

# Women on international assignments



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

During the past two decades, more and more organizations have been going global, and, as a result, more and more employees are being sent on international assignments. Employers are sending more female workers on international assignments than ever before, according to a report. The study looked at 100 multinational companies with about 17, 000 male and female employees working overseas.

This trend reflects the increasingly global nature of modern companies. Nowhere is this dynamic more palpable than it is in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly China, which reports the greatest rise in number of female assignees. But this is not the only region experiencing a boom in the number of female assignees. Respondents from North America report having nearly four times as many female assignees, while their European counterparts say they have twice as many.

The trend is expected to continue. Fifty-five percent of respondents anticipate that the number of female assignees will increase steadily over the next five years. Only 4 percent of the survey participants believe the number of female assignees will decline. For their part, female workers are willing to take on assignments overseas because they can open opportunities for professional advancement.

An increasingly young, multicultural and diverse workforce brings an important new phase to expatriate assignments, termed the pre-decision phase. Pre-decision can be likened to an assignment due diligence procedure that includes a careful assessment of all aspects associated with the proposed posting.

Vital to this process is the opportunity to visit and evaluate living, housing, working, schooling and lifestyle options in the host location. Many Generation X (22-35 years old) and Generation Y (21 and under) employees will refuse an assignment outright if this is not offered, leaving International HR departments little option than to offer the possibility.

The first hurdle to be faced by the hopeful applicant is the selection process itself. After confirming the technical competence and suitability of the candidate, companies generally have two principal assessment targets in identifying their potential expatriates.

One is the cross-cultural competence of the candidate (and accompanying partner). This includes knowledge, skills, and personality traits. The other is termed situational readiness and takes in all factors that may influence the assignment, such as candidate's career path objectives and personal factors that may influence the assignment.

Cross-cultural personality assessment is usually combined with behavioral interviews to form a complete picture of individual competencies, weaknesses and strengths. Candidates should keep these desirable characteristics in mind when undergoing assessment.

Female graduates should be aware that worldwide women hold a very low percentage of all international management positions. This circumstance not only hinders the business success of multinational firms abroad but it also limits opportunities for women to succeed at home.

Most multinational companies prefer that their senior management have abundant overseas experience. Excluded from that experience, women are also excluded from promotions and power later in their careers.

It is necessary, therefore, for women to lobby for these assignments early in their careers. Often the selection process within an organization will be less than transparent, and a proactive standpoint will be necessary.

This briefing paper clearly brings about the problems faced by women on international assignments.

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE:**

The briefing paper was prepared to assume me as the researcher. Let the client be a company that wishes to send their women employees on international assignments. For which they were in need of knowing almost all the pros and cons of doing the same. The result and the ideas that I suggest may or may not satisfy the company.

### **OVERVIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION:**

The specific problems faced by women in international assignments were found to be,

Barriers to women in management (entry level)

Barriers to women in career path

Personality traits

Adjustment problems

Cultural, social, legal, economic and political factors

Several women were offered positions only if there were no suitable male candidates for the post.

## **ANALYSIS:**

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis can be a useful tool in the assessment of the gender dimension of development programmes. The SWOT analysis as follows:

Strengths: internal features of a project that have proved effective in addressing gender issues (e. g. project components, methods and techniques for implementation, monitoring and evaluation techniques, project staff and management);

Weaknesses: internal features of a project that have not proved effective in addressing gender issues;

Opportunities: external factors that may assist in overcoming the weaknesses and building on the strengths; and

Threats: external constraints that restrict the range of opportunities for change.

Although the above operational definitions for opportunities and threats specify a focus on ' external factors' and ' external constraints'. This is appropriate for ongoing projects and programmes since both the internal and external factors in opportunities and threats are relevant. What this

shows, at a general level, is the need to adjust tools such as the SWOT analysis to the situation in which they are being used.

