



Supporting successful family relocation.

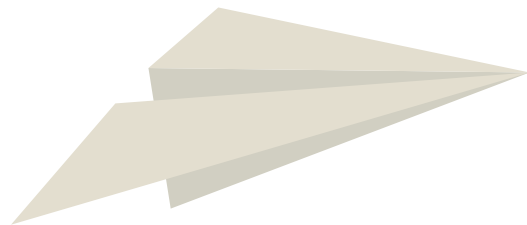
How your company can work with assignees and their families to ease the transplanting process.



Family difficulties learning new language and culture is the leading source of trouble in relocation.

Relocating to a new country is an exciting adventure, but it can also be an overwhelming process. Assignees often don't know where to start; where are they going to live? Where are their kids going to go to school? What does day-to-day life in this new country look like? How is their family going to adjust?

In the following pages, we will discuss three important steps you can take to help your employees and their families adjust to work and life in a new country. We'll address what you need to know about the emotions expats experience before, during, and after a relocation. We'll also share tips for preparing your employees and their families for success, and offer ideas for helping them adjust to the language and culture of their new home once they arrive.



Successful reassignments are a team effort.

While businesses often provide resources for assignees, members of the families are sometimes overlooked.

Your company and its relocating process can work together to ease assimilation and achieve a successful reassignment.

Research indicates companies need to put more emphasis on the family as a whole. In the 2014 Global Mobility Policy and Practices Survey conducted by Cartus:

61%

of human-resource professionals responded that a family's inability to adapt to a new location is one of the top three reasons assignments may fail.

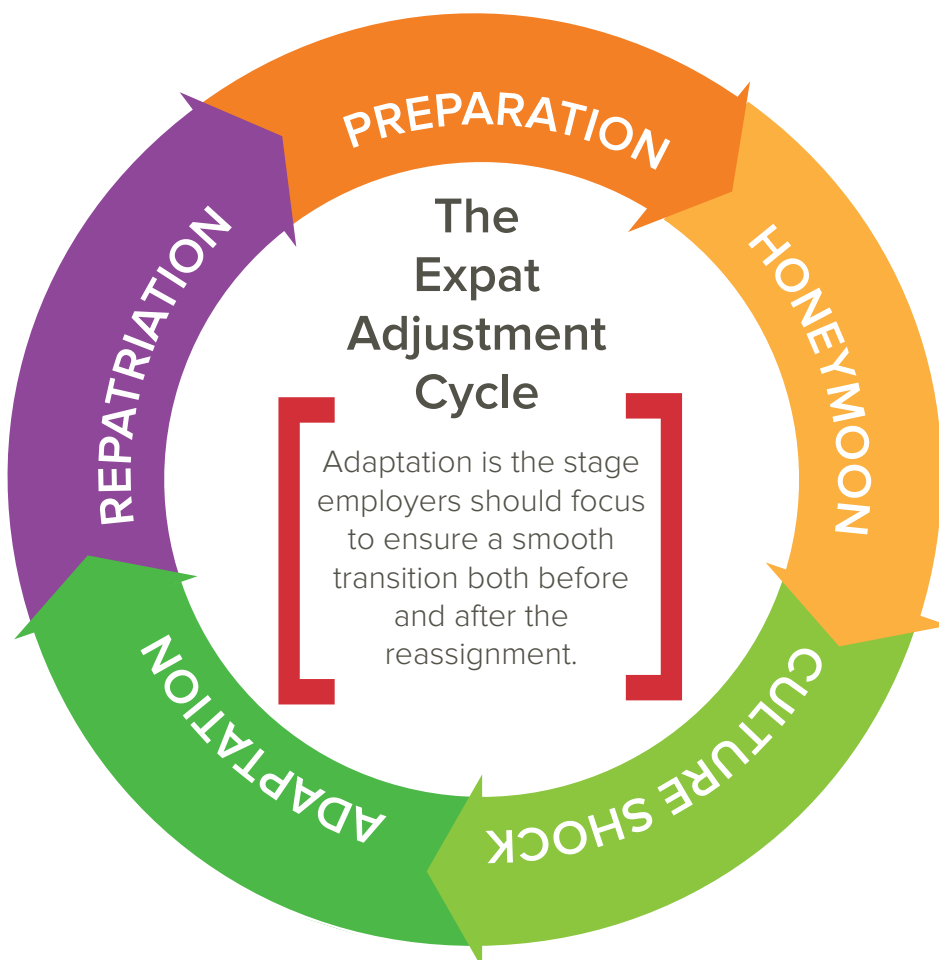
76%

of human-resource respondents indicated that family or personal circumstances are the main reason assignments are turned down.

Step 1: Understand the Expat Adjustment Cycle.

It's important for employers to help those relocating understand the emotions expats typically experience before, during, and after assignment. There are five common phases newly relocated employees and their families tend to experience. These stages are referred to as The Expat Adjustment Cycle.

Help assignees and their family members understand common emotions and experiences felt during the relocation process, and ensure you're providing the emotional and tactical support that will set everyone, including spouses and children, up for success.



Family happiness: The center of success.

PREPARATION

Employees and their families will experience a mix of emotions ranging from excitement to anxiety about the move and “starting over.”

HONEYMOON

When families arrive in their new country, unease often evaporates as they get to explore their new home.

CULTURE SHOCK

The reality of life starts setting in. Families start to realize their own inability to interact with the culture, which can lead to feelings of isolation and frustration.

