



# Expectations vs. reality of expatriate support activities in the case company X

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<p>This study researched a case company's support activities to its expatriates before and during international assignments. According to the case company's wishes the focus was on cross-cultural training, mentoring and coaching, and peer support. This study provides the case company with a status report on how they are doing at present and gives development suggestions on how to improve knowledge transfer and decrease expatriate failures.</p> <p>This project started in April 2012 with a meeting with a company representative. During the summer of 2012, the relevant theory on expatriate management and support activities was collected with an emphasis on three main focus topics mentioned. This study includes insights to these topics by various researchers.</p> <p>Based on the theory an online survey was distributed to expatriates. The online survey outlined the focus points for the follow-up data collection through narratives. These tools were used to collect data on the case company's expatriates expectations and experiences. Expatriates' thoughts, feelings, and opinions were the target data.</p> <p>The case company has a set of policies to support its expatriates. These policies mainly handle financial matters. The expatriates expressed that they would like to receive practical support as well. Cross-cultural training is a basic support activity but the case company could work on the content quality. Mentoring and coaching and peer support are not taken advantage of by the case company. Theory supports that there are multiple benefits from mentors, especially in expatriate adjustment and consequently on international assignment success. Peer support in the form of expatriate networks and home and host country connections can form a support network to assist the expatriate throughout the international assignment.</p>	
<p><b>Keywords</b> Expatriate management, cross-cultural training, support activities, mentoring, coaching, peer support, expatriate network, expatriate society, knowledge transfer</p>	

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# **1 Introduction**

In this chapter I will cover basic information of this study. First there is a short explanation of what brought me into making a research of my particular topic. Then I will explain what I attempt to achieve with this study. The rest of the chapter outlines the topic of the research, the scope of the research and also the definitions of key concepts for the research topic. Lastly I will introduce the case company.

## **1.1 Background to research**

The appearance of multinational organizations together with globalization has brought forth the new trend of global staffing through expatriation. Since those times it has been recognized that there are high costs incurred from international assignments. Yet companies expect their number of expatriates to increase.

This research deals with expatriates of the case company. It will provide answers to what expatriates expect from the support activities of Company X and whether those expectations have been met or not. The case company wishes to remain anonymous thus I will call it Company X and knowingly exclude data that could identify the case company.

## **1.2 Aim and purpose**

Employee engagement is one of the five development programs ongoing in Company X. This study gathered first-hand information from the expatriates. Company X can use the results from this study to make decisions about expatriate processes. This way the expatriates had the possibility to be involved in the decision making. Additionally the case company wished to gain improved benefits from expatriate assignments. This study provides the case company with an overview of the current opinions of the expatriates along with development suggestions for the support activities, which in return aim to improve expatriate assignments. This document is the final outcome offered to Company X.

The research focused on support activities that had to do with cross-cultural training, mentoring and coaching, and peer support. For the most part the social support services are not regulated by the company. Yet those may make a huge difference in the expatriate experience. It is beneficial to the expatriates to make the company aware of these support activities so that the company may find ways to include them in the expatriate management activities.

As for me, the benefit is the experience. This research is first of its kind for me to conduct. The topic is interesting and will provide meaningful insights into human resource management (HRM) and expatriate management in real business setting. Last but not least I had a chance to acquaintance myself with Company X.

### **1.3 Research problem**

This study is in the field of HRM. It looks into the support activities offered to the expatriates of the case company. Expatriate management is an activity under international HRM. It has multiple aspects to it but this study will focus on support activities. The research problem is as follows:

#### **How do expatriates' expectations of support activities differ from the reality in Company X?**

This problem has distinctive steps to take. First, it will be necessary to define what are the support activities included in this study. Second, the study seeks to understand what expatriates in Company X expect from the support activities and what services they have actually received. Third, a comparison is made between the expectations and the experiences. These steps are identified with a set of investigative questions listed below.

- 1 What support activities does Company X provide?
- 2 What are the expatriates' expectations of support activities?
- 3 What are the expatriates' experiences of support activities?
- 4 How do expatriates' expectations compare to expatriates' experiences?

## 5 What can be developed to improve the support activities?

The first investigative question is a background question for the rest of the expatriate expectations. It explains what support activities Company X provides to its expatriates.

The main purpose of this study is to find out what are the expectations of Company X's expatriates. Furthermore, those expectations will be evaluated based on the occurrence/ absence of it and in minor part the quality of it. To be able to evaluate the expectations it is mandatory to know what the expectations are. That is why the second investigative question is about the expectations and only third and fourth investigative questions seek to find out whether the expectations learnt from the second investigative question have also been met or not.

The fifth investigative question is there for additional benefit to the case company. Rather than merely stating the current facts, I take advantage of the collected data to provide some suggestions on how to improve the expatriates' experience of international assignments in the light of meeting the expectations with necessary quality.

Data was collected through two tools: an online survey and narratives. The online survey focused on investigative questions 1 and 2 whereas narratives focused on investigative question 3. Investigative questions 4 and 5 used data from both tools to provide comprehensive evaluations and deductions.

I used two informant groups to acquire primary data. The groups were: expatriates preparing for the assignment (from now on referred to as pre-expats) and expatriates on assignment (from now on referred to as on-expats). There was an additional source of information, the representative of the case company. These relationships are collected into the table below (Table 1).

Table 1. Overlay matrix

<b>Investigative question</b>	<b>Theory chapter</b>	<b>Data collection tool/s</b>	<b>Informant group/s</b>	<b>Results and discussion chapter</b>
What support activities does Company X provide?	2.3	Online survey	Pre-expats, on-expats, company representative	4.2
What are the expatriates' expectations of support activities?	2.3	Online survey, (narratives)	Pre-expats, on-expats	4.3
What are the expatriates' experiences of support activities?	2.3	Narratives	On-expats	4.4
How do expatriates' expectations compare to expatriates' experiences?	2.3	Online survey, narratives	Pre-expats, on-expats	5.1
What can be developed to improve support activities?	2	Narratives, (online survey)	On-expats, (pre-expats)	5.2

#### 1.4 Scope of the research

The focus of this study is expatriate management but it does not cover all aspects of it. It is limited to Company X's support activities alone. Furthermore I do not consider the whole expatriation process (Figure 2, 11) but only the time before departure to the host country and the time in the host country. The case company further defined the evaluated support activities to be cross-cultural training, mentoring and coaching, along with peer support.



This study is entirely from the perspective of expatriates and disregards the management point of view. The key data for this study came from the expatriates' thoughts, feelings, evaluations, and so on. The purpose was to qualitatively measure the expectations and experiences of the expatriates and use that to compare the two.

Company X's expatriates can be divided into three groups; those preparing for their departure, those on assignment and those that have returned from the assignment. Based on a mutual agreement between the commissioning parties this study will focus on the two first groups: expatriates preparing for their departure and those on assignment. The decision was made because the third group of returned expatriates would be hard to contact for data collection purposes. Additionally the two parties agreed that the two other expatriate groups will provide sufficient data for the purpose of the research.

## 1.5 Definitions of key concepts

**Expatriate management** is an activity under international human resource management that deals with the management of expatriates throughout the international assignment cycle. It starts with recruitment and follows the steps of hiring, preparation, expatriation, and finally repatriation. (Emerald Group Publishing Limited 2012.)

**Expatriate** is an employee that transfers from one location to another country in the name of the work. The transfer takes place within a company or an organization. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 69-71.)

