

N°16-7 – November 2016

Editorial

The success—or failure—of an expatriate assignment will typically have a high impact on an organization's presence in the host country. This simple fact no doubt explains why, in the field of cross-cultural management, so much attention has been placed on assessing the suitability of candidates for international postings.

Before I raise any false hopes, let me tell you straight away that there is no magic wand to guarantee the success of an assignment. There are, however, a number of instruments and methods whose proper use can guide selectors and candidates toward making the best possible decisions.

When involving employees and their spouses in a Candidate Assessment Program, it is crucial that they do not feel they are about to face a tribunal. Rather, they should be made to understand that the goal is for them to objectively **assess their own strengths and vulnerabilities**, and ultimately decide whether the assignment is the right one for them at that point in their lives.

Let me hand over now to Robert Limoges in Virginia, North Carolina. Robert dedicates a great deal of his time to helping budding expatriates make the right choices, and we are happy to share some of his experience with you in this month's newsletter.



Laurent Lepez, Managing Partner

Candidate Assessment Programs for successful international assignments

by Robert Limoges, Senior Consultant

Finding the right person to fill a global business role is often a very difficult task human resource professionals and line managers face. Candidates not only need to perform well in their job abroad, they and their family members must also be a good fit for the culture of the country to which they are assigned. All too often I hear managers saying only 3 months in advance, *"I have to send somebody to Singapore... but who? Well, let's send our best salesperson as she has a proven track record"*. Unfortunately, this type of selection process can easily result in costly premature return or ineffective performance throughout an assignment.

Some failures could be avoided **if multinational firms looked beyond tradition-bound selection practices**. Careful assessment and selection of the right people considering the ability of the candidates and their families to adjust to and function effectively in a new cultural environment can greatly reduce the chances of failure and the negative consequences of an early return.

A few months ago, I was contacted by the HR Director of a large multinational who wished to put in place a **Candidate Assessment Program** for a Canadian national who had expressed interest in relocating to Nairobi with his wife and 3-year-old son to fill the role of Financial Controller for the West African division. The candidate's predecessor hadn't fared well, and the HR Director confided that the company simply couldn't afford another mistake.

After quite a bit of discussion, we agreed that the objectives for the program should be to:

- Provide the candidate and spouse with an opportunity for self-assessment and deep reflection about their motivation and suitability for the assignment.
- Explore their ability to adjust to the significant lifestyle changes and challenges they would face in the new country.
- Identify developmental competencies issues (knowledge, skills and attitudes) that could be addressed in pre-departure training and/or through on-site coaching during the assignment.
- Provide Human Resources staff and Senior Management with the information they needed to make an informed decision about the suitability of the candidate and his family for the expatriate assignment.

In order to meet these objectives, I proposed using a variety of techniques explaining that **no single assessment instrument can generate sufficient data for a reliable candidate assessment**.

Dear reader,

If you wish to read the full article or the whole newsletter further, please feel free to contact us through our website. We will be happy to send it to you in the next 10 minutes.