

A flying start

An employee's story – Thomas Chae,
Systems Team Leader, Martin Aircraft Company

Thomas Chae started working for Martin Jetpack in May 2015.

"My academic qualifications are a bachelor's and master's degree in control and instrumentation engineering. Before I came to New Zealand I worked in some interesting industries using my electronics hardware, software and systems engineering background for aerospace, automotive and military applications. My main role was contributing to mission & safety critical systems."

Thomas' story is a very good example of how he found employment by tapping into the employment services and networks available to skilled migrant job seekers.

Shortly after arriving in Auckland in March 2015, Thomas attended the Special Interest Group of Professional Engineers (SIGIE) seminar. He found out about the New Kiwis service which was being presented by Auckland Chamber of Commerce at the same event on the day.

Sometimes it really is a case of a flying start. For Thomas, fortune was looking his way. At the seminar, and he discovered that coincidentally, a registered New Kiwis recruiter had just posted a 'Mechanical Engineering/Design' role on the New Kiwis website recently. It was one of the many New Kiwis vacancies being profiled during the Chamber presentation!

Of course Thomas was very interested. He immediately registered with New Kiwis (the website), discussed his application with the New Kiwis facilitators, and applied for the role.

"I was advised to tailor my CV and to speak directly with the contact at the designated recruiting agency before sending my CV. It was very humble and simple advice, but it turned out to be very crucial advice and a necessary step in the Kiwi job market. I very much appreciate that."

The New Kiwis coaching process is very thorough. Thomas says he learned key critical differences around approaching job hunting in New Zealand. These include how to present his overseas qualification and past experience in context to NZ employers in relation to the role he was applying for, tailoring his cover letter and CV to each job application and how to manage sensitive questions which might arise during an interview. For Thomas, it's about being focussed and dedicated in wanting to successfully establish a new life in New Zealand and that the initial challenges can be overcome.

Thomas was shortlisted and flew down to Christchurch. "My interview was successful. I'm very lucky and privileged to get an offer from this industry. Thank you."

Thomas then quickly caught another plane, this time home to Korea to pack-up and settle personal matters before returning to Christchurch in early May 2015 to begin his new career.

"I wanted to live in two kinds of environments – an English speaking environment and one that has a culture of respect, love and forgiveness. I was sure there were a few countries where I could find this kind of lifestyle but my instinct was to choose New Zealand," explains Thomas.

"My job search experience has mostly been through SEEK and New Kiwis," he adds. "As a part of the immigration process, I thoroughly read and studied all the websites recommended by Immigration New Zealand, which provided very comprehensive information on living costs, housing, social systems, schools, health, jobs and obviously some very informative job search websites including New Kiwis."

Thomas shares four valuable insights into job hunting in the New Zealand market.

1. Job seekers need to be prepared that whatever qualifications, experiences and even reputations they have gained before coming to New Zealand they will need to start over.
2. People may say there is a standard 'Kiwi style' cover letter and CV, but it is best to take the advice of the job recruiting agency you are working with.
3. Kiwi employers can be concerned about working successfully with migrants because so much is unfamiliar. Migrants may have to adjust to accepting a lower salary, or cope with a new language. As a migrant job seeker, there is also a responsibility to mitigate Kiwi employers' concerns by showing a can-do attitude and commitment to making New Zealand home, not just as a place for one-time visitors.
4. The New Zealand standard salary band is based on experience and position or role.

And as Thomas says, "I'd like us (migrants), to be clearly aware of what we really want and what we want to become. Paying attention to the voice coming from our heart gets us through whatever lies before and behind us. It's not a matter of chance; it's our choice to be even better today."

Interview with Thomas Chae conducted by Taryn Ellis, Auckland Chamber of Commerce, in June 2015.



NEW KIWIS
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The New Kiwis website and service is a nationwide employment initiative designed to connect new and returning Kiwis with employers via the Chamber of Commerce brand and networks. The website can be used autonomously or additional support and services for both job seekers and employers can be accessed by calling **0800 709 907** or email newkiwis@chamber.co.nz.

New Kiwis initiative is a partnership between Immigration New Zealand and the Auckland Chamber of Commerce.