When an employee works for a foreign part of the company, that project or work time is called an **international assignment**. In most cases the assignment is calculated to start when the employee departs from home country and it concludes when the employee returns to home country. It is also possible to have an international assignment as a virtual assignment when the employee regularly works virtually to handle business in another country. International assignments are usually categorized according to the length of the assignment but they can be categorized by the nature of the assignment as well. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 66-67.)

**Cross-cultural training** (CCT) is formal intervention with the purpose to educate people how to interact effectively with people from different cultures. In expatriate management it can be further defined as any formalized intervention that prepares the expatriate for the international assignment so that he/she can live and work in a foreign country (Maude 2011, 210; Parkinson & Morley 2006, 118.)

A **mentor** is someone a person learns from. He/she can be considered a resource. A mentor provides an expatriate with information and expectations of the organization. (Maclennan 1995, 4-6.)

A **coach** is someone a person learns with. He/she helps the performer to do more. A coach helps an expatriate to achieve during his/ her international assignment. (Maclennan 1995, 4-6.)

**Peer support** is “social support that is based on experiential knowledge which is given and received between people in similar situation” (Rantanen 2009, 7).

**Knowledge transfer** is as the name suggests transferring knowledge from one person to another within a company. Knowledge can be “explicit (articulated) or tacit (non-verbal, intuitive)”. Explicit knowledge transfer often takes place naturally whereas tacit knowledge transfer can be hard to achieve because of its intuitive nature. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 21-22.)

The traditional definition of **expatriate failure** is the premature return of the expatriate. Current studies are moving towards a new definition that would also consider ineffective performance of the expatriate and the expatriate’s inability to adjust to be expatriate failures. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 86.)

## 1.6 Case company introduction

The case company, Company X, was founded in 1910 and is today a global leader in manufacturing machinery and providing support services for their products. It has a

strong presence all over the globe except for South America and Africa. It has over 1,000 offices and seven research and development centers. (Company X 2012.)

Company X employs around 33,800 employees. The company emphasizes employee engagement, employee development, and workplace safety. (Company X 2012.) The Global HR team is located in the headquarters of the company, but there are HR directors in each unit on local level. Attachment 1 illustrates the organizational HR structure of Company X. (Company X representative 8 June 2012.)

Expatriate management operations in the company are led by two people in Global HR; the Head of International Mobility and International Mobility Manager. These two employees are located in the headquarters and they handle all international mobility that takes place in the global company. (Company X representative 8 June 2012.)

The main purpose of Company X is to provide international assignment opportunities and to ensure knowledge transfer among its subsidiaries. Additionally international assignments may be used to enhance personal and professional growth. In most cases there is a need for specialized knowledge and skills in an open position, and the person cannot be found locally. This results in an open position in Company X's intranet that anyone in the company may apply for. Due to the strategic and specialized role of the open international positions, it is unusual for operative staff to go on an international assignment. (Company X representative 8 June 2012.)

Company X categorizes its international assignments and transfers based on the length of the trip and the nature of the work. There are seven categories which start from business trips of maximum 6 months length to up to 4 years international assignments, and lastly to employment localization after an assignment has lasted longer than 4 years. (Company X 2011, 3.)

For the past five years Company X's number of expatriates has remained constant. In December 2012 there were 95 expatriates in total. From those eight were hosted in Finland and 48 were from Finland. During year 2012, 15 expatriates have departed

from Finland and two expatriates arrived in Finland. Top countries China, Singapore and USA had 28, 12 and 10 expatriates respectively in December 2012. (Company X representative 13 Dec 2012.)

## 2 Expatriate management

Knowing that expatriate management is still a valid topic of research, below I explain the structure of the theoretical framework for this study. The main theory is that of expatriate management. To continue to the main theme of this study, the theory will focus on support activities to expatriates, followed by detailed descriptions of cross-cultural training, mentoring and coaching, and peer support. Notice that the three types of support services will focus on the time before and during assignment, not the time after the completion of the assignment.

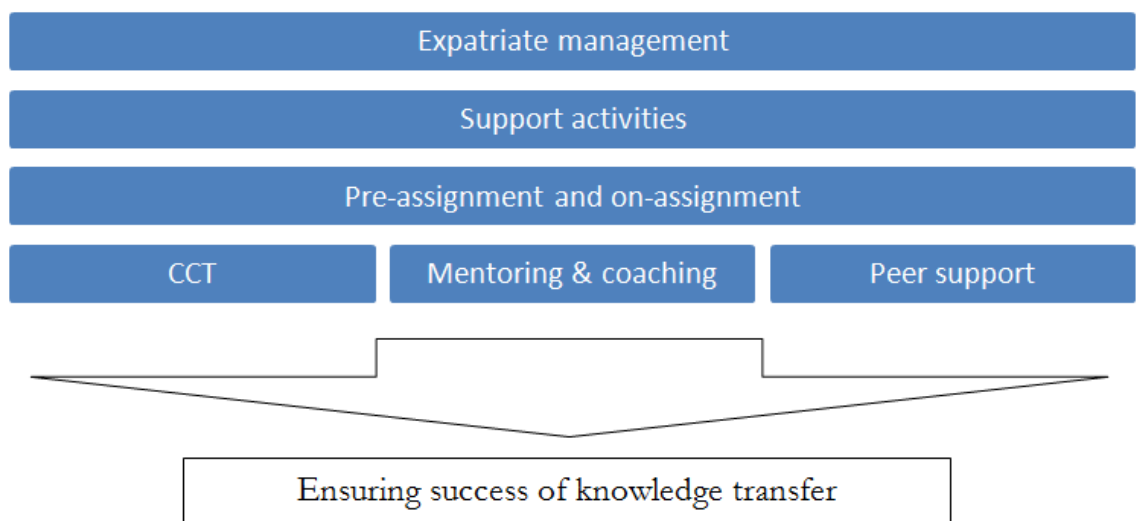


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework will be finally used to deduct suggestions for the case company on how to improve their international assignments. As the main purpose of expatriate assignments in Company X is knowledge transfer, there will be specific focus in finding ways through CCT, mentoring and coaching, and peer support to ensure success of knowledge transfer.

Dowling and Welch (2004, 66-67) and Edström and Galbraith (in Scullion & Collings 2006b, 40) have listed out three main reasons why expatriation has remained as an international human resources management trend.

The first reason is that companies attempt to fill an empty position by staffing internally an expatriate. This approach is used to transfer the necessary skills to where they are needed regardless of national and cultural background of the employee. The benefit from this is the resulting transfer of knowledge.

The second reason has to do with management purpose. A company may wish to train and educate employees in company values, management styles, and so forth by transferring employees to parent offices or to subsidiaries. It may also be used as a mean to develop managers with international adaptability.

The third reason has been the traditional reason for expatriation and is still a valid point. The purpose of expatriation can be to provide organizational development. It is common for companies to send a home-country national to be the head manager of a new subsidiary in a foreign country. This expatriate in return would take with him the parent office management styles and control to the new subsidiary.

Expatriate management is the process of handling expatriates throughout the international assignment cycle; from recruitment to repatriation (Figure 2). Each step is crucial for a long-term success of the international assignment, but unfortunately the repatriation phase is often ignored in practice. (Linehan 2006, 196.) This study will focus on two of the phases: preparation and expatriation.

