

Net Expat Newsletter

BRUSSELS - DUBLIN - FRANKFURT - GENEVA - LONDON - PARIS - THE HAGUE

In order to facilitate employees' international mobility, Net Expat helps expat partners find worthwhile work in their new host country through 8 programs covering 41 countries.



Expert opinion

An Effective Expat Center

Douglas A. Schmidt

*ExxonMobil,
Manager of the
Expatriate Service
Center Europe*



Mr. Schmidt, could you please give us an idea of the scope of the Expat Service Center you are responsible for?

- The Europe Expatriate Service Center was first established in Brussels in 1998. Today our team of 14 specialists is responsible for almost 1100 expats on assignment in 24 countries across Europe and the former Soviet Union. Ninety percent of our customers are located in 6 countries.

Conversely, approximately 110 expats are on assignment in the remaining 18 countries. While the issues and customer service expectations are the same for both populations, the delivery mechanism is often different.

In late 2000, you decided to create a satellite

operation for your Expat Service Center in London. What prompted the creation of this satellite at a time when the fashion is to centralize rather than decentralize?

- My view is that we need to be careful not to blindly follow the latest "fashion trend". Any decision to centralize needs to be

balanced against the size of the expatriate population, proximity to business leaders, and "local" knowledge that is important to expatriates' (and their families) smooth assimilation into their new jobs and the communities where they live. The petrochemical industry is

...cost-effectiveness with no loss of customer focus

increasingly global in scope. We consider our ability to effectively deploy our employees across the globe as a potential source of competitive advantage.

The decision to establish the UK office was both strategic and pragmatic. With 380 expats in the



Editorial

Repatriation shock

Alain Verstandig

*Managing
Director,
Net Expat*



spoke enthusiastically about the company's HR policy, the role played by international mobility in developing its managers, and many other things he now prefers to forget.

This morning, on the eve of Christmas, he has woken up feeling even more dispirited than usual. He had returned from expatriation full of hope. He had expected that the John who was now back in head office would be acclaimed, that he would have the opportunity to share his experiences and pass on the lessons of seven years of invaluable expatriate life.

But it didn't turn out that way. The only welcome he received was the embarrassed looks of some of his top managers - who in his

opinion no longer deserve the respect he showed them in the past - and some blunt questions from some of the newcomers. Even his hometown looks different...

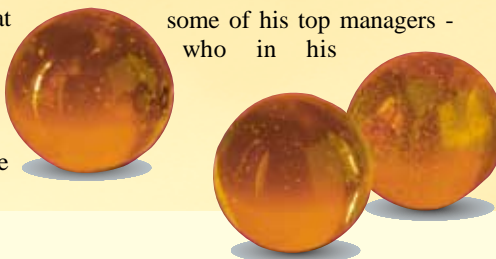
Does this story sound familiar to you? Unfortunately John's case is not an isolated one - to the point that the Johns of this world are now starting to have an impact on the new generation of expatriates! What tangible evidence is there of the kind of reception these future expats can expect on their homecoming, other than the fate they see reserved for those repatriating today?

Yet, from our experience on the ground, we can show that there are efficient and cost-effective solutions to ensure that this scenario is the exception rather than the rule.

Contact us if you want to know more! ■

John, 42 years old, has been working for a multinational corporation for the last 15 years. It's just that he doesn't call it 'working' any longer. He returned to London from his second expatriation six months ago... and nothing works any more.

A model employee, he has given the best of himself in both of the jobs assigned to him. He has been the perfect expat, showing the kind of readiness to integrate - on his part, as well as his wife and children - that you normally only read about in books. His photo has featured in his employer's internal newsletter, where he



Dual Career

Mobility

Integration

Talents

Supported by



UK, we felt the benefits of establishing a satellite office more than outweighed any downside. We've proven to ourselves that, in our current environment, there is more efficiency in decentralizing this piece of our operation than in centralizing. The bottom-line is that our UK satellite office has been a fantastic success.

Does this mean that centralization is no longer the keyword?

