

# Supporting Successful Family Global Relocation

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

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

61%

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

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.

While short-term assignments are still more cost-effective, long-term assignments are still on the rise, so it's more important than ever that families of assignees are prepped and comfortable in their new environments. 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 — for the whole family.

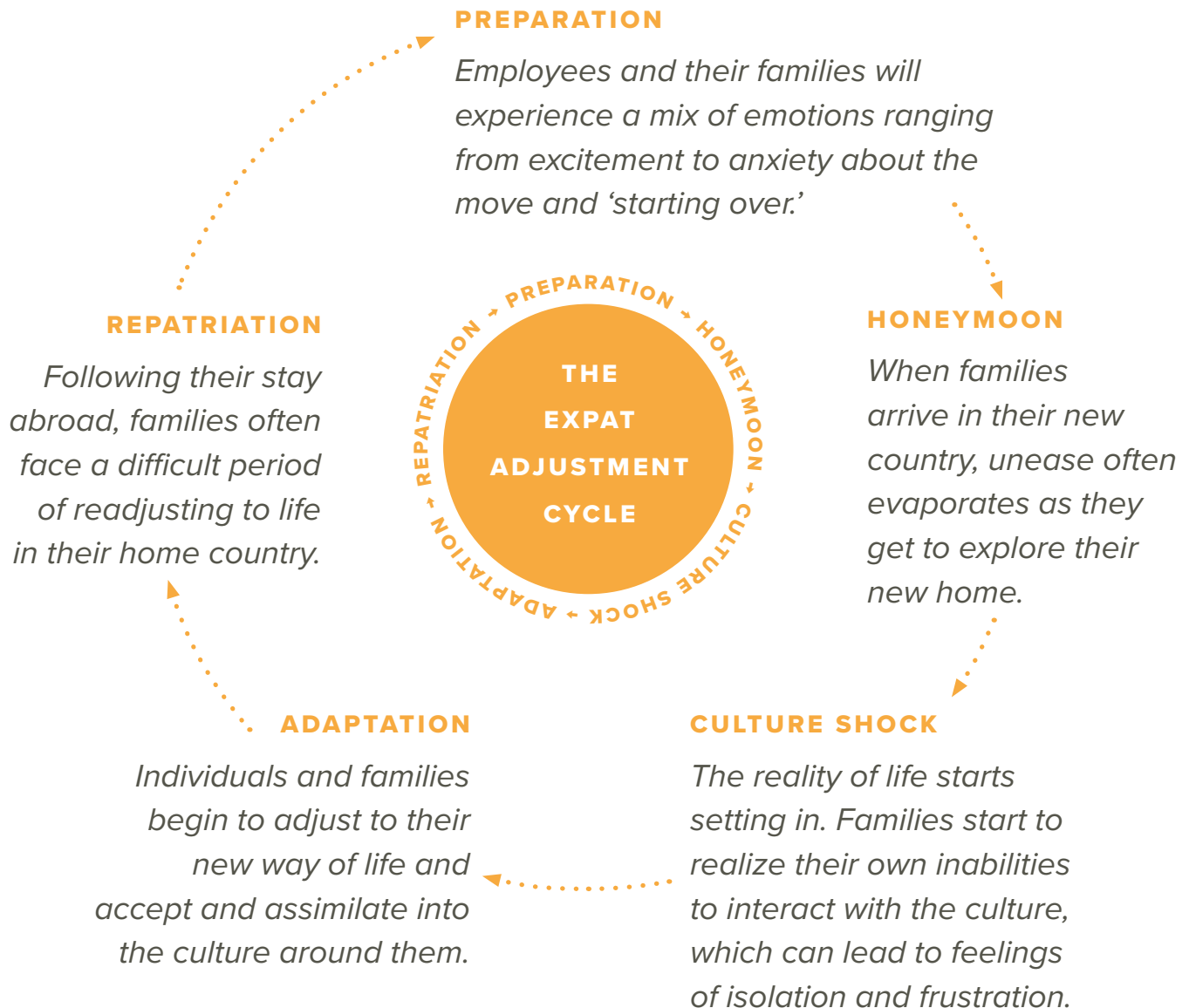
*Research indicates companies are spending more money on long-term assignments. In the 2016 Global Mobility Policy and Practices Survey conducted by Cartus:<sup>1</sup>*

*Long-term assignments are still viewed as essential to global mobility. 81% of global mobility experts around the world expect long-term assignment activity to stay the same or increase over the next two years.*

# 1

## Recognize the Expat Adjustment Cycle

It's important for employers to help those relocating to 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.



## 2

### Adopt the ‘family first’ mentality

Often, spouses and children are unaware of the resources available via their family member’s employer. There is often a correlation between the amount of realistic information a family receives before going abroad versus 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 stress of the transition on the family.

#### **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.

#### **ESTABLISH REGULAR CHECK-INS**

Regular check-ins will help in understanding how the relocation is going and in determining if the reassignee or members of their family are experiencing challenges that you can help them overcome.

#### **BUILD A NETWORK**

Connect families to others within your company who have already experienced successful relocation or who will be relocating in the same place, or at the 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.

# 3

## Make language and culture a priority

Even if the assignee will still be conducting business in English, they will be expected to interact with their international business partners, while their families will be expected to interact with new neighbors, friends, and colleagues from their new country. Children typically need to learn the local language in order to succeed in international 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.

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 up for success.

### **CONVERSATION-BASED LEARNING**

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."

Select a language-learning resource that focuses on a conversation-based approach to help assignees quickly and effectively learn practical words and phrases, 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.

## **SPEAKING WITH NATIVES**

Culture and context round out the adaptation process. 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 a new 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. Picking up the local slang and understanding the protocol involved in riding local public transportation also allows for independence, mobility, and confidence for your employees and their families.

# Key takeaway

Relocation is an exhilarating, exciting, and often overwhelming process. What are the top takeaways to make the relocation process a 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 assignees 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 successfully navigate both as a unit and as individuals. 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.

## **CONCLUSION**

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 a different way of life in Dubai, 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, while on bad days it could seem like 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.



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