

# managing worldwide skills

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## Mexico, an attractive destination:

Reconciling your company and your potential candidates  
to expatriation perspectives

For many of our customers, Mexico remains a very attractive destination. The low-cost, high-quality, and decent availability of labor and managers, the political stability, the NAFTA-TLCAN, and a generous tax-exemption system in many areas of the country are often a major part of the explanation.

However, it may not be the opinion of quite a few expatriate managers and families, either before departure because of a rather degraded image of the country or after a few months in office for having met, in many cases, real unexpected cultural hurdles.

In order to make an expatriation in Mexico a successful venture, I would like to draw your attention to 5 aspects among many of the Mexican culture in the corporate world. We consider it an absolute necessity for your international managers to have a deep understanding of the following:

### Agachismo, Malinchismo, Mexican time management, Conflict aversion, Security

1. "Agachismo" is a feeling of being behind other countries in the world and not being able to ever catch up. With this in mind, your foreign expatriates (especially the US and Western European ones) have the capacity to transform what is a hidden sense of frustration and shame into an endless source of motivation for developing their teams and the company at large.
2. "Malinchismo" is a tendency to prefer what comes from a foreign country rather than from Mexico. The "malinchista" person would in a way act and communicate as if he or she were not truly Mexican. The term comes from "la Malinche", name of the first Indian female translator, adviser, intermediary (and much more ☺) of Hernán Cortés. This term is slightly pejorative but helps to describe a fairly hidden aspect of Mexican culture in front of foreigners, which reflects a subtle mix of two psychological tensions: betraying/belonging coupled with a sense of inferiority/superiority. There again, the capacity of your expatriate to interact with their Mexican team or Mexican boss can have an exploding effect, either very adverse or positive. This becomes especially true when bringing new technology, new know-how or new procedures from outside, for example the head office.
3. Mexican time is a serious issue where many ill-prepared expatriates lose their temper and therefore create adverse conditions for working hand-in-hand with their team. By learning how to select their priorities, explain and put energy on these high-priority subjects, your expat managers will master their own tension (sometimes simply called "stress" ☺) while getting everyone on board. They will learn how to micro manage who needs to be and let others and other issues flow the Mexican way. It works well and by the way, in most cases, they do not have other options!
4. In Mexico, even more than anywhere else in Latin American, a respectful, harmony-oriented, "high-context" communication is an absolute must. Any behavior showing signs of irritation or any communication that brutally exposes and addresses issues is very often counterproductive. The expatriates who have learnt how to tell their opinion very clearly, fix targets, and assess performance leaving no ambiguity without breaking the formalism that guarantees mutual respect and room for efficiency will do wonders.

## Our Mexico Team

Mini bio:  
Maria



Maria specializes in global leadership development training and coaching with over years of experience in the US and Latin America. She also has experience as an expat entrepreneur establishing her own consulting firm in Mexico, offering services such as cross-cultural training and coaching for expats and families, global team management, diversity and inclusion, and leadership business competencies.

Mini bio:  
José Luis



José Luis is a Mexican consultant specialized in the field of intercultural competences. In addition to his consulting activities, he has been teaching in the most prestigious institutions and universities around Latin America, North America and Europe. His fields of excellence are multicultural teamwork as well as cross-cultural management, leadership, intelligence and communication. He has facilitated over 100 seminars and courses in more than 20 countries. He has lived and worked in Mexico, Canada, Germany and France. José Luis holds an MBA from Germany and a PhD from France.

5. Security in Mexico does require the usual amount of precautions as in most destinations. It is true that in some northern parts of the country where the drug cartels are fighting, there are very special measures that need to be taken. However, now in MC Distrito Federal, in Monterrey or Guadalajara, life is so pleasant and safe that many families think the security issue is grossly overestimated. This is, however, poorly communicated to the managers and their families when considering expatriation to Mexico. That is why we think a short briefing about security could help potential expatriate families take an enlightened decision ☺.

In a hypothetical situation where you have numerous expatriates to select from, we would be happy to offer our help in assessing the adaptability of your candidates and their intercultural skills to tackle those five challenges among many others. Your reality will probably be very different: you may find few motivated expatriates fulfilling all the technical, managerial and intercultural requirements. **Therefore, we strongly recommend you train them properly.**

You could go for a simple one-day, pre-departure intercultural training and stop there. If the job at stake is of significant importance, we would recommend you offer some additional support: **security briefing + two-day intercultural training + mini 360° interviews**. In this case, we provide a security briefing before the family takes their decision to encourage them to go to Mexico, while not hiding an inch of real security measures that each member will have to implement. The security briefing and the first one-day training are done before departure in the country of origin. The second one-day training will be done 3 to 4 months after arrival in Mexico. It is preceded by a 360° assessment based on 3 interviews. The training pattern below is a great option that we would like you to consider if you want to do things well.



Our team is there for you! Let me introduce some of our consultants based in Mexico, Europe and the USA: Liliana, Maria, Francisco and Jose Luis.

Together, we are here to help you have your expatriates on the same wavelength as your company: Mexico is an attractive destination, seen from all perspectives and you are ready for it.

**Laurent Lepez, Managing Partner**

#### Mini bio: Francisco



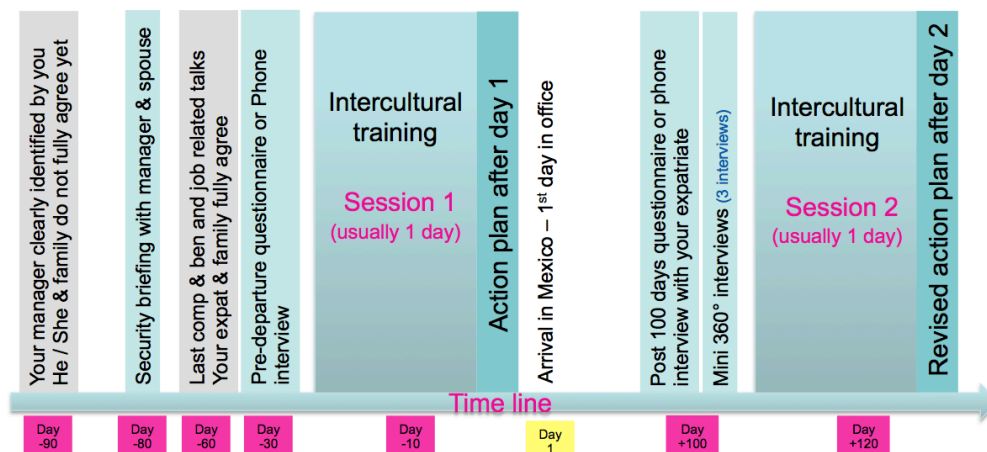
Francisco is a cross-cultural consultant. He specializes in training and coaching executives and their families who are on assignment in Mexico. He also develops and conducts cultural awareness workshops for Mexicans seeking to achieve broad cultural understanding and intercultural competencies especially for global project management and import/export activities. He lived and worked in the US, Spain and Canada.

#### Mini bio: Liliana



Liliana, Mexican, has been delivering relocation and cross-cultural training throughout Mexico since 1998. She has professional experience in the fields of human resources, public relations, relocation services, intercultural, diversity and conflict resolution training, as well as personal and professional intercultural experience in several countries including the US, Brazil, Panama, Guatemala, Canada, Venezuela, Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Portugal.

### Intercultural training for expatriates in Mexico Global scheme overview



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