- The keyword is "customer service" regardless of where the service originates. Today, some of our services are delivered locally, others are regionally managed, and some processes are global in scope. The challenge is to maintain

efficiency, identify and implement best practices, and actively pursue cost-effectiveness with no loss of customer focus. As an example, our organization used to be known as the 'Expatriate Administration Center'. Today, we're called the 'Expatriate Services Center of Excellence'.

Isn't this just cosmetics?

- Not in our case! Over a number of years we've been able to effect a change in mindset. We've moved away from a "by the book"

application of our Expatriate Policy. Our team does a great job developing creative solutions to individual cases while supporting the principles and philosophies that provide the foundation of the policy itself. The job of the Expatriate Advisor has evolved along with the mindset change. The position

places an increased emphasis on judgment, creativity, and conceptual thinking.

Does this mean you

are prepared to negotiate case by case?

- Our objective is to deliver the same service level and same treatment for all expats around the world who find themselves in the same situation. Today we spend more effort listening and responding to our expatriates' needs and concerns. We dialog with our expats and communicate decisions within the framework of policy intent. Our goal is to educate our expats about why the policy provides or doesn't provide certain benefits rather than simply advising that "it's not in the manual". The job of the Expatriate Advisor may not be any easier than in the past, but I'm convinced it has become far more rewarding. ■



Quality

A new norm



Michael Wijns, Netexpat's Quality Manager:

Mrs. Looze, you have been an ISO auditor for more than eight years now and know all there is to know about quality standards. You have seen our approach to the quality issue evolve over a number of years, and you awarded ISO certification to Net Expat for the first time in 1999. Now you have recertified us for the three years to come. In your opinion is it as important for a service company like ours to have ISO certification as it is for a consumer goods manufacturer?

Mrs. Looze: I think that ISO certification is just as useful for a service company because

it helps to improve its operational standards. It helps the company to grow and provides a common point of reference for everyone in the company in terms of work well done. I also think more and more service companies are competing for tenders put out by companies that are themselves ISO-certificated and, in such cases, the ISO label of the service provider contributes to the quality management work of the client. And then in all the companies I have audited, including your own, it has been a pleasure to witness the pride felt by employees when an auditor officially endorses the quality of their work.

Michael Wijns: it's true that we are all proud of our ISO certification.

Mrs. Looze: It's understandable. You have just passed a relatively advanced milestone

since I had the pleasure, on December 6, of certifying you in accordance with the new ISO 9001:2000 norm.

Michael Wijns: can you explain to us how this norm differs from the earlier one?

Mrs. Looze: The new ISO 9001:2000 norm will replace its predecessor at the latest before December 18th 2003. It has the additional objective of quality improvement. You now have to demonstrate that your services are consistently up to the level expected by your clients. It's no longer enough just to produce or plan in an organized way, you have to show that this is meaningful to your clients, and that you subscribe to the continuous quality improvement of your processes and services. It is revealing to note that even the name applied to ISO certification has changed: it used to be known as a "quality assurance" system, whereas the ISO 9001:2000 norm is now

known as a "Quality Management System". Today, ISO obliges you to be constantly responsive to your clients' expectations of better service. This in itself is a considerable challenge: I am aware of a number of companies among the ones we will have to recertify that risk losing their certification because of this aspect.

Michael Wijns: what changes have you seen in Net Expat in the three years since you awarded us ISO certification in 1999?

Mrs. Looze: I would say that your company's procedures have become more formalized, more systematic. And, needless to say, your facilities are much more impressive and it is also evident that your

professionalism is now clearly recognized in many countries. You have demonstrated the spirit of the new ISO norm, namely that your services meet the expectations of your clients. ■

The ISO 9001: 2000 norm has the additional objective of quality improvement meaningful to your clients!



