

Net Expat Newsletter

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

Survey

Dual Careers and International Assignments

Siobhan Cummins

Managing
Director,
ORC, London



As multinational organisations continue to develop and exploit markets on a global scale they increasingly need mobile employees to undertake international assignments. However, one of the major barriers to employee mobility is the whole issue of dual careers and spouse employment.

Participants in ORC's 2000 Worldwide Policies and Practices Survey of over 610 companies indicated that Dual Careers and family matters are the most frequently cited reasons

for assignment turndown. With more women in professional or managerial position the problem is likely to increase in importance because spouses, both male and female, are reluctant to interrupt their careers or give up a lucrative job to accompany their partner on an international assignment,

In 1996 only 38% of companies had a formal written policy but nearly 80% now include a written statement in their international assignment programmes

particularly if the assignment is to an emerging country where living conditions and the opportunities to work are limited. Some countries also restrict work-permits, which exacerbates the problem.

To determine how companies are responding to this challenging issue ORC recently conducted a major new survey on Dual Careers and International Assignments, which attracted over 300 participants from Europe, North America and Asia. This was the fourth such survey ORC has conducted and it set out to establish what steps companies are taking to resolve this problem in their organisations. It revealed some interesting facts.

The survey Respondents confirmed that the expatriate world is still very male dominated (86%) and the number of female expatriates has changed very little in the past 10 years (14%) and is



Editorial

Fundamental questions

Alain Verstandig

Managing
Director,
Net Expat



I have just spent two exhausting but absolutely fascinating days. Net Expat was invited, in the context of a major international recruitment fair, to counsel young potential expats with at least three years business experience. All these young people were anxious for advice, encouraged by their impressive CVs and diplomas and a promising, albeit brief, exposure to working life.

We were there to talk about the challenges of expatriate existence, to help them decide what they expected or did not expect of life in a foreign country and, above all, how to

maximize their chances of success.

I was astonished at the maturity of these young people, maybe a sign that I'm getting old. For behind the facade of the promising and ambitious young manager eager to go anywhere at any time, most of the questions put to us betrayed their anxiety about the longer-term implications. How can one stay mobile when one has a partner or children? How can one reconcile two careers? Is it inevitable that one of the partners sacrifices his or her professional ambitions? Is it better to contemplate life abroad as a couple? When should an expatriate couple start a family? How should

one start an international career? How to avoid losing the taste for long-term expatriation?

All these questions, coming from people under the age of 28, reflected all the freshness and, at the same time, the earnestness of life. These future managers will have to be mobile, they know it. But, set against their dazzling diplomas, the lack of assurance of these future managers in managing their own futures is alarming. Evidently, judging from the number of young people who talked to us and the hordes of questions we were subjected to, neither their education nor the limited experience they shared with their peers was sufficient on its own. And yet the underlying question is as simple as it is fundamental: how to succeed in this world without frontiers? ■



Dual Career

Mobility

Integration

Talents

Supported by





possibly due to a whole range of issues from women opting out of the selection process because they fear rejection to those who find the prospect of managing a family and a career abroad too daunting.

Most male assignees are generally married and tend to be accompanied by their families whilst most women expats are likely to be single and unaccompanied. Interestingly the survey highlighted the number of male trailing spouses is reportedly on the



increase and companies more likely to accept non-traditional family situations than before.

The majority of companies reported the number of expatriates in their organisations are increasing with a trend towards shorter-term assignments being reported in nearly 40% of companies.

The latest survey highlighted a major change with a significant number of companies reporting that they now have a formal policy on Dual Careers. In 1996 only 38% had a formal written policy but nearly 80% now include a written statement in their international assignment programmes.

The types of support vary

from company to company but the most typical options are:

- Language tuition
- Cultural orientation
- Work permit assistance
- Payments toward further education

Few companies provide compensation for loss of spousal income but will provide limited financial support in the form of a one time payment at the start of an assignment or an annual payment. Allowance levels have increased with \$8,000 being typical for one off payment and \$6000 for annual allowances.

Most companies will provide assistance to spouses regardless of whether they were working prior to an assignment or not.

It is clear that the significance of Dual Careers is increasingly causing concern and the fact that so many companies now address the issue in their assignment policy bears witness to this. It is also interesting to note that companies are reviewing other alternatives such as short-term and commuter assignments, more open advertising of international vacancies and more family friendly working arrangements to provide a better work life balance for their employees.