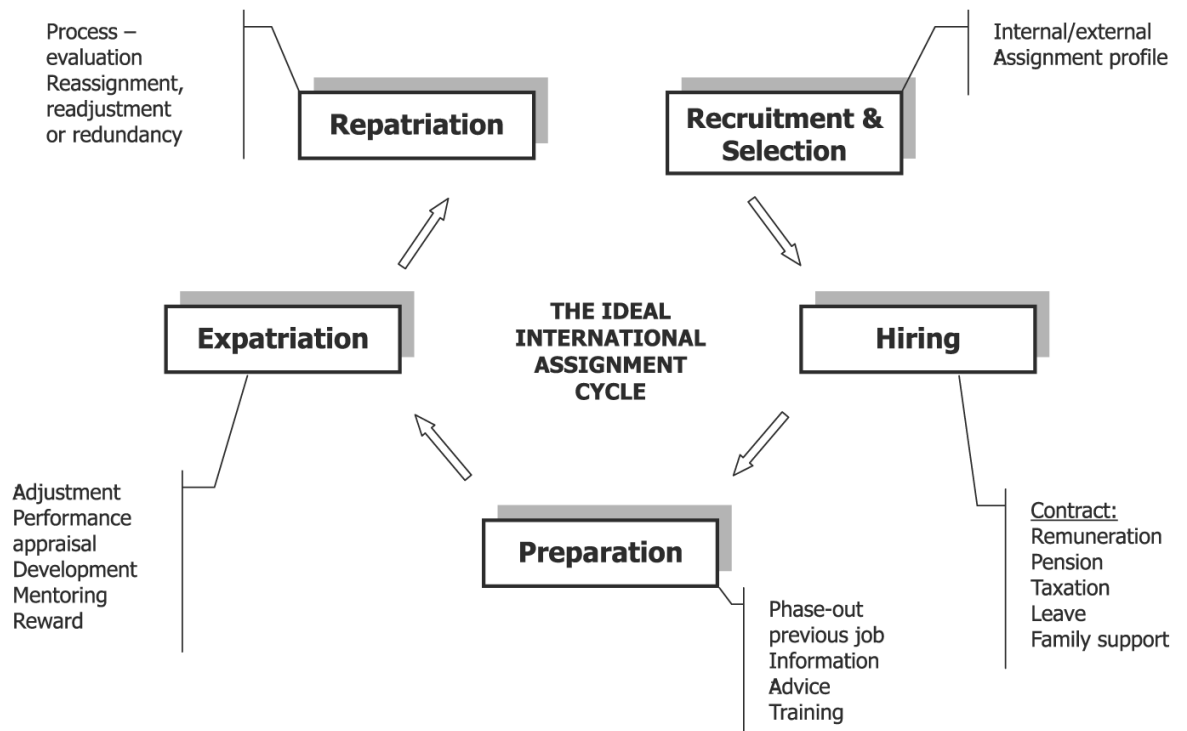


Figure 2. The ideal international assignment cycle (Emerald Group Publishing Limited 2012)

Preparation should include pre-departure training. A common part of pre-departure training is cross-cultural training (CCT). Some companies offer the expatriate a chance to visit the country for the duration of several days. Language training can also be included in pre-departure training. Furthermore training on practical skills necessary for the success of the international assignment can be very beneficial. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 120-127.) Stephen Asher (2009b, 16-17) lists out additional issues to be considered in pre-departure training of an expatriate. The additional ones are remuneration, long-term benefits, career development, job security on return, and stress of moving.

Expatriation is the stage of staying and working in the host country. During this time it is normal for the expatriate to go through a culture shock: the stages identified with adaptation to a new environment.

## 2.1 Expatriate and the international assignment

It was established in subchapter 1.5 that an expatriate is an employee that transfers from one location to another country in the name of the work. Generally expatriates

are those employees that live and work in the country for the minimum of a year but the trends in international assignments has caused a reason to rethink the definition of an expatriate.

Nevertheless, we can still identify different roles for expatriates. Dowling and Welch (2004, 69-71) define the following five roles; agent of direct control, agent of socialization, network builder, boundary spanner, and language node.

Agent of direct control ensure compliance to company policies and is a direct control mechanism for the parent company. Agent of socialization is similar to agent of direct control as in the purpose of stretching parent country control into subsidiaries, but the method is indirect, through corporate culture. The expatriate's purpose would be to transfer parent company's corporate values and beliefs to the subsidiary. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 69-71.)

Network builder is what the name suggest, an expatriate that builds connections in the host country. Consequently these connections may be used for informal control purposes but also for efficient communication. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 69-71.)

Boundary spanner is rather an action based role. The expatriate would act as a representative of the host country and at the same time collect host country information. The purpose would be to bring home and host country closer together, internally and externally. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 69-71.)

As language nodes, expatriates may become "the right language connections". During an international assignment the host company employees get to know the expatriate who, by the time of repatriation, may be able to communicate in the host country language. Later the host country employees will prefer to contact this particular expatriate and do business in their national language, rather than the corporate language. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 69-71.)



Second theory on expatriates' control roles is by Harzing (in Scullion & Collings 2006b, 44-45) who named the three roles as bear, bumble bee, and spider. The bear is an expatriate directly surveilling the subsidiary. The expatriate in this role is the centralization of decision making in that subsidiary. The bumble bee is similar to network builder, but the purpose of creating networks is to instill control in the subsidiary through informal communication networks. The spider is like bumble bee but instead of creating network in the subsidiary only, the spider creates an informal control network in the whole multi-national company (MNC).

### **International assignment**

The traditional definition of an international assignment would be a period between one to five years of living and working in another country within the same company. Asher (2009a, 9-10) and Scullion and Collings (2006d, 159-163) recognize that international assignments have been under change. Previously international assignments were primarily long-term assignments, which is still precise but there is a current trend to develop more flexible forms of international assignments. These would include short-term assignments and virtual assignments.

Dowling and Welch (2004, 67) have listed out the different types of international assignment (IA) (Table 2). These include short term IA (up to 3 months), extended IA (3-12 months), long-term IA (1-5 years), commuter assignment (weekly travels to host country), rotational assignment (period of time spent between host and home country), contractual assignments (project-based), and virtual assignment (responsibilities abroad).

Table 2. Types of international assignments (Dowling & Welch 2004, 67)

Short term	In length up to 3 months of living and working in host country
Extended	In length up to 1 year of living and working in host country
Long-term	Length is from 1 to 5 years of living and working in host country. The traditional definition of international assignment.
Commuter assignments	International assignee travels to work in the host country on a weekly basis for example.
Rotational assignments	International assignee travels to host country to work for a period of time, and then returns to the home country for a break before traveling to host country for another working period, and so on.
Contractual assignments	Project based international assignment lasting between 6-12 months.
Virtual assignments	A person has responsibilities in another location but does not relocate to that location but manages his responsibilities virtually.

Another method to categorize international assignments is to make a distinction between short and long assignments and whether the purpose of the assignment is demand or learning driven (Scullion & Collings 2006b, 41-42).

Table 3. International assignment types categorized by purpose of expatriation (Scullion & Collings 2006b, 41-42)

Long	<b>CORPORATE AGENCY</b>	<b>COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT</b>
<b>Assignment duration</b>	Control/ knowledge transfer	
	<b>PROBLEM SOLVING</b>	<b>CAREER ENHANCEMENT</b>
Short		
	Demand driven	Learning driven
<b>Assignment purpose</b>		

Scullion and Collings (2006d, 159-163) ventures to make a new differentiation between permanent expatriates and intermittent expatriates. Intermittent expatriates do not stay in the host location permanently but make regular trips back home. This new type of expatriate illustrates the start of a more flexible mobility of expatriates.

