



What works in expatriation?

What works in expatriation and what does not? If only we knew the answer ...a group of international companies came together recently in the Netherlands at the Shell Learning Centre to discuss the subject. Although nobody had a ready, one-size-fits-all answer, the peer level discussion did generate some ideas. In the last issue of Graduate Recruiter, I discussed some of the issues, below are the remaining topics from our discussion.

What works best?

To find out what works best is not an easy task, but sometimes it helps to hear what others do. For that reason each of the companies present explained what makes them feel proud regarding their organisation's policy for expatriates. Of course a consulting company treats its expatriates different from an oil company that has long-term projects that last several years, but nevertheless both can gain from each other's experiences. Below is a list of issues that were covered during the session.

- Recognition of the value of expatriates
- Having devoted and experienced staff dealing with expatriates
- Making expatriation and the issues around it more explicit
- Being capable to select expatriate talent of which you know will stay with your company
- Having managed to create a new generation of global citizens instead of career expatriates
- Having a company wide policy
- Having a local talent management & coaching system

- Having created an open resources system with much more transparency
- Having been able to proof the business rationale behind a spouses centre

"We are proud to ensure the motivation of our expatriate staff at the European Space Agency. A space mission may take more than 10 years of development and - as in the case of Rosetta just launched, 10 years before reaching its target and we need to make sure that the various expats working on the project all remain motivated throughout the project," Paolo Donzelli, Head of HR, European Space Technology Centre.

"We have been able to proof the business rationale behind a partner support network. Such a centre is not just a 'nice to have' but it provides visible benefits in terms of promoting international mobility within an organisation," Josephine Evans, Manager Outpost, Shell.

"Apart from the regular HR staff within the company, two members have been assigned to take care of the expat population full time. They have responsibility for all aspects concerning

international mobility, thus ensuring that the expats are informed and happy."

Antoinette Abel – Busschers, International Mobility Manager the Netherlands, Cap Gemini Ernst & Young.

Benefits in cash or kind?

There was a divergence around providing expatriate benefits in cash or in kind. Some organisations opt for providing the benefit in cash; others have decided not to provide lump sum budgets.

"HSBC tries to involve spouses in the briefing meeting. We have found that it works well if you stipulate their role in the decision making process. We do provide assistance in several areas, such as 'spouse allowance', courses etc., but we do not compensate for lost income. Currently we are moving towards a lump sum policy; do provide the budget, and let the expat decide on how to spend it." Milton Ives, Senior Manager, International Secondments, HSBC.

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