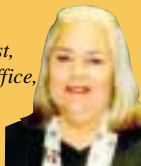
ORC has advised many companies on the development of appropriate policies and practices and is happy to share the benchmark research collected over the past ten years with companies and HR Professionals. ■

Initiative

Solutions from the U.S. Department of State

Debra M. Thompson

Employment Program Specialist, Family Liaison Office, U.S. Department of State



How long has the dual career issue impacted Department of State Foreign Service employee mobility?

- The Department of State has recognized the increasing demand for spouse employment options over the past twenty years. Statistics compiled in the mid-1990s by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau indicate that more than 61% of all married couples in the US are in fact dual-earner couples. And the number of

married women participating in the labor force has almost doubled between 1966 and 1994. Foreign Service marriages are also made up of dual-earner couples and the accompanying spouse often has a professional field to follow. This represents a significant shift in the demographics of the Foreign Service.

Unfortunately, locating employment in a foreign culture during the limited time-period of an overseas assignment continues to be exceptionally difficult for professional spouses wishing to enhance their career development. In many of the Department's diplomatic missions there are numerous positions available to spouses,

but they are rarely in professional fields nor do they pay at the professional level. Therefore, there are a significant number of spouses wishing to work outside the diplomatic mission, yet few professional opportunities are available to them.

What solutions has the Department of State considered?

- For more than ten years the Department of State maintained a voluntary skills bank of spouses accompanying a USG employee to an embassy or consulate. This information was forwarded to post prior to the spouse's arrival and was

distributed to the HR Officer. This system worked fairly well for spouses seeking employment within the diplomatic mission as the HR Officer could inform the spouse of openings prior to arriving at post.

However, spouses seeking professional employment on the local economy were not well served by this system, as there was no individual responsible for distributing the information. Since the Department changed its computer system from the WANG in 1996, the Skills Bank has been inactive. There are plans for developing a more resume-oriented database that will be useful for



The most useful tool in a productive job search is a large, diverse and active network of contacts

Newsletter

Testimonial

It's tough, but you'll get there!...

Rosanne Coté

Accompanying
Expat Spouse
from Umicore



Net Expat: What was it like when you were confronted with the decision and when you were still working in Canada prior to your departure?

- Making up our minds was the most difficult and the most stressful period of all. For my husband, who had been offered this new job, it was a challenge, a very exciting opportunity. As for me, I didn't know what to expect - except that I

was going back to Square One in terms of a job, setting up home, and so on. There were days when I felt I was facing a huge wall of uncertainty! The fact is that the partners start out from entirely different situations. The intervening period before the move was an entirely different matter because, by now, the decision had been



mission employment and local employment searches, but many security details must still be worked out.

A new initiative developed by the Department was tested in Mexico in 2001 and will be implemented in 9 new countries in 2002. The program is called the Spouse Networking Assistance Program or SNAP. Most career counselors would agree that the most useful tool in a productive job search is a large, diverse and active network of contacts. Department of State spouses have a limited

time at a post and cannot afford to invest six months to a year in building a network each time they relocate. SNAP provides a ready-made network built and maintained by a Local Employment Adviser (LEA). The LEA also provides one-on-one coaching to spouses on job searching techniques most

effective in the host culture, schedules workshops on interviewing and resume writing, and hosts a web site and message board providing up-to-the-minute trends and advice. SNAP's expansion countries for 2002 include the United Kingdom, Belgium, Poland, Egypt, Singapore, Korea, Japan, Argentina, and Chile.

The Mexico pilot, the precursor of SNAP taught us that the

service was needed and beneficial, but that many spouses needed assistance in accepting the realities of employment on

the local economy. Between the low salaries, longer hours and language requirements, many spouses were not satisfied with the job offers they received. One important addition to the program in our expansion sites is a training component on the realities of employment in that specific country. ■

taken. This was a very intense period of planning and preparations for the move, with a lot of problems to be sorted out. It was very busy time!

What were the biggest challenges you faced in approaching the job market here?

- I hadn't been in the job market for a very long time, so it seemed an enormous challenge to me. I didn't know where to start. What's more, this was a new country for me and that didn't help: I didn't have any contacts and I didn't really know the rules. However, the help I got from Net Expat was terrific. My coach there gave me all the tools and support I could have asked for. I really felt I had friends.