Newsletter

Survey

Managing Mobility

Stefan Nerinckx

Partner of Bogaert & Vandemeulebroeke, correspondent firm to Landwell

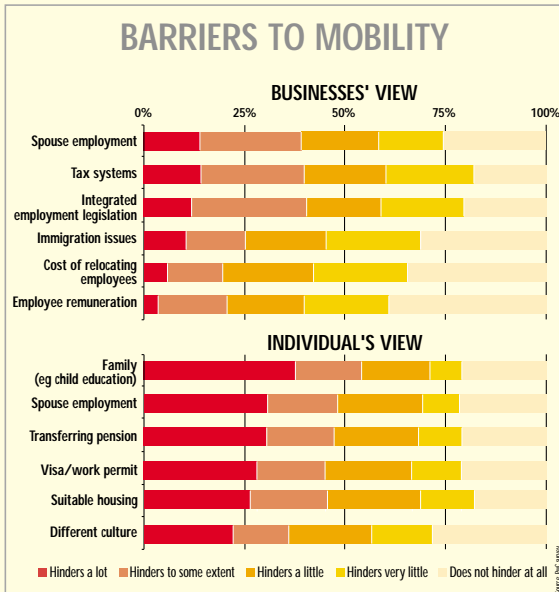


A recent Landwell/PwC survey identified key business and policy issues linked to labor mobility in the EU. International labor mobility is multi-dimensional: it can take different forms depending on whether it is motivated by the employer or the individual and whether it lasts for a few months or for several years.

A large majority of businesses expect their need for a mobile workforce to increase over the next five years. It is clear that taking into account this trend, businesses will have to merge business drivers with the private aspirations of the employee. The dual career issue is a significant hurdle in the management of an expatriate program and was identified by 59% of the participants in a PwC survey on Global Policy and Practice as one of the main reasons for assignment refusal. The opportunities for an employee resulting from an international assignment can be outweighed by the detrimental impact of a career break for the partner. Over half of North American organizations provide no spouse job hunting assistance compared to about one third of European and Asian Pacific firms. It may be the case that European organizations, dealing with more intra-European Union moves where there are no

work permit issues, have more practical options in helping a spouse's job search. Work permit regulations and the lack of reciprocal recognition for professional qualifications are the major restrictions on finding work for spouses and partners in many locations.

In this respect, one of the major issues that companies will have to tackle in the future is the discrepancy between the businesses' needs and the individuals' aspirations. The survey demonstrates that companies tend to develop more new types of international mobility scenarios such as commuting of people, in which case the family can remain in the home country



(and the non-accompanying spouse can continue his/her career) while the employee is working in another country. Traditional scenarios (transfer and long term secondments) are increasing, but less than the recent types of scenarios of international mobility such as commuting and business trips combined with teleworking.

As far as the barriers to international labor mobility

are concerned, a lack of integrated European-wide legislation (employment law and immigration), differences in social security coverage and tax systems and, to a lesser extent, differences in additional benefit systems are generally perceived as being the most important ones. The most important "company-specific" factors are also linked to policy (e.g. variations in the legal status of workers between countries), although differences in remuneration are also seen as important. Furthermore, individuals see the potential barriers to mobility which affect them directly as more significant than their employers do. Moreover, the importance attached to the different barriers varies significantly. Social barriers are perceived to be more important by individuals, particularly family ties and factors such as children's education and housing. As a result it is very important, from an HR point of view, to at least properly structure in a proactive way the combined aspects of employment law, taxes, social security, benefits and immigration. These issues are different in each international mobility scenario (transfer, secondment, commuting, simultaneous employment and business trip/virtual employment) and need to be properly addressed especially as the legal structures of today are focused on the more traditional scenarios of international mobility. ■

For a copy of the survey please contact: stefan.nerinckx@landwell.be or www.landwell.be



Some Clients

- 3M
- Advanced Elastomer Systems
- Alcatel Microelectronics
- Alstom Power
- BBL International
- Brady
- Bristol-Myers Squibb
- Bull
- Cadbury Schweppes
- Colgate Palmolive
- Cordis
- Corus Group plc
- Delhaize Group
- DuPont de Nemours
- Electrabel
- ExxonMobil
- Gemplus
- Guidant Europe
- Honeywell
- ING
- International Paper
- Janssen Pharmaceutica
- Kraft Foods
- MasterCard
- Merck Sharp & Dohme (Europe), Inc
- Nestlé European Information Technology Operations Center
- Newell Rubbermaid
- Nur
- PerkinElmer
- Procter & Gamble
- Reckitt Benckiser
- Saint Gobain Glass France
- Sogem
- Solvay
- Sonaca
- Sony
- TotalFinaElf
- Tractebel
- Tyco-electronics Raychem
- UCB
- Umicore
- Unilever
- Unisis
- UPS
- Whirlpool
- ...