## 2.2 Expatriate failure

The first definition of expatriate failure has been that of premature return of the expatriate. There is current discussion that ineffective expatriate performance and inability to adjust should be considered expatriate failures as well. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 86.) Scullion (2006c, 60) adds expatriate's personal satisfaction with the experience, the lack of acceptance by local nationals, and the inability to identify and train a local successor.

There are multiple reasons for an international assignment to fail. Some of them are work related, the others family related. Some arise from the expatriate himself; some could be prevented by the MNC's activities. Below is listed the most common reasons for expatriate failure provided by Scullion and Collings (2006c, 60-61):

- Inability of spouse/partner to adjust or spouse/ partner dissatisfaction
- Inability of expatriate to adjust
- Other family-related problems
- Failures in expatriate selection
- Expatriate's personality or lack of emotional maturity
- Expatriate's inability to cope with larger responsibilities of overseas work
- Expatriate's lack of technical competence
- Expatriate's lack of motivation to work overseas
- Dissatisfaction with quality of life in foreign location
- Dissatisfaction with compensation and benefits
- Lack of cultural and language preparations
- Lack of support for expatriate and family while on overseas assignment

There are direct and indirect costs to expatriate failure. Direct costs are those of relocation expenses, salaries, benefits to the expatriate, etc. Indirect costs would rise from inadequate or failed interaction with host country subsidiary and government officials. Direct costs tend to appear in short term but indirect costs can only be recognized in long-term, if even then. Expatriate failure also affects the expatriate itself, which may incur costs. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 89.)

### 2.3 Support activities

Research strongly suggests that support for expatriates is crucial for the success of the international assignment. In general companies have acknowledged this when it comes to traditional long term assignments but when it comes to other types of international assignments, the research shows a lack of HR support. (Scullion & Collings 2006d, 162.) Overall, it has been established that an expatriate needs support throughout the international assignment unless he is meant to be localized in the host country after the assignment (Davidson 2009, 212). The challenges to adapt to one's new work tasks are increased as the expatriate has to adapt simultaneously to a new culture and basically a new life (Suutari & Brewster 2001, 555). Evidence shows that expatriates appreciate the support they receive but as the support does not match their expectations, expatriates often feel that they do not receive enough support. Prior international assignment experience causes expatriates to put more importance on those support activities that they have received before than first-time expatriates. (Suutari & Brewster 2001, 564-565.)

Understandably HR is required to be more involved with the personal life of an expatriate as it is not merely the expatriate, but his/her family as well, that will be in need of support from the company. Supporting expatriates and their families should be a key function of HR and in increasing amount of companies, it is so. Those companies recognize that HR support affects positively staff performance and well-being. (Dowling, & Welch 2004, 9, 15.)



Figure 3. Full cycle of expatriate support (IOR Global services 2012)

Studies show that expatriates face three types of adjustment challenges: general adjustment, work adjustment, and interaction adjustment. General adjustment covers living conditions and host country culture. Work adjustment covers job satisfaction with international assignment position and tasks. Interaction adjustment covers interacting with locals in host country. (Kraimer, Wayne, & Renata 2001, 72.)

Support is expected both from the home unit and the host unit (Dowling & Welch 2004, 93). The home unit is responsible for benefits and compensations, and pre-departure support activities. These actions contribute to facilitating general adjustment. The host unit should provide support in daily activities. Expatriates expect logistical support. Host country support actions provide continuous adaptation throughout the international assignment. In particular host unit support facilitates work adjustment and interaction adjustment. The distribution of roles between the home and the host unit is important as expatriates make the differentiation which in turn reflects on the perceived employer supportiveness. (Kraimer et al. 2001, 76, 91.)

Having the necessary technical skills is not enough to manage an international assignment successfully (Gill 2009, 201). A lack of support may result in an expatriate's ina-

bility to adapt to the new environment. Furthermore, a lack of support may cause the expatriate to return premature or even to leave the organization after repatriation (Guzzo et al in Dowling & Welch 2004, 97). The latter appears as a consequence because lack of support and communication will raise fear in the expatriate of being forgotten and isolated from the home unit, which in turn creates a negative impact on their expected careers (Dowling & Welch 2004, 163, 169; Linehan 2006, 197).

Support activities to expatriates can be manifold. The most known one is cross-cultural training (CCT). Some obvious services are language training and practical training. An additional support activity is offering the expatriate in preparation a preliminary visit in the host country. This service is becoming common among MNCs. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 123-128.)

Important note is to remember that expatriates can be encouraged to take an active role in asking for support from employer (Asher 2009c, 199).

### **2.3.1 Cross-cultural training**

CCT's (cross-cultural training) purpose is to help people to communicate with people from other cultures and to build relationships with them. It prepares people to handle unexpected situations in another culture. (Earley in Dowling & Welch 2004, 119; Maude 2011, 210.) Its objectives are to teach people to see issues from the perspective of a person from another culture, to reduce stereotyping and teach people to realize their own prejudices, and to teach appropriate behaviors. Maude (2011, 2010-2011, 213) lists out six essential practical skills that are needed in close to all cultural settings, thus making them the backbone of CCT:

- The correct greeting behaviors
- The correct nonverbal behaviors
- Host culture-friendly means of expressing opinions and ideas
- What are appropriate topics and how to avoid discussions that one feels are inappropriate

- How to respond to others' opinions in an appropriate way
- Active listening, paraphrasing, and questioning.

CCT provides preparation for cultural adjustment and business exercises. Cultural adjustment is built up from knowledge of culture, positive attitude towards that culture, and appropriate behaviors. Many of the content requirements mentioned above are supported by Avril and Magnini in their article (Maude 2011, 213; Avril & Magnini 2007, 6-9). Most common methods used in CCT are experiential learning and methods to change behavior. Other methods available are role plays, case studies, culture assimilations, and videos and discussions. (Maude 2011, 214-216.)

CCT is usually provided as culture-general programme or culture-specific programme. A CCT tends to include parts from both but there is always a strong emphasis on one of the two and not a balanced emphasis on both. Culture-general programmes educate about practices and communicative behaviors in diverse cultures. Culture-specific programmes are, as the name suggests, programmes that provide information on practices and communicative behaviors in a specific culture. (Maude 2011, 216-217.) Studies show that culture-specific programmes are more beneficial. They increase expatriates' effectiveness in general and in managing foreign subsidiaries, and job performance. (Maude 2011, 205; Scullion & Collings 2006b, 45.)

A study by Waxin and Panaccio (2005, 51-64) found that cross-cultural training improves general adjustment, work adjustment and interaction adjustment. Additionally they found that international experience facilitates work adjustment. However, they believe that CCT has more benefits to an expatriate without prior international experience.

Research suggests that CCT would be most effective in-country, after arrival (Maude 2011, 220-221; Avril & Magnini 2007, 6). In-country expatriates will receive direct feedback. Pre-departure training has also been identified effective, especially those that create cultural awareness and positive attitudes in the expatriate. Pre-departure CCT is

most commonly used in MNCs as there is evident support that pre-departure training facilitates expatriate's adjustment in the new culture. (Maude 2011, 220-221.)

### **2.3.2 Mentoring and coaching**

A mentor is someone a person learns from. A coach is someone a person learns with. A mentor is a resource. A coach helps the performer to do more. A mentor provides an expatriate with information and expectations of the organization. A coach helps an expatriate to achieve during his/ her international assignment. (Maclennan 1995, 4-6.) There are many objectives to mentoring and coaching. Here are some that are beneficial to an expatriate (Maclennan 1995, 39):

- to encourage flexibility and persistence
- to create responsive crisis management and conscientious crisis prevention
- to facilitate team work and mutual support
- to allow adaptability and responsiveness to change
- to encourage perseverance and resilience

A mentor is required to have the necessary business field knowledge and experience. A mentor is rather a teacher that should be able to tell the expatriate what he/she needs to do. An important attitude in a mentor should be the feeling of being secure in his/her position, so that the developing expatriate will not turn into a rival at any point in the mentoring relationship. A mentor provides representations and liaison, options advice, and skills analysis, for example. (Maclennan 1995, 45-46.)

