

Some General Considerations to Young While Expatriating¹

QUELQUES CONSIDÉRATIONS GÉNÉRALES POUR LES JEUNES LORS DE L'EXPATRIATION

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Abstract: When is an expatriate assignment most beneficial to your career? This depends very much on your situation – there is no “one-size-fits-all” answer to this question. This article attempts to describe them. First, it analyses the situation of expatriating, explains the benefits and downsides of expatriating for the young. Illustrate personal factors in expatriate and put forwards the suggestions in the end.

Key words: globalization; expatriate; young; suggestion

Résumé: Quand une affectation des expatriés peut bénéficier le plus à votre carrière? Cela dépend, dans une grande mesure, de votre situation - il n'y a pas de réponse de “taille unique pour tous” à cette question. Cet article tente de les décrire. Premièrement, il analyse la situation de l'expatriation et explique les avantages et les inconvénients de l'expatriation pour les jeunes. Ensuite, il illustre les facteurs personnels dans l'expatriation et propose des suggestions à la fin.

Mots-Clés: globalisation; expatriés; jeunes; suggestion

1. GLOBALIZATION TREND DOUBLES NUMBER OF EXPATRIATES

The last three years has seen the number of employees on international assignments double as part of a continuing trend toward globalization, according to a survey. Nearly 250 multinational companies representing more than 94,000 expatriates (compared to 50,000 in 2005/2006) were surveyed by Mercer for its 2008/2009 Benefits Survey for Expatriates and Globally Mobile Employees. The report found that 47% of respondents said they had increased the deployment of traditional expatriates (employees on one- to five-year assignments) and 38% reported an increase in global nomads (employees who continuously move from country to country on multiple assignments).

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Managing the expatriate's adjustment process is a primary focus of GHRM for the multinational organization. The difficulty of this task has increased in recent years, for several reasons. It is obvious that expatriates will play crucial roles in many of the world's largest international employers. It is, in fact, estimated that approximately 80 percent of all middle-to large-size companies use expatriates. Despite the importance of expatriate managers in international business, many companies are apparently not yet effectively selecting and preparing their employees for overseas assignments. Estimates of the failure rates for expatriate managers range anywhere from a low of 40 percent in Europe and Asia to as high as 70 percent for assignments in their world countries. Interestingly, however, a study of Fortune 500 international HR managers indicated that slightly more than one-third of their companies provided systematic cross-cultural orientation training for expatriates.

2. BENEFITS AND DOWNSIDES TO YOUNG WHILE EXPATRIATING

2.1 Benefits to Young while Expatriating

Expatriate assignments offer many benefits to young professionals while they are overseas:

It is quite common for expatriates in their late 20's / early 30's to manage operations that would typically be assigned to someone 10 to 20 years older in their home country. The ability to make more and more important decisions: Quite often, the distance and time difference are such that it is very difficult for people at head office to be involved in decisions to be made in subsidiaries, even when they want to.

A higher after-tax income and benefits that enable them to have a lifestyle they could not afford in their home country.

On average, people who are just starting their careers find expatriate assignments more rewarding and more satisfying while they are overseas than people who are well into their careers. Compared with local candidates, expatriates have some built-in advantages (Their ability to "think internationally" and their demonstrated adaptability to new situations) and one built-in disadvantage (their lack of visibility and exposure to head office management). In many organizations, the ability to "think internationally" and to work effectively with people in other geographies becomes a major positive, differentiating factor between two candidates only in senior positions; for senior positions, expatriate assignments is therefore often a major plus.

Expatriates have better chances to find positions that make use of the skills. They have acquired overseas when they are within reach of senior positions. From this perspective, expatriate assignments are more beneficial to mature professionals than to junior professionals. Mature expatriates who spend a few years managing significant operations overseas are in a good position to take upon their return, either important line positions or corporate positions that require extensive collaboration with people in all subsidiaries.

2.2 Downsides to Young while Expatriating

Some find that the organization has not planned for their return and that they do not have any position to take while others end up in positions that do not require international experience. As a result, many junior expatriates end up leaving their organization shortly after their return, often to find a position in another organization that will send them overseas. In many cases, their new foreign assignment is in a country where they were posted before, since such a position makes maximum use of their experience. The longer expatriates stay overseas, the harder it is for them to be remembered at head office. The people who sent them overseas and had an interest in their career may have moved into other areas of the organization, changed company or retired.

The longer expatriates stay overseas, the harder it is for them and their families to readapt to life in

their home country. A good rule of thumb is that, after five years of expatriation, major repatriation difficulties can be expected, both from a professional and from a personal point of view.