Did you have any moments of doubt?

- Of course! I went through a very difficult time about two months after I arrived. I started getting rejection letters from potential employers. I also started to feel that I was no one. I had always had a job since the time I left school. So it was very difficult for me to stay at home on my own. I felt like someone who had been pensioned off suddenly. I was also very afraid that I would never find a job. I was losing confidence in myself and wondered whether I had it in me to work again.

Yet today you have your work permit and a good job. So what would you say to other expat partners?

- I would encourage them to be optimistic and patient. People should realize that

there are likely to be difficult moments, and this is only to be expected. It's also important to have other things going on during this period and not concentrate all your efforts on the job search on its own. And also to

keep in touch with your Net Expat mentor! I'm very happy. I think the experience helped me see more clearly what I wanted and what I was looking for in a job. ■

The fact is that the partners start out from entirely different situations

Our Customers

3M
Alcatel Microelectronics
Alstom Power
BBL International
Brady
Bristol-Myers Squibb
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Net Expat Newsletter

Websites

Expatriate websites relay company support to international assignees

Hélène Stampe

Marketing
Manager,
xPATS.com,

<http://www.xpats.com>



Does anyone involved in international mobility doubt that the success of an assignment also depends on how expatriates and their family face the experience on the private side?

A recent survey that we organized showed that many expatriates can count on their company to help them settle when arriving at destination. However, they rarely feel that that help has been enough, even for those who were granted relocation services.

And of course, once people have moved in, another story begins, for which help just simply crumbles into dust:

settling in the new country means meeting new friends, finding a trustworthy doctor or plumber, ...

Progressively, expatriates find their way and develop their information network. They even discover that information is available in a quite extensive way: there are of course the magazines dedicated to the expatriate community, the expatriate associations, the tourism information services and last, but not least, ... the expatriate websites!

Websites nicely complement the structured information and help provided by companies on arrival

Unfortunately, many expatriates admit to having discovered the existence of those websites

far too late. Mainly by word of mouth. And they agree that they could have saved so much time and energy by knowing about them earlier!

Internet has a big role to play for expatriates, because it is already available before moving, providing lots of

information about the future destination.

When leaving the home country, internet also provides the ease of e-mail to keep in touch with family and friends at home. It helps to stay informed with local news in the home country.

Expatriate websites provide a lot of practical information on housing, education, the health system, shopping and banking, ... But the biggest added value is their interactivity:

'ask an expat' sections make it possible for people to post all kinds of questions and ask for advice. Help rapidly comes from peers. And 'oldtimers' would admit that they

even still use the 'ask an expat sections' from time to time. Expatriates can really get support from their community online every day. Expatriate websites also offer the possibility to post classifieds, to get cultural information to find out what to do during the next week-end and to link with hundreds of other useful websites. Some of them even host expatriate associations for people sharing the same interests.

Expatriate websites offer expatriates a splendid opportunity to get help everyday and never feel alone. They nicely complement the structured information and help provided by companies on arrival! ■



A great international initiative is born!

The objective of the "Permits Foundation" is to promote the improvement of work permit regulations for the spouses of expatriate employees. "Permits" is already supported by more than 20 top international companies from Europe and the USA. Shell is playing a major role and is actively supported by corporations like British Airways, BP, GlaxoSmithKline, ICI, ORC, Philips, PWC, Schlumberger, Siemens, Unilever and many others. Siobhan Cummins (see article on front page) is member of the board. If your organization wants to join the foundation, please contact Kathleen van der Wilk-Carlton or Philippa Fletcher at +31 70 377 16 85, phillippa.a.p.fletcher@si.shell.com or Net Expat.

Don't miss the upcoming HR Conference: "Revival Experience in Expat Management"

21st March 2002
starting at 4.00 pm,
followed by a reception
Contact us for more information!

Some profiles

Looking for that specific profile?

We have a lot of candidates who are actively looking to pursue their careers. Don't hesitate to contact us if you are interested, it's completely free of charge.

Do you want more information? Don't hesitate to contact us at jobs@netexpat.com.

NET EXPAT specialises in helping spouses/partners of expatriates to find worthwhile and fulfilling work in their new host country. Would you like more information?

NET EXPAT

See also our Web site at

<http://www.netexpat.com>

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