A coach is required to have the experiential learning of achievement. He/she does not need to be an expert in the business field. A coach should be supportive, nurturing, empathetic, open, responsive, and trusting. With these attributes the coach can act as a guide to the expatriate, to help the expatriate to overcome barriers. A coach would let the expatriate find a way to success, not tell him/her what to do to get there. (Maclennan 1995, 43-45.)



During an international assignment, an expatriate will face many people problems, some due to cultural differences. Many of the people problems can be overcome with the help of a coach, who can discuss the issues with the expatriate. Even in uncoachable situation the coach can aid by asking questions from the expatriate that would facilitate the expatriate's motivation to take steps into solving the problem. (MacLennan 1995, 167-168.)

Higging and Kram (in Mezias & Scandura 2005, 521; Crocitto, Sullivan & Carraher 2005, 524) suggest that a network of mentors would be most beneficial to an expatriate. Naturally managing multiple mentoring relationships is an additional challenge to an expatriate but Mezias and Scandura (2005, 531) believe that the benefits outweigh the challenges.

Mentoring relationships can be either formal or informal. Formal relationships are initiated by the employer. They are often short-term and scheduled. Informal relationships are born naturally. They are often long-term and proceed irregularly. At occasions formal relationships may be regarded as a compulsory additional task which hinders the positive effects of a mentoring relationship. (Mezias & Scandura 2005, 521-522.)

Mentoring relationships can be either hierarchical or peer. Hierarchical mentors could also be considered coaches. They provide career advice, work-related support, protection, and counseling. Peer mentors provide psychosocial support and personal feedback. The study points out that expatriate may be more welcoming to what a peer mentor has to say than to what a hierarchical mentor has to say. (Mezias & Scandura 2005, 523, 528, 530.)

Expatriates needs regulate at what point of time and for what purpose is what type of mentoring relationship most beneficial (Mezias & Scandura 2005, 531). See attachment 3 for more information.

Crocitto et al. (2005, 1317, 1322) have studied the difference between home country mentor and host country mentor in relation to expatriate effectiveness. Home country mentors have a positive effect on job performance and promotability. It had a negative effect on job satisfaction and organizational identification. Host country mentors have a positive effect on promotability, expatriate organizational knowledge, organizational knowledge sharing, teamwork and performance. To meet all the needs of expatriates, both mentors, home country and host country mentor, are necessary.

### **2.3.3 Peer support**

Peer support is “social support that is based on experiential knowledge which is given and received between people in similar situation”. The purpose of peer support is that a person does not need to feel alone as he/she can gain support and advice from a group of people that are experiencing similar situation as him/her. The role of each person in individual support (pairs) and collective support (group) is to be a supporter and to be supported. The amount of support given and received can be balanced or imbalanced. The most crucial part of peer support is the ability of active listening from all participants. (Rantanen 2009, 7.)

Peer support group differentiates from other groups by being personally involving and without professionals. It differentiates from other support groups by including supportive environment, reciprocity, feeling of togetherness, and group response to all members. (Rantanen 2009, 7.) Riessman and Carroll (in Rantanen 2009, 24) advocate the usefulness of peer support based on four factors. First, the personal learning from experience can be used to give guidance and strength to others. Second, every member can give and receive. Third, progress happens according to possibility. Fourth, the support is based on experience rather than outsider’s knowledge. (Rantanen 2009, 24.)

Expatriates can receive two types of peer support: from other expatriates and from colleagues in host country. Other expatriates can offer support in handling cultural adjustment and colleagues in host organization can offer friendship and assistance (Scullion & Collings 2006a, 21; Scullion & Collings 2006c, 64-65; Shen & Kram 2011, 534). Scullion argues that there is evidence of positive relationship between support

from colleagues and interaction adjustment. Peer support from expatriates provides psychosocial support through understanding and confirmation. Expatriates need them to ease the stress of handling new situation. Company colleagues provide career support. (Shen & Kram 2011, 535-537.)

Social support is "the availability of helping relationships and the quality of those relationships". Stress management scholars believe that social support is useful in new situations, like moving to live and work in a new country. Social support positively affects the stress and uncertainty associated with new situations. (Kraimer et al. 2001, 73.)

Language barriers may cause difficulties in interacting with locals but in many cases the effort to overcome them are worth the results. Maude (2011, 184) mentions that "learning occurs through communication with members of the host country". Local network will aid in cultural adjustment and work issues, but in future it can provide further career benefits as well (Dowling & Welch 2004, 48; Maude 2011, 66, 185-186).

## **2.4 Knowledge transfer**

Knowledge transfer is a key outcome of international assignments, which in turn results in organizational development. The previously explained five roles of expatriates are all in some way connected to knowledge transfer. Often the need to success in knowledge transfer rises from the role of an expatriate training local employees. In the past the knowledge transfer was merely considered to move from headquarters to subsidiaries but recent studies assume that knowledge is created at subsidiaries too which expatriates can transfer to the headquarters upon repatriation. (Dowling & Welch 2004, 71-72; Scullion & Collings 2006b, 40, 43-44.)

Knowledge transfer can be facilitated through formal and informal communication channels and links. Maude suggests that the linkage should be in the senior management of the home organization. Additionally expatriates should be encouraged to develop informal relationships in host unit. (Maude 2011, 164.) These communication linkages can be established through international mentoring, which not only would facilitate knowledge assimilation and transfer but expatriates adaptation

process as well (Mezias & Scandura 2005, 531). Crocitto et al. (2005, 530) believe that mentoring relationships facilitate transfer of tacit knowledge.

### **3 Methods**

This chapter introduces the methods used in this study. It outlines the reasoning why a particular tool was used and the practical steps of the data collection process. There is also an explanation how the tools contribute to the investigative questions.

#### **3.1 Research method and design**

This study is a qualitative research that seeks to find out whether expatriates receive all the support that they expect to get. The purpose of the research is to gather deep information on personal opinions of the informants which will be more accessible through qualitative research means. In some aspects quantitative measurement tactics will be used for the benefit of handling a large amount of qualitative data.

In the study I gather information on what support the expatriates expect to receive. The result will be compared to the actual experience. The measurement unit will be something like the benefit the expatriate gains from the support service. The benefit will be researched on emotional and rational level.

The research's target group can be divided into two sub-groups: case company's expatriates preparing for their departure on their international assignment (pre-expats) and case company's expatriates who are on-assignment (on-expats). The figure (Figure 4) below illustrates how primary data will be gathered from these two target groups. The figure also includes the source company representative. Based on my discussions with him/her and the materials that I received from him/her I acquired data to investigative question 1.

