

Net Expat® Newsletter

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Expats Coaching | Dual Career Solutions | Expats Assessment

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Offices throughout America, Europe and Asia-Pacific

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International Mobility at Oracle

Corporate Vision



Dini Lavelle

Senior Manager, Oracle International HR - Global Mobility, Pleasanton, USA

Alain Verstandig: Dini, who are your expats today at Oracle?

Dini Lavelle: Oracle sends about 2,000 employees abroad each year. 80% of these are on short-term assignments for anything between 30 days to 1 year, but the average is 6 to 8 months. The remaining 20% are our



"traditional expats" sent abroad for 2 to 3 years. Thus Oracle has approximately 900 expats at any given moment in over 74 countries.

The objective of our short-term assignments is mostly consulting and sales; they are actually part of a specific client project or future project. These short term assignments

The driver behind this centralization was clearly and initially the focus on compliance

are therefore technical experts, and they travel light in terms of mobility support - they often have no housing allowance but instead are reimbursed on their

traditional business expenses. Actually, for the vast majority of them, these allowances will vary and depend on which project they are assigned to as well as the duration of that project. They will follow the global Oracle "travel policy", but expenses will often be dictated by client agreement or contract.

Next to these short term assignments, our approximate 400 traditional expats are sent abroad for 2 to 3 years mostly to bring knowledge locally, start new development centers and strengthen Oracle's expansion.

AV: How are all these expats and short-term employee assignments administered?

DL: All International Mobility activities were centralized about 4 years ago. The driver behind this centralization was clearly and initially the focus on compliance - compliance on tax, labor law and immigration as well as to ensure business continuity.

Overall, most of our international mobility is being driven by project life cycles. Our Oracle people resources have to move on very short notice and for a duration which you often know for sure only after completion of client projects! ■■■

The economic crisis and the voice of expats

Editorial



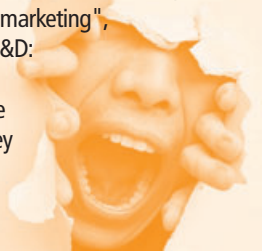
Alain Verstandig

President, NET EXPAT Group

One major change affecting mobility today is the way corporations prepare expats: not so long ago, intercultural trainings were 2 to 3 days long, and delivered in the home location before departure. The economic crisis and the voice of expats have dramatically changed this: these "old" formats were expensive because they were multiple days training, resulting in numerous days out of the business. Despite its added-value, around 40% of expats were no longer attending these trainings. In addition, non-negligible travel costs were involved as host culture trainers had to fly to the home locations; The new best practice has quickly gained momentum globally: short half day to one day intercultural training delivered in the host location during the first 10 days of arrival which allows participants to address "real time" questions.

As a result of these savings, corporations are now finally able to invest in effective corporations customized "coaching" as follow up: while trainings are a group format answering "what is this country and this culture all about?", the follow-up coaching with its weekly face to face sessions answers "how am I going to put all this into music?". Challenges faced by expats are not the same if they are a "Finance Director", "VP of sales and marketing", Head of R&D:

so why should the advice they receive be the same? ■



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■ ■ ■ You can easily see the potential immigration and tax compliance risks we're facing on a daily basis.

Our challenges are also emphasized by the rhythm of all this: Oracle has been growing tremendously these last few years and, as such, the international mobility group has been forced to evolve very quickly. We have found little time to breathe and think strategically. With the pace of our growth, you can imagine our challenge, it's as if we had to change tires at 80 m/h!

We also educate our Oracle colleagues during their tender phase: our project leaders sometimes neglect to take into account all employees' tax implications in their P&L.

AV: *What type of support is included in the Oracle policy?*

Understanding how to work efficiently with your new local client might include understanding its culture

DL: Our policy itself is slightly outdated but will be reviewed in the coming fiscal year and is managed by our HR Global Mobility Group. We have a very lean and simple policy with no intercultural training nor coaching like NET EXPAT offers. Times have changed as our mobile employees have changed together with our local client expectations;

this makes us think that we need to review our international mobility policy. We'll most probably evolve toward a "menu" driven or core plus policy which will allow our lines of business the ability to customize assignment packages based on project needs, assignment types and durations. Our future policy will most probably include destination

services and intercultural training options which have not been included previously. Even if you're an Oracle technical expert, you can benefit from learning more about the working culture of the country you'll be moving to. Understanding how to work efficiently with your new local client might include understanding its culture. ■

Succeeding in India

India has always welcomed its expats, but their initial reaction is of shock because of the obvious disparity in culture and behaviors, the mix of modern and traditional: a traffic light turning red or green may mean the same thing to some drivers! What does this "wobbling" of the head mean: is it a yes or no? How do you handle all these internal politics in local organizations?

Seema Seth, senior consultant at NET EXPAT New Delhi will cover all this for you in our next newsletter.