## **SWOT Analysis:**

### **Strengths**

### **Weaknesses**

high rate of women's participation during programme formulation

good participation by other stakeholders (e. g. Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services)

project addresses the most vulnerable woman-headed households and marginalized women

water users associations formed in which both women and men participate

women participate in irrigation scheme activities

equal opportunity for women and men to access credit and markets through water users associations

no provision in project design for conducting a baseline study to act as a foundation for addressing food security, nutrition and income enhancement

lack of training on gender issues

cultural values: women tend to be shy during group meetings

women have no access to modern machines and other technology (e. g. ploughs, tractors)

## **Opportunities**

### **Threats**

conduct a baseline study

strengthen the linkage with the gender mainstreaming efforts coordinated by the extension services of the Department of Agriculture

support the development of labor-saving technologies

the problem of the sustainability of women's empowerment, given the relatively short period of the programme, coupled with lack of training

programme affected by the displacement of people due to droughts and floods

limited funds

### **Strengths**

Restructured, rationalized and focused

Good political leadership

Trained, skilled and experienced staff

Project implementation experience

Focused on policy and not interventions

Focused on helping private sector

Based in the commercial capital of the Country

Already involved with various marketing interventions, i. e. warehouse receipt

Support to cooperatives and participation in international trade conferences

Capable and constructive senior civil servants

## **weakness**

Limited operating budget (poorly funded)

Distant from capital (isolated)

Staff poorly paid

Low staff morale

Lack of marketing expertise

Lack of marketing expertise -indeed, considerable naivety in the understanding of support to private-sector marketing interventions

Ministry has a very wide agenda and is lacking in focus

Probably finds it difficult to give sufficient resources to rural marketing

Staff poorly paid and lacking motivation at middle and lower levels.

## **opportunities**

Much donor goodwill

Government reform programme for function analysis, downsizing, liberalization and privatization.



Key ministry and lead sector Size and remit offer opportunity to become the lead ministry for support to small-scale farmer marketing

Opportunity to become the lead ministry and catalyst to the private sector by supporting existing entrepreneurs and the private sector's involvement with marketing.

## **Threats.**

Staff turn over

Shifts in political climate

Limited field presence due to Decentralization

Lack of sympathy and understanding of the private sector will seriously disadvantage its identification of interventions.

Unsure of its status to assist with rural marketing

Seen as a promoter of cooperatives – a concept derided by private sector.

## **SOLUTIONS &RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Women need air-miles to improve their international career prospects, but the first challenge many ambitious women face is getting an assignment in the first place.

Women entering traditional gender-typed occupations can find themselves in such archetypal female 'ghetto' occupations as secretarial work.

Women nowadays can enter the employment with the same level of educational attainment as men.

<https://assignbuster.com/women-on-international-assignments/>

Women graduates expressed as much interest in international careers as their male colleagues which shows their managerial capacity.

There are many ways to be get rid of the problems that arose due to the adjustment problems. They can handle them by their own.

Adopt a sophisticated approach to the determination of criteria for effective international managers.

Monitor their selection processes to ensure access is not unfairly restricted to specific section of employees.

Avoid assumptions as to the likely motivation of women to accept overseas assignment and the likely success rate of women expatriates.

Decision-makers make assumptions as to what they think the best sort of assignment for someone would be. When they move that framework over to women they tend to eliminate certain jobs because of the locations they are in and assume they are either too dangerous or difficult.

Depending upon the degree to which a culture has been involved in the process of globalization, “ foreign businesswomen are seen firstly as business people, secondly as representatives of their culture, and thirdly as women.

In a shrinking, wired, global world there are still many reasons why companies choose to send expatriates rather than hiring locally, including meeting key strategic business requirements, such as the need to establish a business presence quickly in response to rapid market developments and

helping to recruit, orient and train new employees. Perhaps still most importantly, expatriates play a strategic role in the transfer of corporate values and culture.

It is cultural attitudes toward the role of women in child-rearing and family life which play a role in this shortfall as women move through different life stages.

Adopt an educative approach to the organizational resistance to sending women abroad; do not assume it is the result of direct prejudice.

Try to be in right place at the right time.

## **FORECASTS & OUTCOMES:**

Men still account for the lion's share of international assignments, but an increasing number of women are going to foreign lands as well. By 2010, participating companies predicted that 20% of the expatriate population would be female. Although it is undocumented, international HR executives estimate that about half of all female expatriates are not married and go on assignments as singles.

Domestic U. S. relocation figures have shown dramatic increases in the transfers of women as well, and these statistics may support the forecast of an upward trend in the international arena. According to the Employee Relocation Council, women, who made up 5% of the domestic transferee population in 1980, made up 11% of that group in 1986 and 18% in 1991. The forecast for 2010 is 24%.

Companies also reported that they are expanding their global talent banks and using more focused and competency-based selection tools. “ More women are listed as candidates for key overseas positions than they were 5 to 10 years ago. We are no longer making the faulty assumption that women are not mobile and not interested in a foreign assignment,” said one HR executive.

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