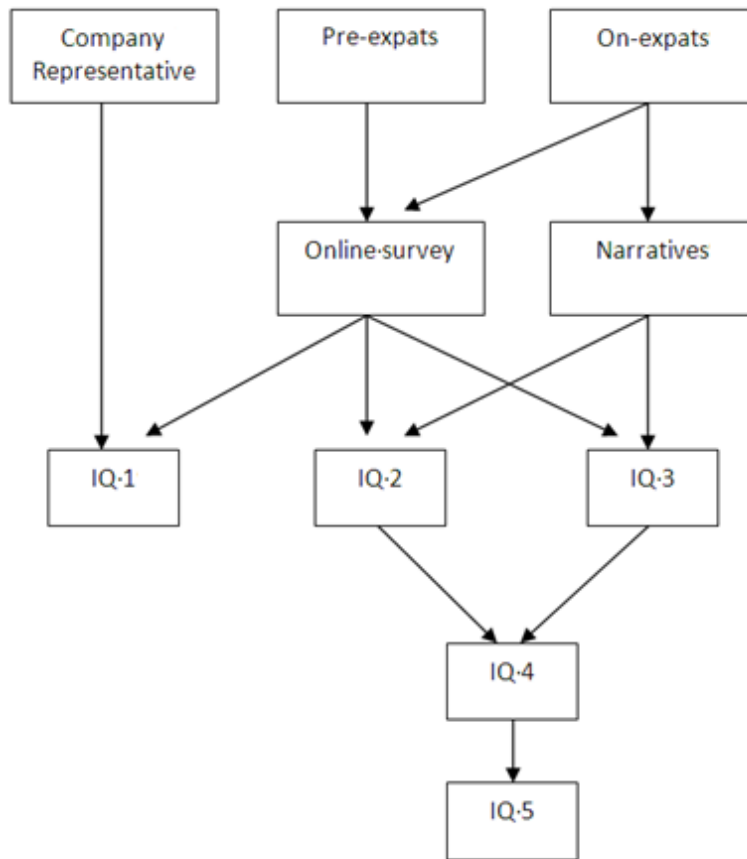


Figure 4. Informant groups' contribution to investigative question

### 3.2 Data collection tools

An online survey was used to gather background information and expatriates' expectations of support services. Additionally the survey included points to find out what are the different types of internal support services available. A second method of research was a set of narrative questions. A pair of questions was provided to a small number of target expatriates which they answered with free word. Both data collection tools were conducted in English as the informants were from all around the world.

#### 3.2.1 Online survey

The first part of data collection is through an online survey. The choice of tool was based on the amount of respondent, the amount of expected data, and the purpose of the tool. I contacted 84 expatriates to gain data on Company X's expatriates' expectations on support activities. Out of those eight were pre-expats and the rest on-expats.

The data is the subjective thoughts of expatriates, meaning that there are no right answers, merely individual opinions.

With the purpose in mind, the survey attempted to have questions formulated in a way that would not prompt the respondent to answer in a way that the question setting would suggest to be the right way. Most of the questions started with the words "do you". Additionally the survey had open ended questions rather than multiple options. Where there were multiple options to choose from, the last option always included the possibility to include an extra opinion.

The open ended questions provided a large amount of data to analyze. I acknowledged that. I made the choice for the purpose of receiving real subjective data and use it to find commonalities among the respondents' opinions. It was not necessary to comment on every little remark that arose from the open questions, thus making it manageable to use open ended questions.

The survey had six parts to it. The first part was the basic background information. The second part was about the expatriate's current position, position during international assignment, and position upon repatriation. Third part sought to list out the expected support activities. The last three parts then inquired about the three emphasized support activities; cross-cultural training, mentoring and coaching, and peer support. At the end of the survey I collected volunteers to participate in the second part of the data collection, in the writing of narratives.

The survey was sent by me by e-mail to the whole target group. The company representative provided the e-mail list to me. The expatriates had two weeks (10.9. – 24.9.12) to fill in the survey.

In warm-up questions in each part of the survey I used questions that had ready answer options or a continuum where to place one's answer. This was to handle a large amount of data and to somewhat limit the topic at hand to something specific. Then there were one to three open ended questions where the answer was not limited to a

variety of options but the respondent was free to express his/her exact feelings and thoughts. This freedom of expression was the basis for qualitative data from the online survey. (Fowler Jr. 1995, 46-60.)

### **3.2.2 Narratives**

The online survey aided me to collect data on the target group of on-expats. The online survey alone was not enough to acquire deep knowledge about the three main topics of this study: cross-cultural training, mentoring and coaching, and peer support. The second data collection tool was narrative, which was used to gather personal information from on-expats.

The online survey focused on expectations. The narratives focused on reality. "A personal narrative is a recollection of events and emotions as experienced by an individual in the course of their own life." (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 213.) In this case the main actor in the story was the on-expat and the theme of the story was his/her international assignment. Within these limitations and a given narrative statement, the on-expats wrote stories that reflected his/ her experience, what happened in reality.

There were seven narrative statements altogether. Each respondent was provided with a form including two out of those eight options. The two statements were chosen based on the replies the respondent gave in the online survey. The seven narrative statements were as follows

- Write a story about your cross-cultural training (3/8).
- Write a story about how people around you have affected your international assignment experience (4/7).
- Write a story about how you became an expatriate and prepared for the departure for your host country (4/5).
- Write a story about you and your mentor (1/5).
- Write a story about you and your coach (2/5).



- Write a story about how you became part of an expatriate network and how has it affected your international assignment experience (1/5).
- Write a story about you and your local guide/buddy (1/3).

The number after the statement indicates how many responses out of the sent ones I received. The choice of narrative statements was based on what the volunteers had marked down as something they had experienced. Those that marked they had had a mentor, were in most cases asked about that, for example.

The narrative forms were sent to the target group of 19 respondents by e-mail on October 7<sup>th</sup>. The respondents had two weeks to complete the two narrative stories, by October 22<sup>nd</sup>. The deadline was extended to November 18<sup>th</sup> due to some of the expatriates being busy with budgeting activities. I received the replies by e-mail. Although e-mail had been used and I know the respondents' identity, the respondents of narratives are kept anonymous. This is a method to allow the respondents to answer freely without any cautiousness towards possible company actions for their words. The identities are kept hidden from the company representative as well.

"Qualitative methods" points out that narratives are weak in practical implications. In this study the narratives are used to make disciplinary reflections, rather than coming up with a step-by-step guide. The theoretical part of this study covers the practical part of the results that are drawn from the reflective analysis of these narrative stories. (Flick 2009, 211, 213-214.)

### **3.3 Method of analysis**

This study had three main topics: cross-cultural training, mentoring and coaching, and peer support. Investigative questions divided each topic into expectations and experiences. I used these categorizations in analyzing online survey results and narratives. The table (Table 4) below illustrates this.

Table 4. Categorizations for analysis

	Experiences	Expectations
CCT	<i>data</i>	<i>data</i>
Mentoring and coaching	<i>data</i>	<i>data</i>
Peer support	<i>data</i>	<i>data</i>

It was necessary to use similar method of analysis for both of the data collection tools to be able to make comparison between them. Online survey focused on expectations whereas narratives focused on experiences.

The online survey results were analyzed as follows. For questions with pre-determined answer options I calculated the frequency of each answer option chosen. I used the same method with open questions. I made a table where I wrote down each new item in one column and marked in another column the frequency of it being mentioned. In some questions the respondents had clear commonalities in their open questions but in one or two questions not.

I analyzed the narratives by first picking out the important comments from the stories. Those I gathered in cells: one comment in one cell. Those comments I then arranged into categories based on my study themes: support activities in general, cross-cultural training, mentoring and coaching, and peer support. In some of those categories I made sub-headings, expatriate society and buddy in peer support for example. The color coding was used to make it visually clear which subheadings belong to same main heading (Attachment 12).

