. What candidates are losing is often at the top of their mind, and they may view their own position as more attractive than how others see it.

How can we counter these psychological forces?

- 1** Have a compelling story: excite, motivate, and listen. Don't assume your opportunity is better than the one they are currently working on, even if everyone thinks it is. Sometimes facts don't matter. What matters is how the candidate views the world. Put yourself in their shoes. What will they lose?
- 2** Acknowledge and empathize about the stress of changing jobs. Have candidates talk about their fears and what is great about their company. Don't be afraid to get the positives out. Don't assume they are halfway out the door.
- 3** Get the interview process moving quickly. In recruiting, there is a bell curve; candidates need to have been offered and closed 75% to the top of the curve before loss aversion kicks in, and they slide down slowly toward rejecting the offer from the new company.
- 4** Don't assume the deal is done. Meet with the candidate to discuss the offer, answer questions, and address concerns.
- 5** Remember, the offer is only as strong as how it's perceived. No offer is neither good nor bad, but perception makes it so.

Ultimately, if you have followed each of the earlier tips, your chances of an offer being accepted will be greatly improved. By undertaking market mapping you will be equipped to offer a competitive salary. Clearly conveying a career path will contribute to your compelling story. With the right recruiting partner, you'll receive expert and local guidance through the offer process.

The hope is you can present an opportunity that is considered by the candidate as *ichi-go ichi-e* (一期一会, "one time, one meeting"), a Japanese term, which can mean "for this time only," "never again," or "one chance in a lifetime."



A Market Entry Case Study

After experiencing tremendous success in Asia Pacific, an Australian data analytics company was looking to expand its business into Japan. The demand was there from clients, but there was a problem. Where would they find a Country Manager to run their Japanese operations?

With limited local connections, they met several candidates. None of them lived up to the company's expectations. Here is what they were looking for:

- A standout candidate (a star!)
- Someone who could take a lead on business development and open doors
- Fluent in English
- Good understanding of their technology

Despite their efforts and working with a recruitment agency, after three months of searching they were no closer to finding their ideal candidate. To keep the business operations in Japan running, they were flying an account executive back and forth from Sydney and knew it wasn't a sustainable option.

Finding the superstar

Client demand was there, and yet without the right leader this company was not going to get off the ground. They turned to Morunda in desperation.

We were shocked at the lack of progress, and knew they would never find the right person with their current approach. No one they had interviewed was even close to being a good fit. Knowing that the Australian CEO was flying into Japan in two months, we set that as our deadline and got to work.



Within 2 months they had their superstar leader. Today business is booming and they have continued to hire more staff. This is what they had to say about working with Morunda:

"I feel that you and the team have done a great job of refining your knowledge of the profile of the candidate we are after. And with this in mind, I think it would be safe to assume I will want to meet with anyone you are currently representing. Without exception, all of the candidates you have represented have been very strong. We are an organisation with extremely high expectations, and while some candidates may not quite meet the specific competencies we are looking for, I genuinely feel that all of them have been worth meeting – regardless of whether they have progressed or not."

Crack the Code for Entering the JPAC Market

The job market in Japan and Asia Pacific is fiercely competitive. International pharmaceutical and healthcare companies need top talent to grow their business, and yet finding high quality candidates is tough.

At Morunda, we have access to every available candidate in the market.

We leverage our combined 60 years experience being based in Japan to give you confidence in hiring. We headhunt! One position may take hundreds of emails and hundreds of calls. We do all the heavy lifting so you don't have to.

When you recruit with Morunda you get:



Exclusive candidates

We have the largest database of healthcare workers in Japan and give you access to a unique and exceptional talent pool of not just job-hunters but people already in the market.



4 qualified candidates in 4 weeks

We make an average of 500 outbound calls per week on your behalf and qualify candidates before providing you with excellent options. On average, one in three of our candidates is female.



From market entry to growth

We have cracked the code for hiring in Japan and Asia and specialize in market entries. From clinical trial to launch we have the right candidates to ensure your success.




Book a Discovery Session and make the best hiring decisions for your organization.

[BOOK A DISCOVERY SESSION](#)


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When you schedule an obligation-free call with us, we take the time to understand your company and position requirements and begin to share our extensive local and industry knowledge.

Gather insight. Gain options. Get top talent.

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