

Proper design of a reparation program



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Repatriation is “ the return to one’s home country after a host country assignment” (Rugman & Hodgetts 1995; Adler 1991). (Joinson, 1998), In order for companies to effectively apply their core competencies globally and expand, expatriates are needed who can transfer their technical expertise and cultural understanding on behalf of the companies. Upon finishing their international assignments, expatriates are elicited to the conflicting goals of the international contingent and corporate headquarters.

So it is imperative for companies to properly administer the repatriation process so to successfully exploit the full skills and knowledge of the repatriated employee. However, companies constantly face the prospect of high turnover from the repatriated employees and during this critical point try to figure what can be done.

It is only when a repatriation program is properly design it can solve many problems that are associated with repatriation, Therefore by shaping a accurate re-entry expectation and creating awareness of the difficulties that may occur upon repatriation are imperative.

Major issues identified in the case

It is important to note that the Mark Chan’s re-reentry case study is no exception. repatriation is a difficult field especially for corporate manages and their family. Research by (Iarzarova, 2001) found that repatriate have the following symptoms of frustration because of the career implication of a international assignment.

“ the majority of expatriate managers experience some degree of culture shock during repatriation,

one out of every five employees who completes an overseas assignment wants to leave the company when they return,

less than half of returned expatriates receive promotions upon return,

two-thirds of returning expatriates feel their overseas assignment had a negative impact on their careers,

at least half of returning employees feel their reentry position is less satisfying than their overseas assignment.” (Günter K., 2004, pg 5)

Coupled with the challenging position and career opportunities in Europe this contributed to Mark Chan’s re-entry problems. Furthermore, senior and challenging positions in Singapore unit was restricted compared with the corporate headquarter where more abundant. Consequently, Mark Chan’s and repatriates alike are often only presented only temporary job position upon returning.

In Mark Chan’s case he rose through the ranks at alarming rate whilst on international assignments puts company in a difficult position to allocate a lateral position for repatriates.

Mark Chan’s social network in Singapore was severely hampered after prolong time abroad and reach a point at nearing the end of his assignment he was like a stranger back in Singapore unit. Manager that experience prolong time abroad face the difficulty to return to the mainstream in the home office, also often subjected to different behaviour and changes towards culture.

Mark through his sheer commitment gained promotion during his assignment abroad. He believed he could afford the same treatment in Singapore.

However, Mark wasn't offered a challenging position and felt disappointed, as if he was demoted from his senior position and losing status and pay.

According to (Adler, 2002) It is not uncommon that unrealistic expectations are the foundation of re-entry problems.

FinCorp case study comparision

In relation to FinCorp repatriation program, the support is divided into non-work related and work related aspects. Emoplyee were advised to their health, culture, taxation, remuneration, renting and new assignment.

Training was provided to prospective expatriate and their spouse that included language and culture preparation. (Adler, 1984) points out that globalization of company means need to prioritise cultural over geographical boundaries.

As part of FinCorp induction for both repatriataition and expatriation is to ensure their employee are statisfy and gain knowledge to overcome barriers, one example was organising pre-visit. Helping prevent expatriate failures.

As a result of interviews work related aspects problems emerged as the main concern. FinCorp incorporated a policy that allows expatriate to return to the home base once a year, that had supposly keep them in informed with the current developments in the organisation and market and stipulate assessment with managers and planning session. Across the board the poorly managed policy was seen to add little value by the majority.

Furthermore, upon re-entry they face various problems in their new roles. Repatriated employee felt that their gains in international experience was not acknowledged in their new role. In many cases, as a result of restructuring in FinCorp some repatriates had no role to return to, effectively idle.

How did the employee perceive it?

Expatriates were satisfied with their remuneration that offered a reasonable yet attractive package, but not too far-fetched, so when repatriates return they won't contemplate lower status and pay issues. However, other reflections were made during the interview. One employee said "Yes, there was good support for the basics and moving, but not for the after."

(Oberg, 1960) has recognised that culture shock has not been a new phenomenon. Although, it has been noted by (Bochner & Furnham 1996) that what is less evident is the important role that reversed cultural shock may play in relation to repatriation, that can be detrimental to a MNC. As mentioned earlier in Mark Chan's case when expatriation is prolonged, it risks expatriates to change value within the corporation and culture. A FinCorp employee commented and said "...people are less committed here ... than they were before" In response, FinCorp reduced the international assignment duration as a countermeasure to this problem.