## 4 Results

This chapter collects the raw data from the two data collection tools used. The data is simply introduced. The analysis and explanation of data is made in the following chapter. This chapter outlines the data that the following chapter will refer to.

### 4.1 Respondent rate and respondent profile

In the online survey there were a total of 56 responses. Out of those five were pre-expats and 51 were on-expats. The survey was sent to 84 expatriates, making the response rate 66.7 %. The narrative form was distributed to 19 on-expats. From those eight filled the form and sent it back on time and two additional narratives came within the extended time. In few cases the volunteer only wrote under one narrative statement, not on both provided. The following data has been gathered from the online survey results.

The general profile of a respondent of the online survey is as follows

- This is his/her first international assignment (52 %)
- The international assignment lasts 24-36 months (average 31)
- The expatriate travels from Europe to China or United Arab Emirates
- He travels with his/her spouse and kids (48 %)

Company X's expatriates were asked to explain the reasons for accepting his/her international assignment (Table 5). The top three reasons were the opportunity to discover a new culture or visit a culture of personal interest, the professional challenge the international assignment would bring, and opportunity in career development.

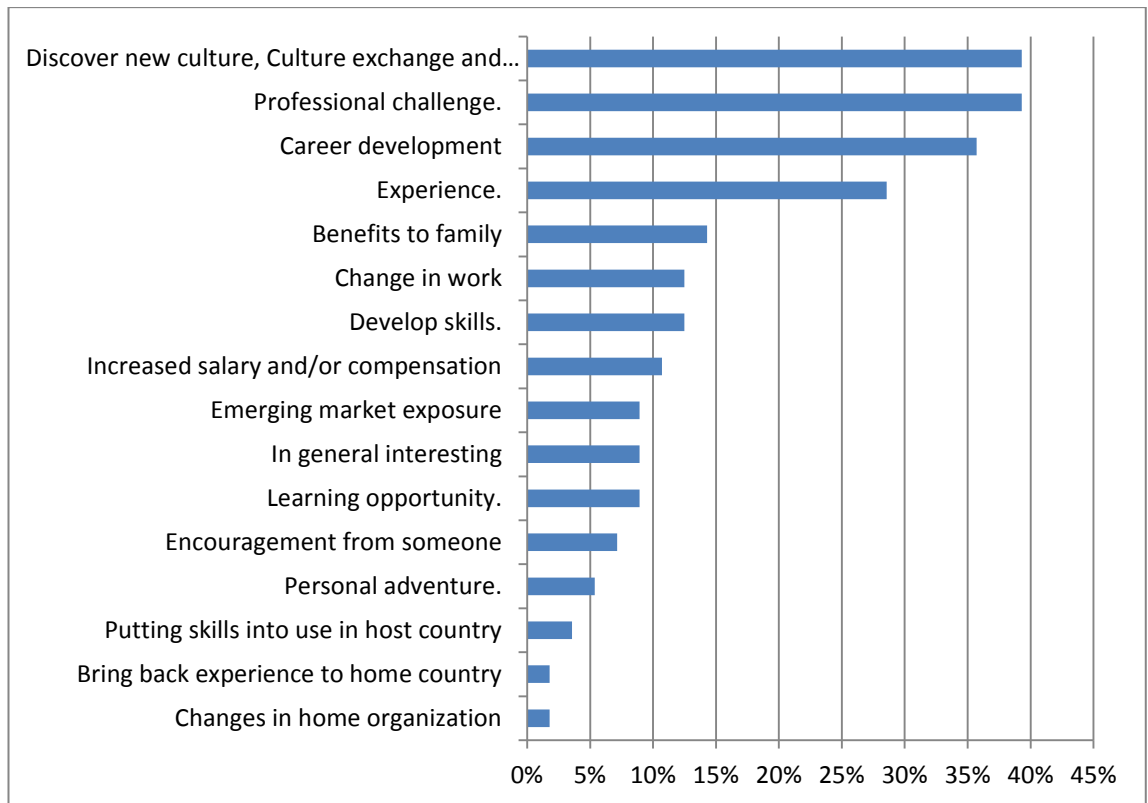


Figure 5. Reasons for doing an international assignment (Attachment 6)

## 4.2 Support activities

This subchapter outlines the expected, available and received support activities in general and as such it answers the first investigative question.

Company X provides practical and financial assistance to its expatriates and their accompanying families. In briefing the expatriates will receive necessary information about the assignment. This includes country profile, briefing on policies, life in the work country, and so forth. This is provided by host company and Global HR. When necessary the briefing includes the topics of housing, living conditions and schooling. (Company X 2011, 5.)

Company X acknowledges the effect of family on the expatriate success and considers the family. When necessary they provide assistance to the family members. In reciprocity Company X expects to be informed of personal matters that affect the international assignment. (Company X 2011, 5.)

Look-See trip is provided to all expatriates. When possible, the spouse is allowed to join the trip and his/her costs will be paid by Company X. The trip is a maximum of five working days. It is provided for the benefit of meeting new colleagues, learning about the upcoming position, checking on housing and schooling, checking on taxation and social security, and so forth. (Company X 2011, 6.)

The host country's HR is responsible to make a timely plan for paperwork handling. The host company helps with the paperwork and pays for necessary papers. Company X will compensate costs associated with necessary medical actions, vaccinations for example. (Company X 2011, 5.)

Company X offers financial support in moving household items to the host country and back. There are limits to the weight and size of the total cargo and also for the total costs. Company X reimburses costs that have been agreed upon prior to actual relocation. It also reimburses the customs charges for the agreed cargo. Vehicles and pets are not within reimbursement. (Company X 2011, 6-7.)

Expatriate has to take care of his/her housing in home country. It is his/her choice whether to sell it, rent it, or something else. Company X will not cover any expenses in any situation. In the case that after arrival the arranged housing is not available from the start, Company X pays for temporary housing. Similarly is done upon return to home country. Expatriate and his/her family receives housing allowance from Company X that covers rent and usage of utilities like water, gas, etc. (Company X 2011, 6-9.)

Company X provides cross-cultural training through an external professional provider. The preferred timing of the training would be one session before departure and one session few months after arrival to host country. Expatriates family is included in the training. Additionally Company X encourages expatriates to do extensive reading and other research as preparation. Host company will determine whether language training is necessary. If so, Company X will provide it to the expatriate. The spouse may receive up to 80 hours of language training if there is an agreement of it. (Company X 2011, 5, 12.)

Home company makes sure to keep its expatriates up-to-date on major matters that take place. (Company X 2011, 6.)

There are additional provisions where Company X provides financial support. These include tax payments, vacation trip to home country, child-birth cost, education of children and more. The details are not necessary for this study. (Company X 2011, 8-12.)

Company X offers financial support in many matters related to expatriation. Most are practical matters. There are policies to support expatriate's family members. Certainly Company X's financial support is a significant factor in starting one's international assignment, but it will not support expatriate to make it through the international assignment successfully. Further information on practical non-financial actions could ensure improved success rate.

### **4.3 Expatriate expectations**

All the data under this subchapter is from the online survey results. This chapter answers investigative question 2 for all three topics: cross-cultural training, mentoring and coaching, and peer support.

The online survey listed out ten potential support activities that an expatriate could receive. The respondents were asked to mark the ones that they expect to receive. The table (Table 6) below shows the results. The top three expected support activities were help in finding housing, help in relocation, and help with healthcare together with preliminary visit to host country.

