

Culture shock in the repatriation process essay sample

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



Discuss the role of reverse culture shock in the repatriation process. What can companies do to avoid this problem? What kinds of skills do managers learn from a foreign assignment, and how can the company benefit from them?

The excitement of returning home after several years on an overseas assignment is sometimes frustrated by the unexpected nature of what awaits expatriates and their families: reverse culture shock. The difficulties of reintegration into the person's native culture are usually a real surprise: coming home should be easier than going abroad in the first place. However, the stages of acculturation that took place when employees were posted abroad are no less relevant when they return home. This process of repatriation and the experience of reverse culture shock apply equally to the return to the office and the factory as to the return to family and friends.

Among expatriates culture shock is a term in common usage. It describes the discomfiting responses one may have while re-adjusting culturally to one's home culture in repatriation. That distress tends to result in disorientation and emotional challenges. When one passes through that cultural adjustment process, it is said that person has acculturated.

A second experience of a similar response typically occurs to most that go through the coming home process known as repatriation. Interestingly, this is often experienced as a more difficult process for those who adjusted well to a host culture and completed the assignment effectively. This response is common in repatriation and is typically called reverse culture shock.

Depending on how big a change a person has experienced, the person may feel as if the culture isn't in fact new, but that they belong, or the person may not exactly feel part of the culture, but they're comfortable enough with it to enjoy the differences and challenges.

They feel almost betrayed, perhaps by the company, certainly by their own naïve expectations. That they have themselves, in part, to blame, does not stem the onrush of jumbled emotions like sadness, embarrassment, anger and loneliness. . At least the employee has a place he can go where he can feel affirmed in his global accomplishment, flushed with subdued pride and the expectation of reward. But again, reality disappoints. On his first day back at work he gets a jovial greeting from the former coworkers who are still there and is then ushered into a manager's office to be told, in so many words, that the company is not sure what job they have available for him at this moment. Further conversation dispels the employee's hopes for the immediate gratification of promotion and generous financial remuneration.

Addressing painful issues of repatriation is not the responsibility of the company alone. But if looking for a rationale for action, the causes of repatriate disaffection are straightforward and so are the remedies.

Companies need to close the gap between expectation and reality. In some cases information and education can bring expectations into conformance with reality. In others companies need to bring reality into closer proximity with expectation. With intentionality and planning, both can be accomplished.

Managers use many skills to learn from a foreign assignment that may posed the greatest risk to their companies they responded:

- Family difficulties posed by assignments,
- selecting candidates that are either unsuitable or unwilling to accept assignments,
- Not taking advantage of the skills and knowledge acquired by assignees, • losing employees after repatriation,
- remaining competitive while trying to control costs and provide consistent policy coverage,
- Security of assignees, and non-compliance to various laws and regulations by assignees.

By instituting repatriation practices companies address three of the first four items of concern. Some observers suggest that repatriation planning should begin when the expatriate has about six months remaining on his assignment.

The one which may be of greatest value is to realize such responses are very common for those who successfully adjusted to a host culture. That personal adjustment permitted you to complete an effective expatriate assignment. You were sufficiently patient in the host culture so as to complete the cultural adjustment process successfully. Similarly, it will take time for you to complete the process of cultural readjustment to your culture of origin.

Typically, cultural readjustment requires far more attention to that which is “affective” than “cognitive.” Thus, one must readjust at the emotional levels of change in order to be culturally readjusted to the home culture. Coming home from an international assignment requires patient and persistent steps to affect your personal readjustment to home.