Sharing a dream



Eunice Latty

Expat Partner from Areva, is interviewed by Lyne Girouard, Senior Consultant at NET EXPAT Montreal, Canada

Testimonial



Lyne Girouard: *What is your background and what brought you to Montreal?*

Eunice Latty: I was born and raised in Mexico where I graduated in "International Trade" and started my career as a Project Manager. Then, my husband got transferred to Paris which proved to be a great but challenging adventure for me. In November 2009, my husband was presented with a new assignment here in Montreal and we arrived in early February 2010.

EL: I thought that I was well prepared, but I was totally unaware of my new environment. I truly

It's so great to wake up in the morning knowing that I am continuing my career

valued my coaching sessions with you, Lyne: you helped me a lot in rethinking and clarifying my career options, and in turn sticking to my plans. When you move internationally, the danger is to lose the focus!

My NET EXPAT coaching has helped me prepare for entering the Montreal job market. I've been able to revise my CV/resume to meet local standards which is a must and practice "role play interviews" which have also helped tremendously. Recruitment interviews can be stressful to a

newcomer: you are playing so much in a few seconds, trying to understand body languages and hidden messages from someone whose culture is new to you. Practicing role plays with you also helped me learn how to be myself with recruiters and highlight my individual qualities which I think is the best way to be convincing.

LG: *Can you highlight some of the cultural challenges you have faced throughout your transition?*

EL: As a Mexican, I have been raised in a very empathetic environment where people joke and smile a lot. When I moved to Paris, I had to get used to a more stressful environment, with much more direct and confrontational people - even though Parisian people are very nice, the working atmosphere is much tougher. Here in Montreal, I'm back to a more relaxed

and friendly environment, even though you feel the Anglo-Saxon professionalism behind every word. Moving back and forth between cultures can be a bit destabilizing.

LG: *Your motivation and our joint work have paid off: you have now been working for the past 2 months.*

EL: Yes, it's so great to wake up in the morning knowing that I am continuing my career here in Canada! I'm contributing and learning at the same time. And of course, my husband is so happy for me too: we're able to share a dream. It's a win-win situation! ■

I thought that I was well prepared, but I was widely unaware of my new environment

LG: *What did you have in mind when you arrived?*





From Microsoft to Worldwide ERC®

Industry perspective



Peggy Smith,
Worldwide ERC® CEO, Washington DC

Alain Verstandig: Peggy, your nomination as CEO of Worldwide ERC® is recent, but it looks like your start has been quick and passionate!

Peggy Smith: You're right Alain - it has been a short transition. I left the Microsoft offices on May 14th after saying goodbye to all my Microsoft colleagues, and one hour later, I was holding my first meeting with members of my new ERC team at 6 pm. And 12 hours later, on Saturday, May 15th, I was attending the Worldwide ERC® conference in Orlando, Florida! But I'm actually not new to ERC, nor is ERC new to me.

AV: How was the transition from your previous responsibilities as Director of Global Mobility at Microsoft?

PS: I find a lot of parallels and differences between the two environments. At Microsoft, most of my interface with the rest of the organization was in dotted lines, as I was heading a support function of the company. In addition, Microsoft imposes a very strong internal discipline. Here at ERC, I find an organization with a strong staff that also relies in part on volunteer leaders, which results in a very different infrastructure. Despite the

difference in scale and process, I find more similarities than differences between the organizations. They are both rich in talented, creative and motivated professionals.

My first key word is "listening" ... my second key word is "transformation"

AV: What are your next steps as head of Worldwide ERC®?

PS: I have drafted a 120-day plan that will take us to our October Board meeting with some solid go-forward recommendations. My first key word is "listening": I've been out talking to our current and new members, non-members and stakeholders since my first moments in this position to evaluate how they see their organization and learn about their wishes for the future. My second key word is "trans-

formation". Today's business and workforce mobility environment is not what it was 10 or 20 years ago. We need to move on, to emerge with a more transparent structure and a business plan that can triumph in the new economy. We need to create even more value for each dollar invested by our members and heighten our cost-conscious approach while gaining market share. We need to be a true "business association".

AV: What will Peggy's touch look like?

PS: I'll bring my rigor, a set of templates, and a few "non-negotiable" points! As you know, I'm very energetic and results-oriented. Like most businesses today that constantly need to reinvent themselves, we don't have the luxury of waiting too long to make progress. ERC and its members already have a presence around the globe, and you'll see that network expand and deepen. We have exciting projects ahead of us! ■

I find a lot of parallels and differences between the two environments

I've been very active there for over 10 years. As such, ERC is like a family to me, so the landing has been very easy. I have been welcomed with fantastic enthusiasm.