3. PERSONAL FACTORS IN EXPATRIATE MANAGER'S SUCCESS

3.1 Culture

When an organization structures its HRM policies for international operations, it should consider cultural differences throughout the concept for "fit". For an organization to be successful in the international marketplace, it must be concerned with this fit from both an internal and an external perspective. Internal fit is concern with making sure that HRM policies facilitate the work values and motivations of employee. Policies must be structured in ways that allow headquarters and foreign subsidiaries to interact without sacrificing efficiency. External fit, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which HRM matches the context in which the organization is operating. HRM is critical to international operations because of its effects on cross-cultural interaction. To be effective, the organization must understand the cultural and socioeconomic environments of the foreign subsidiary. A person who does not adapt well to change is more likely to have difficulty adjusting to work and living in another culture. Different cultures have different core beliefs and national traits. And this effects cross-cultural communication and international business across the board through different: attitudes, reactions, expectations.

3.2 Language

Language can be another barrier to cultural understanding. Even when people use the same language, misunderstanding and misinterpretations occur. The same words and symbols have different meaning to individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Persons with the knowledge and skills required for successful job performance will have less stress on the job and greater levels of job security than will others who do not.

3.3 Interaction

Interactions with people on and off the job are likely to be significant factors that influence whether an expatriate position is successful. Managers with previous experience in another country are likely to better know what to expect and both their positive attitude and previous professional and personal experiences will be helpful to them.

3.4 Family member

The interest that family members have in relocating and their general support of and input into the decision to accept the international assignment is very significant concerns that will dramatically affect the success of the international assignment.

Expectations about an international assignment must be reasonable. Effective transitional training is necessary. Tactic can help to assure that a candidate for a position in another country realizes what is and what is not likely to happen.

4. A FEW SUGGESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS FACING EXPATRIATE

4.1 Keep in Mind 80/10/10 Rule of Career Management

While you are overseas, keep in mind the 80/10/10 rule of career management: you need to spend 80% of your working time doing your job and making sure you are doing it well. You cannot go too far if you are not taking good care of your current responsibilities. You need to spend 10% of your working time actually networking, telling people how well you have done your job. This can be done in the form of presentations within the organization or at technical / professional conferences. You need to spend 10% of your working time learning how to do your current job better and preparing for your next job. This can be done in the form of continuing education, internal courses, conference attendance, etc

4.2 Understand Culture Associated with Your Host Country

In today's global industry, it is necessary for people to have a cross-cultural awareness and an understanding of ethnic identity. Cultural barriers in workplaces do exist, therefore it is important to understand ethnic diversity, minorities, and how to train ethnic groups in order to understand the various cultural aspects in their workplace.

Become aware of verbal and nonverbal styles and conventions. Recognize that gestures like raising an eyebrow, nodding, crossing your arms, pointing or leaning forward send a message, but its meaning may vary in the host country. For instance, a smile and a nod in Japan can be a polite refusal. Moving your head from side to side means "yes," not "no," in south India. Pointing is impolite in Indonesia.

Properly understanding the social customs and behavior of the host country will help you to interact successfully with your hosts. Key areas include learning how to make introductions and greetings properly. Understanding food habits, mores about drinking and smoking, conversation topics, relations between the sexes and gift-giving is also important. The more you know, the more prepared you will be. Being prepared will pay big dividends in your relationships with persons in your host country.

4.3 Make Sure your Family Members can Further His or Her Career While Overseas

He or she may not be able to work because of visa limitations; however, he or she may study or volunteer in organizations that will benefit his or her career in the future. Think of this as insurance policy: If your spouse can work or find a job quickly, your family income is less exposed overall.

4.4 Understand the Political Risks

Learn the geographic, historic, political and economic factors that have shaped your host country and its people. Start by reviewing a map to determine the country's location, distance from the country and other nations. Read history books about the country. Become familiar with current events. Investigate topics that will make the host country and its people seem more "real" and ease into conversations with host nationals. Understand what the likelihood of political unrest is, criminal activities that target foreigners, or war with a neighboring country? This risk is difficult to assess, but it is worth at least thinking about it.

4.5 Network with People at Head Office

Make sure you stay in touch with your mentors (people who have supported you in your career so far). Consider the impact of their career changes (moves within or out of the organization, retirement) on yours. Some expatriates have decided to come back to head office while their mentor was still able to help them secure an interesting position.

4.6 Business Etiquette

Learn how business is conducted and how people are managed in the host country. Discuss in advance what's expected at business/staff meetings. Learn about typical leadership styles, boss-subordinate relations, decision-making, teamwork, differences in pace, pressure and protocol. Ask others who have been overseas how they handled sensitive work or management situations

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