ADAPTATION

Individuals and families begin to adjust to their new way of life and accept and assimilate into the culture around them.

REPATRIATION

Following their stay abroad, families often face a difficult period of readjusting to life in their home country.

Step 2: Set everyone up for success.

Tasked with helping your employees adjust to their reassignment, adopt the “family-first” mentality, extending support beyond your employee to all members of the family. Oftentimes, spouses and children are unaware of the resources available via their family members’ employer.

There is often a correlation between the amount of realistic information a family receives before going abroad and their level of happiness once they are relocated.

Pre-assignment orientations are one of the best ways to communicate resources available to the entire family during relocation. If your company doesn’t already offer pre-assignment orientations, make sure to incorporate them into your employee relocation strategy.

Adopt a “family-first” mentality.

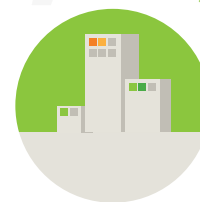
You should be prepared to assist relocating families in securing housing, schools and spousal employment in order to ease the anxiety of the transition on the family.



HOUSING



SCHOOLING



**SPOUSAL
EMPLOYMENT**

Go above and beyond.

While these resources aren't always expected from employers, providing them can make the difference between a failed relocation and a success.



BUILD A NETWORK

Connect families to others within your company who have already experienced successful relocation or who will be relocating same place, same time. Use an email listserv, a private Facebook group, or your company's internal communication channels. This can go a long way in helping your employees and their families build a network of support in their new home away from home by being able to share information regarding the housing search, childcare, spousal employment, healthcare, and so much more.



PROVIDE ON-THE-GROUND SUPPORT

It's important for companies like yours to provide on-the-ground support to relocated families. Whether it's a professional relocation counselor or local resource who has experience working with expats, giving your employees and their families access to an advocate in their new home country will help them feel supported.



ESTABLISH REGULAR CHECK-INS.

Understand how their relocation is going and to determine if the assignee or members of their family are experiencing challenges you can help them overcome.

Step 3: Make language and culture a priority.

One of the best methods of aiding employees and their families in overcoming the culture shock and then to adapt is by providing resources necessary to help the entire family learn the languages and culture of their new home.

Even if the assignee will still be conducting business in English, they will be expected to interact with their foreign business partners, while their families will be expected to interact with foreign neighbors, friends, and colleagues. Children typically need to learn the local language in order to succeed in foreign schools, and spouses or partners need help learning the language for their own career or social life.

When they understand and appreciate the new culture into which they've been transplanted, families have an easier time navigating their new home, even if their language skills are still developing. You can then help them take their cultural literacy to the next level by sharing information about housing, food, dress, social relationships, religion, and other norms and habits.



Culture and context round out the adaptation process.

Help assignees and their family members understand common emotions and experiences felt during the relocation process, and ensure you're providing the emotional and tactical support that will set everyone, including spouses and children, up for success.

CONVERSATION-BASED LEARNING.

Select a language-learning resource that focuses on a conversation-based approach to help assignees quickly get up to speed, so they can begin having conversations in the local language as soon as they arrive. Lessons that help expats navigate day-to-day life in their new country are especially essential. For example, learning how to ask where the bus stop is located, or how much utilities cost is more imperative than learning how to say, "the donkey ate the carrot."



SPEAKING WITH NATIVES.

Nothing beats conversations with locals. These conversations can take place through online chats, local meetups, or language classes. If none of these resources are available, a self-guided language learning tool that allows a person to record their language practice and match it up with a native speaker's pronunciation helps learners ensure they are on the right track.



LEARNING THROUGH AUTHENTIC CONTENT.

One of the best ways to learn language in the context of culture is through the exploration of authentic content - magazines, newspapers, television shows, and movies that depict everyday life in the country of origin.



CULTURE-BASED LEARNING.

Resources that provide cultural context and notes to help learners go beyond vocabulary is important. For example, when an employee or family member studying German learns that a university professor should always be addressed in writing as "sehr geehrter Herr Doktor Professor" ("most honorable Mr. Dr. Professor") they are also learning that in the German culture, the way to show respect is through honoring and acknowledging a professional title.



Key takeaways.

Relocation is an exhilarating, exciting, and often overwhelming process. Here are the key takeaways for making the relocation process a smooth process:



Remember that it's a process. No matter the country, adapting to the new culture takes time. Whether families are simply adjusting to the new currency and poutine of Toronto, or the wildly different way of life in Ulaanbaatar, it will still take time and energy to get used to a new schedule, culture, and cuisine. On good days, this will be exciting and inviting, and bad days it will seem a formidable challenge. These emotions will change as families adapt to their new way of life. By helping your employees and their families understand the Expat Adjustment Cycle and letting them know you and your company are there to support them throughout, you will position your employee and their family for success.



Keeping family central is essential. The success of your employee's relocation is integrally tied with the success of their spouse and children accompanying them abroad. Relocation is and should be treated as a family matter. Going above and beyond to extend resources and support to family members will set reassignees and members of their family up for success.



Learning both culture and language is key. Understanding language and culture is empowering: it allows families to navigate both as a unit and as individuals. Picking up the local slang and understanding the protocol involved in riding local public transportation allows for independence, mobility and confidence for your employees and their families. By providing the right resources that place equal value on language and culture learning, everyone will be better positioned to adapt to their new home and life during reassignment.





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