In light of structural and strategic changes, it is evident that FinCorp employee status is constantly subject to change such as departures or place in different operations. The effects can have an adverse for the expatriates who felt uneasy and lost. Their networks were lost, career plans stalled and new found experience was considered irrelevant by the corporation. The overall

sentiment for the human resource management for repatriation was not well received.

The concern of the employee was echoed upon returning ruling that “ Business has changed at the company; I missed the working style; returning from being the special one to a small person in the large system was a real problem”, and another concern was “ Getting back I felt like a ‘ cog in a machine’. I missed the freedom, power level, and the strategic position I had had while on secondment”. Mark Chan can certainly relate these problem however these problem are stem from the mind that has embellish the previous job, that may be different than what is actually was.

How can expatriation be seen as a opportunity rather than a exile?

“ Before. Preparation: job description, fit for career, training, family (see for example Sullivan and Tu, 1993; Sappinn, 1993).

During. Keep in touch; remunerate, retain commitment, communicate, manage expectations.

Ending. Smooth repatriation, to a subsequent career stage, would reduce the prospects of reversed cultural shock (Rodrigues, 1996).”

In the conclution of FinCorp interview a interviewes was asked for some feedback and for the management in the future and strongly suggested that “ Try to re-incorporate overseas operations into “ main-stream career concept”, which should be part of career development path at FinCorp. It is good for “ calibre” people. This way a good, positive cycle will be developed.

Do not let people return to old jobs, and be aware that for them it may be a new organization, especially following frequent changes. As former boss might have gone or moved, a mentor can be a good replacement. Also half a year before return, one should come for meetings etc. Don't let them feel they have lost the place in the queue."

ways in which these issues may be addressed and that can be useful in facilitating the repatriation process by accurately shaping the expectations, these includes

(Adler, 2002; Black et al., 1999; Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2001; Dowling, Welch & Schuler, 1999; Harvey, 1982; Martin & Harrell, 1996; Stroh, Gregersen & Black, 1998; Sussman, 1986).

To remove some attributes of re-entry problem one can provide career counseling. By covering foreign assignment potential risks can paint an accurate expectation to the candidates. Human resource department can make clear that employee may enjoy less authority after returning from their international assignment, especially communicating the fact that there is a absence of same career opportunities that a afforded at the headquarters. It is also essential that no candidate position is guarantee upon return.

Regardless how long the candidate spends time away from home country they will foster a anticipatory expectation. Recalling expatriates regularly may be a policy that can be implemented to counter re-entry problems.

Regularly updating Expatriates on the current home organizational development, policies, strategy, staffing change etc. a necessary because

expatriates will anticipate the difficulties when they return after being made aware of changes

Providing expatriates a sponsor or mentor may ease their re-entry. the mentors are to assist and notify of important information for the expatriate throughout their assignment. Moreover, mentors can observe elements of the expatriates situation, performance, career, remuneration etc upon their return.

Assigning expatriates project after their return to the home company can sensitize to the aspects in the foreign and home environment. It can also retain their networks at home. During the expatriate business visit or home leaves are the ideal time to provide these short-term assignment in order to work effectively.

More approaches that can help the repatriation process.

(Adler, 2002; Black et al., 1999; Brewster, 1991; Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2001; Dowling et al., 1999; Evans, Pucik & Barsoux, 2002; Harvey, 1982; Mendenhall, Kühlmann, Stahl & Osland, 2002; Selmer, 1999; Stroh, 1995; Black & Gregersen, 1999). These recommendations include:"

" A closer tie-in of international assignments with long-range manpower planning and career development.

Paying attention to the question of repatriation in conjunction with annual performance reviews of the expatriate throughout the foreign assignment.

Continuous monitoring of the expatriate's training needs to reduce deficits and enhance professional skills prior to return.

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Systematic examination of alternative reentry positions for the expatriate at least six months ahead of the proposed repatriation date.

Development of a formal orientation or de-briefing program, including the introduction of the returning expatriate to key persons in the home organization.

Identification of job skills acquired or enhanced overseas, and identification of ways in which those skills can be integrated and productively used in the home organization”

Conclusion

(Forster, 1994) points out that expatriates feels negative upon return, in relation to difficulties they are face when they come back, as repatriation is hard not simply. The recurring theme in the interview reveals a message that the life they came to know has disappear and moved on.

The development of personal strategy to re-intergrate into their past networks should be actively encouraged by expatriate. Human resource department &the operational department face the problem of weighing the role of managing expatriation and the. If the HRM take a more proactive role because line manger are only concern with the days operation rather then people that are abroad.