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Amy Roman, Publisher

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In This Issue
Predicting the Success of Effective Global Assignees
Anchor Drops
Amy's Research Findings

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• [Visit Our Website](#)
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- Upcoming Features**
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Predicting the Success of Effective Global Assignees

by Lauren Herring, SCRP, SGMS, Chief Executive Officer, IMPACT Group

Can we predict success? At first glance, the answer is simple: Future success is based on talent and proven track records. What does this mean in the world of international assignments? For many corporations, "success" in this realm means those who have shown achievement at the home office. It is instinctive for companies to promote the person who has been most successful in a similar position back home. But unfortunately, experience within your domestic walls doesn't always translate to success overseas. If you want to increase the chance for success on your next international assignment, it is important to look beyond the obvious in your global assignees.

Thirst for Knowledge. How successful a company is at competing in the global marketplace can depend on its strategic approach to cultural diversity. For leaders in particular, intercultural curiosity and the presence of a global mindset are mission critical.

Individuals with a thirst for knowledge—who know there are different ways to get things done in different cultures, and who are willing to learn them—are likely to be more successful in navigating the local culture and understanding how it interplays with the company culture. Identifying opportunities for growth in global competencies and refining skills to enhance effectiveness across cultures will ultimately result in a much higher potential for attaining assignment goals.

Supporting the Family. While most international candidates show a penchant for self-sufficiency, their families may not be as well-equipped to thrive in their new environment. As it is often the family that experiences the most difficulty adjusting internationally, this can greatly impact the productivity and success of your family-focused expatriate employee.

Pre-assignment assessments help to identify potential problems before they occur. Additionally, integration support for all family members addresses concerns directly through one-on-one support and ongoing family assistance for logistical, practical and emotional support before, during and after the international expedition. For working spouses, when finding an actual job is unlikely due to visa restrictions, your company can proactively help through job search assistance, or career continuation assistance.

Think Long Term. Close to 40 percent of international assignees who return home voluntarily leave the company within three years, according to a recent Brookfield Global Trends study. International assignments undoubtedly produce challenges in "out of sight, out of mind" frameworks and unsuitable reassignments upon repatriation, but still, retaining top talent is the best way to maximize your international investment.

Too often, companies see in hindsight that skills acquired on assignment were not properly matched to the repat's new position, and individuals the company invested so highly in ultimately were not placed in the right role back home for their long-term careers. Helping expatriate employees manage their careers on assignment and find better-fit internal jobs for the return home not only creates a cost-effective solution to repat turnover, but also increases expat career engagement to keep them on the long-term path with your organization.

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—Carolyn Feuille, President,
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The Importance of Assignment Success

Corporate leaders today are focusing on accelerating innovation, globalization and developing new products for rapid business growth. But in the current economic environment, it's not surprising that many companies have focused on cost management to ensure their expansion and global mobility programs are as efficient as possible. Issues like challenging housing markets, rising transportation costs and compliance costs are front and center. Yet, extremely critical parts of a successful assignment are often overlooked, like selecting the right candidate and setting them and the family up for success.

For nearly half of all companies, selecting candidates with the required technical and business skills, followed closely by selecting employees with the ability to adapt successfully to the location, are the two most significant global challenges. And selection mistakes can be costly — upwards of \$1 million for an international assignment according to IMPACT Group research. That's why forward-thinking companies are looking at assignments much more holistically — developing a globally minded workforce, supporting the assignee and family during the entire transition process and thinking long term about careers, ultimately better forecasting assignment success.



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Working in a foreign country is an opportunity that can add a valuable dimension to your career; however, international assignments should not disrupt career plans, but instead become developmental positions. Therefore, overseas employees need to take control of their own situations. Begin by fully understanding the following:

- the position you will assume overseas,
- your title and authority in the new position,
- how you will integrate into the overseas business climate,
- how you will stay abreast of corporate focus and strategies while abroad,
- how your skills will be utilized upon return.

Amy's Research Findings

Assignment Challenges

As in previous survey reports, spouse/partner and family issues continue to be serious challenges to assignment success. The top issues cited as very critical by respondents include: spouse/partner resistance to the international assignments, followed by family adjustment and then children's education. If all the issues that pose very critical and highly important challenges are combined, family adjustment eclipses the group at 91 percent of respondents noting it as a key assignment challenge.

In fact, family concerns continue to be the number one reason cited by respondents for assignment refusal, with 35 percent of respondents reporting this as a top reason for candidates turning down an assignment.

Source: Global Relocation Trends 2013 Survey Report



Amy L. Roman has a BS in Business Marketing from Penn State University, and an MA in Counseling and Psychology from Lesley University. Amy has worked in the field of publishing since 1994. Her business and counseling background, combined with her 24 relocation experiences contribute to her relocation expertise and are a perfect fit with BR Anchor Publishing's moving books.