Adapting your Leadership Style when going abroad

NET EXPAT Germany



Dr. Winfried Guba
Director NET EXPAT Germany

Since Daniel Goleman presented an overview of effective leadership styles ("Leadership That Gets Results" in Harvard Business Review March/April 2000), a lot has been written about this subject. Coaching and training thousands of expat executives around the globe gives us a fantastic insight on such styles. Obviously, the most effective executives use a collection of distinct leadership styles – each in the right context. Such flexibility is not always easy to put into action, but it pays off in performance. What does this mean in an interna-

tional environment? As we all know, values and assumptions represent different things in different cultures. Understanding

Understanding the cultural differences is one thing and being able to adapt your leadership style is another

the cultural differences is one thing and being able to adapt your leadership style is another. Let's take USA and Germany as an example: while Germans are quite

used to a rather directive style of communication /management, one wouldn't be an efficient manager if one led that way with US workers. While German managers often think "not being criticized is enough to be praised", managers in the USA may feel that "not being praised is to be criticized".

In other words, you need to adapt your leadership style when you take over a new role in a new cultural environment. However, in order to be successful, you first have to be aware of

your own leadership style and its limits. Secondly, you need to understand how to use that tool set in another cultural environment to be most effective. What is the right tone to set, how do you initiate change and how do you lead your team through rough times?

These are far from easy questions which all expats face and need to answer, preferably in the host country with a trusted expert who knows the local management culture. ■



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Pfizer
PricewaterhouseCoopers
Procter & Gamble
PSA Peugeot Citroen
Puratos
Reckitt Benckiser
Roche
Rolls-Royce
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Expatriate Spouses: What do they want?

Research



Nina Cole

Associate Professor of Human Resources Management, Ryerson University in Toronto and author of "Expatriate Spouses: What do they want?", interviewed by Miranda Arya, Director NET EXPAT UK and Ireland



Miranda Arya: Your recently published research clearly shows the importance of supporting expatriate spouses. What was the overriding issue for them?

Nina Cole: The whole reason spouses tend to be the most critical member of the family in influencing the success of an expatriation is because they're the ones whose lives are most affected. The expat has a sense of familiarity through his or her company and the children build a new routine through their school. Unless companies provide support, as NET EXPAT does, spouses sit at home alone and the issue of employment and dual careers exacerbates it all.

Spouses want practical assistance rather than cash payments

MA: What are the conclusions of your research?

NC: The conclusions show that companies just haven't thought things through. It's not enough to just throw money at the problem. Spouses looking for work need knowledgeable, professional assistance from someone who understands the context they're in. The support needs to be provided in the host location and not from the home location as every place is different and it also needs to be tailored to finding a job in that particular country.

MA: Do most companies you surveyed provide spousal support?

NC: Most companies provide very

little. There are some that do but most don't or just give away money or have internal local HR try to help which is often not very helpful. Companies themselves don't know what spouses need. It is a major concern that every company should provide help to spouses if they want the expatriation to succeed. When spouses don't get properly supported, studies show that they feel very upset and disappointed in the company. I didn't hear many positive things about any of the HR departments across 100 multinationals – in fact only 2 out of the 100 received good reports!

MA: You also found that spouses wanted greater respect and practical assistance rather than cash payments. Why did they feel this was so important?

NC: This was a key thing – spouses wanted to be included in the information being provided when the assignment was being planned and often all the details of the benefits are dealt with by them. But on the other hand, I also heard a lot of stories about HR departments offering intercultural training pre-departure to spouses who ultimately didn't turn up as they were too busy. Unfortunately, later on when the spouse's interest might be higher once they get to the host country, the local HR was not really interested or able to respond to their queries; spouses then felt very distant from anyone who could help.

MA: What was your most useful finding from the research?

NC: The most useful finding is that what spouses want is really not very

complicated. They want an experienced human being who can tailor the support to their specific needs and help them through the transition process, providing a springboard to the rest of their expatriation. The other thing is that when it comes to jobs, spouses are realistic and don't expect the company to actually find a job for them, but they want to be provided with efficient and professional assistance to lead them towards employment.

MA: I understand your next research project is around male spouses. Can we have a sneak preview of what you've discovered?

NC: That male spouses need more or less the same as women but they have a harder time reaching out to find other spouses. They definitely need employment support. Their identity seems to be more exposed than women spouses when they have to reveal that they're actually not working while abroad – it makes many people feel very uncomfortable. Male or female, spouses are very important to the success of an assignment and companies need to take the issue seriously and not underestimate the impact that an unhappy spouse can have on the employee. ■



Net Expat®

We help you expat your talents

NET EXPAT is a global leader in assessing, training and coaching expatriates and their partners. We provide expat spouse support, expat coaching, intercultural training and expat assessment to over 200 multinational corporations in 52 countries where we have a local presence. Our ultimate goal is to assist corporations and expats in achieving successful international assignments, whether the move is for three months, three years or on a permanent basis.

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