Bringing professionals from abroad



Solange Monteiro

When it set up shop in six Latin American countries, NEC, the Japanese information technology and communication company, had a strategy. Each subsidiary specializes in one segment so that it can support the others when necessary. "When there's a problem, we send an SOS to another country asking for a technician with specific training," says Heriberto Yamamuro, NEC president in Brazil.

Lately, with the marked growth of the Brazilian subsidiary, there have been more specialists coming here than Brazilians heading elsewhere on the continent because of the difficulty of finding qualified professionals here. Yamamuro's company, which has 750 employees, currently has 20 foreign nationals with temporary visas providing technical services. "To grow 30%, as we expect this year given the need for public and private infrastructure for the World Cup and the Olympics, we need 50% more staff," Yamamuro says.

NEC is not the only company that needs agility to respond to rising demand. Some are bringing home Brazilians who have gone abroad to enhance their careers. According to the General Coordination of Immigration of the Ministry of Labor and Employment, in the first half of 2011, compared to the same period in 2010, Brazil recorded an increase of 35% in visas of up to 90 days for technical service providers and specialists and 18% in visas for employment of foreigners. For administrators, directors, and other executives with management responsibilities, visas increased 7%. Labor Minister Carlos Lupi pointed out that attracting these executives is a sign of foreign capital entering the country, but added that foreign labor still represents "a small share of the working population" and that employment generally has risen.

Yamamuro only comments that "In the last decade we have seen many Brazilians migrating abroad, and we still graduate few engineers and technicians." But "the Rousseff

administration has shown that it wants to prioritize science and technology."

Why Return? For Brazilians who are returning, economic growth and favorable exchange rates, reflecting opportunities and higher wages in general, are auspicious — and not just for executives. Since the 2008 global economic crisis, Governador Valadares in Minas Gerais state has seen the return of many citizens who had tried their luck in the U.S. AeC, an R$274 million company that offers integrated contact center, consulting and project management, and software licensing, plans to open a call center in the city in September that will employ 900. "This new operation is aimed at serving national clients, but there is the possibility that it may become our first attempt to structure a bilingual operation," says Alexandre Moreira, AeC president. He explained that the company chose Governador Valadares because of existing infrastructure for its operations and a young population with high school diplomas and advanced knowledge of English.

The city's inhabitants have been immigrating to the United States since 1960. According to Sueli Siqueira, the Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Regional Development at the University Vale do Rio Doce, 51% of city households have at least one migratory experience. The city Development Office said, however, that it is difficult to give numbers on how many people have returned because most were undocumented in the U.S. and thus prefer anonymity.



Companies are bringing in more foreign workers and specialists.

(Working permits for foreign workers and professionals)

	2008	2009	2010	1st half 2010	1st half 2011
Total	43,993	42,914	56,006	22,188	26,454
Temporary workers	41,271	40,460	53,441	20,760	24,684
Permanent workers	2,722	2,454	2,565	1,428	1,861
Investors	1,357	921	848	431	434
CEOs, directors, managers	957	933	1,218	711	762
Technical assistance for 90 days	6,293	5,806	8,028	3,724	5,026
Professionals and experts	2,301	2,460	3,521	1,714	2,024

Source: General Coordination of Immigration of the Ministry of Labor and Employment.