

International human resources development

**A dramatic move to return back home? (management stuff)
Escalating cost or beneficial expatriate experience?
(headquarter)**

Ines Hofmann

International Consultant



Successful reintegration of German expatriates

Many international organizations have to withdraw their expatriates due to the world economic crisis.

Reintegration problems:

- 10% of German expatriates leave their company within the first year of returning home
- A significant number of professional staff move to the competitor taking along their know how
- Escalating costs
- Efficiency of expatriate experience?

Personal comments:

“The arrangements when returning back home are disastrous”

“All my predecessors have quit their job due to limited career prospectus”

“The development at the headquarter has bypassed me”

“My wife cannot return to her previous job”

“Instead of interest in our overseas experience we come across ignorance and jealousy “

Due to the financial crisis, many international companies are forced

to withdraw their expatriates from overseas. However the integration back home is not planned properly, it is unstructured and often a last minute arrangement. Therefore the returnee often faces unexpected challenges: The career prospectus, which has been promised after the overseas contract, does not materialize, because the position has been cancelled or whole departments were closed or sold off. Further the development of the company has been escalating rapidly and the knowledge gained overseas cannot be utilized anymore. Therefore the employee has been placed into an arbitrary allocated position at the organization.

The previous human resources manager may have changed the company. Therefore the expatriate had limited contact and may have been forgotten by the human resources department, and the original career goal has fallen into oblivion over the years. Then suddenly the returnee turns up and expects that his career development progresses. As he and his family had to sacrifice many things overseas he wants to get rewarded now back home.

However the opposite is often the case:

Nobody is interested in the new acquired competences. International thinking, intercultural competences, a foreign language, a new way how to deal with time, space and quality, new rules and

regulations of the foreign country; all these are regarded as ‘nonsense’.

The returnee is expected to get back down to earth, he should be more humble, he was regarded as the big boss overseas and received a high salary. Now the returnee becomes aware that his previous work- and living standards are not accepted here. Additional to this, he did not experience the further development of the headquarter and the change of leadership and management. Further the new department, the new colleagues, the new superior and the process of change management is unfamiliar to him. Therefore the returnee is often ignored and regarded as an intruder. He actually should first build up the trust with his colleagues, but this is difficult due to the arbitrary allocated position. The headquarter cannot offer him the position he was accustomed to, which was in a leadership role, with job variety and autonomy. Therefore reintegration back home has lost the special status that was given to him before. For example overseas he was probably a member of the corporate elite, he probably had private servants and a luxurious life style. Now he is an average member of the middle class society.

He is becoming aware of the reverse culture shock, the so called re-entry shock, which also

affects him tremendously. Questions of identity, the purpose of life, family and the future open up. Therefore the person feels unsettled, unsatisfied and dis-oriented.

The personal development overseas has lifelong consequences. The contact with people of another culture and the experience of a foreign culture forms the person on a lasting basis.

After returning home the social network, privately and for business has changed. The person has lost the connections and his business and private networks cannot support him anymore. His family also has tremendous reintegration problems. They had international friends, another life style and another budget available. Often the wife or partner has given up her job in order to promote her husbands career. Now after returning home there is no suitable position and she has lost her connections and contacts, nobody is waiting for her with open arms, except her own family. The family returning home has lost their balance and has to go through a period of transition. Each family member wants the support from others, although they are all overloaded with the situation. This loss of orientation and frustration could lead to psychological issues. Finally they may look for a solution, by quitting the job and moving to the competitors.

Solution strategies:

Return phase I:

- preparation for the work at the headquarter, handover of the job overseas

Reintegration phase II:

- deal with culture shock
- reintegration into the company culture/ national culture
- reflection on the intercultural work and life experience
- private systematic family coaching
- workshop for the wife

Distribution phase

- experience generation
- handover to successor and new staff members overseas
- input of intercultural experience into an information pool

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