Net Expat Newsletter

Customer

A happy family

**Krassimir
Mitchev**

Expat Partner from
Merck Sharp &
Dohme



Looking back on the time you were settling into your new host country, what were the most difficult moments for you?

- I was expecting some difficulties, but I couldn't really imagine what kind. Unfortunately nobody mentioned Net Expat to us when we first arrived. With your help, everything would have been much easier and we would have

avoided a lot of the challenging moments at home.

I am a physician, with most of my experience in hospitals and academic research. My goal was to reposition myself and work in the pharmaceutical industry.

The time spent with my coach was not only useful, but very pleasant as well. He is such an open-minded person, ready to understand the daily problems of newcomers totally lost in their new realities. I really would like to thank my coach. He helped me so much, from

*Thanks to my coach,
I was at my best during
interviews*

CV writing to the preparation of interviews. Thanks to him I was at my best during interviews. It was appreciated and made the difference.

To be honest with you, at the start of the coaching process I didn't properly appreciate the importance of preparation and I sometimes had the feeling that we were spending too much time on details. Later I realized I was wrong.

I would like also to compliment the Net Expat lawyers. Instead of the usual painful and lengthy

administrative process, my work permit was delivered in only three weeks thanks to them.

You are now happily working in a job in line with your career expectations. Do you think this has a real impact on your family life?

- Yes, of course! We are both career-oriented. I would not have survived without working. We are a happy family now and this of course also has a big impact on my wife's performance at work. I would also like to express my gratitude to my wife's employer, who put up with me and offered me your support. ■

Point Of View

Being a coach at Net Expat

**Anne
de Wergifosse**

Program Manager,
Net Expat Belgium



As I have now been working with Net Expat for a little over a year, I take the liberty of offering some thoughts on the work of a coach. These comments do not presume to be theories cast in concrete but are intended as reflections. People love putting things in pigeonholes. Using labels helps put things into perspective, place them in context. If only it were so simple! But reality, happily, is subtler than that! Being a coach at Net Expat means first revealing the candidate's strengths, identifying potential market

areas and functions, helping the candidate send professional CVs and application letters, training in interview techniques. It also means looking for jobs and helping the candidate structure and organize his or her searches so as to make the difference that really matters. Ultimately it means being a lasting motivator and a source of moral support in today's difficult job market.

But remember that here, at Net Expat, we are working with expatriates from all over the world and with widely differing backgrounds and most of the time they don't speak the local languages. Unlike some recruitment firms, we do not specialize in the Finance industry or Marketing or any other specific discipline. Sure

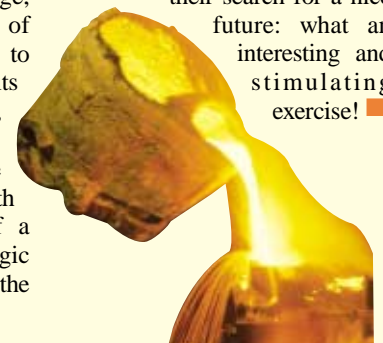
enough, our coaches are complementary to one another, but our specializations are a reflection of the candidates we work with. On top of this, for many of them it's the first time they've been in a foreign country and, to be here, they have had to leave behind a job, part of their family and their friends...

HUMILITY

It would be wonderful to know every foreign language, understand the subtleties of every profession, be able to anticipate the behavioral traits of every culture. But, as it is, we all have our limits. It's not easy to avoid losing face when you're confronted with the journalistic jargon of a Russian or the strategic subtleties of someone from the

US Defense Department! It's often the candidates who are the experts in their field. Yes, but wait a moment, we're the ones that are supposed to be the experts. We're not always, but in any cases we are wonderful pathfinders! We guide, we orient, we help the candidates sell themselves, we give them wings.

So we coaches have to "catch the ball on the bounce" and accompany our candidates in their search for a nice future: what an interesting and stimulating exercise! ■



NET EXPAT specializes in helping spouses/partners of expatriates to find worthwhile and fulfilling work in their new host country.

NET EXPAT

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