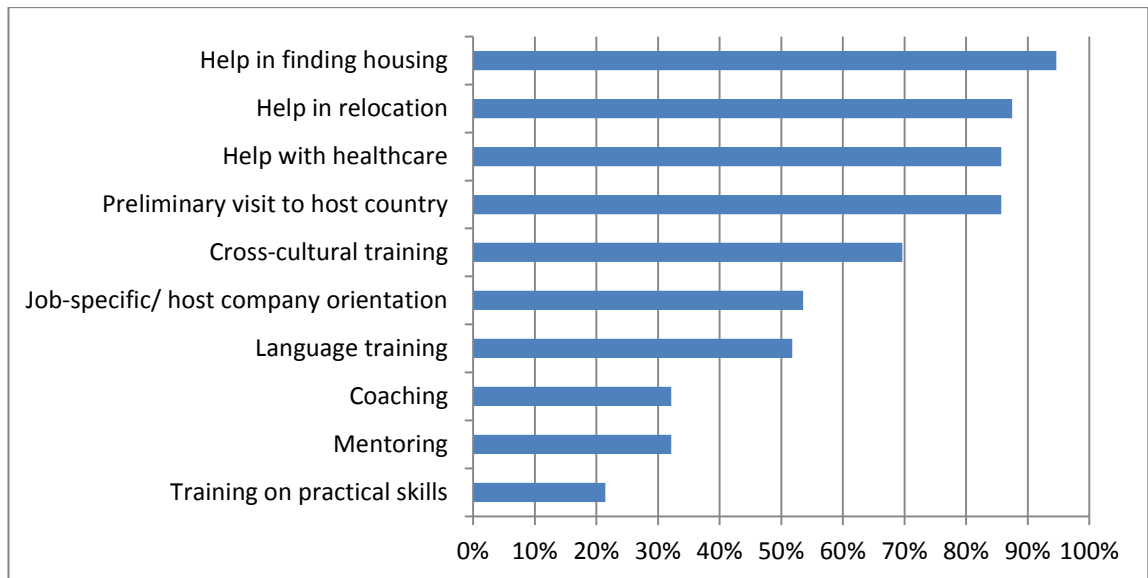


Figure 6. Expatriates' expectations of support activities (Attachment 7)

The respondents could also give additional responses. What they also mentioned was help with the schooling of wife and kids, help with permission handling and other paperwork, and to have a company car and home allowance.

Out of the respondents 46 expected to receive a job description of their international assignment position. Out of the respondent 43 % expected it to be detailed, 34 % flexible, and 23 % negotiable. Target definition for the international assignment was mostly regarded to have been done well (50 %). Other responses were very well (25 %), poorly (18 %) and very poorly (5 %).

None of the expatriates expect to return to their original position after the international assignment. Seven expect the new position to be of same level as the original one. Mostly expatriates expect to receive a higher level position (64 %). Two expect the position to be lower and two expect to change employment.

### **Cross-cultural training**

Expatriates expect to receive host country-specific CCT (64 %). Nine expect to receive general CCT as well, whereas four expect to only receive general CCT. The length is expected to be one day (39 %) or two to three days (30 %). A training of week or two to three weeks were both supported by three respondents. Only one expected to have

a month of training. But no one expected longer than a month. Five respondents did not expect to receive CCT at all, two of them for the reason that they were doing the international assignment to a familiar country.

CCT is expected to be received before departure to international assignment (61 %) and/or after arrival to host country (32 %). Eight respondents would also expect to receive it during the international assignment. No one expects to receive CCT before return to the home country or after the return to the home country.

In CCT expatriates expect to learn about the culture. They want to gain basic information on the local culture, to learn about the differences between home and host countries' daily and work life, and to be introduced the work/ business practices of the host country. Additionally expatriates expected to learn what they should and what they should not do in the host country. Table 7 lists out all the mentioned expected learning outcomes of CCT.

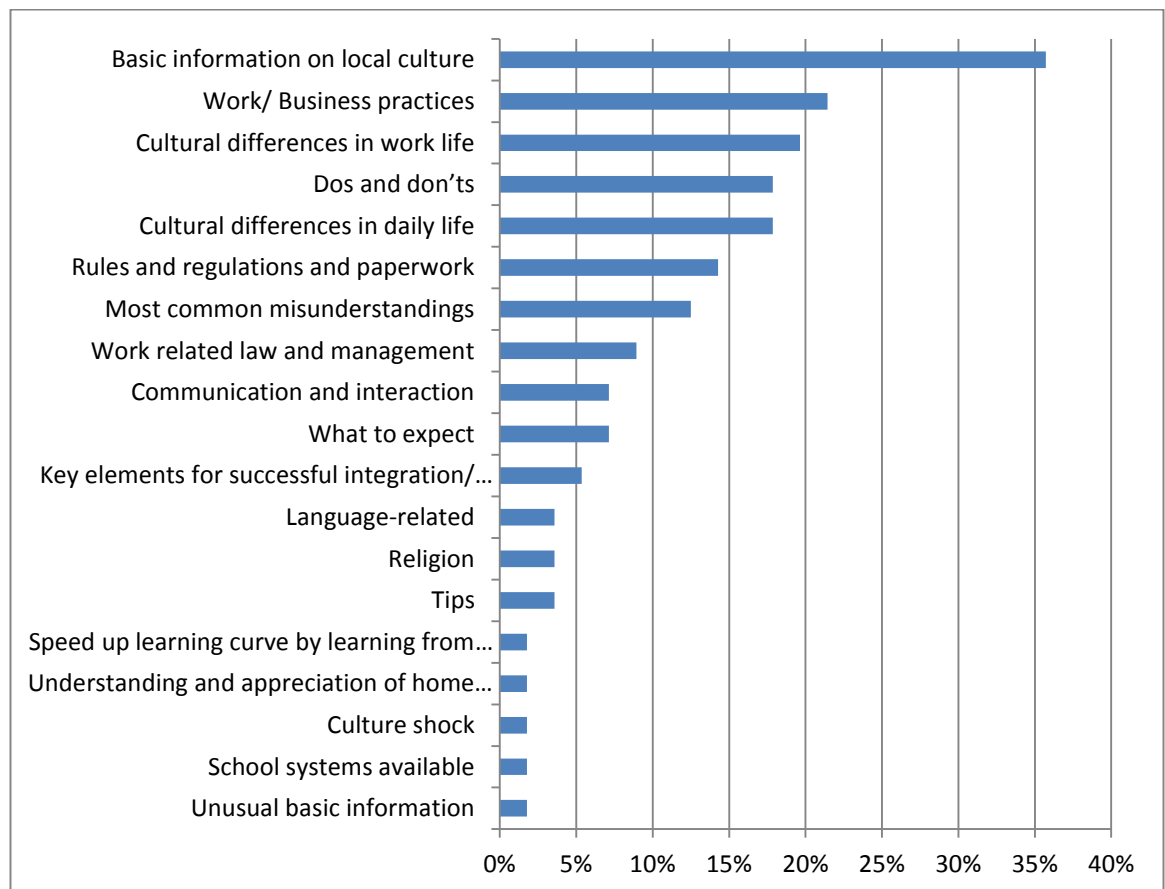


Figure 7. Learning expectations from cross-cultural training (Attachment 8)



## Mentoring and coaching

Majority of expatriates believe that mentoring and/or coaching would be beneficial during international assignment whereas ten disagree. Out of the respondents 52 % would expect to have a mentor, 18 % expect to have a coach, and 23 % expect to have both mentor and coach.

A mentor is expected to be senior in job position (43 %) and working experience (55 %). Only 16 % felt that seniority in age mattered. Out of the respondents 27 % expected the mentor to be from the same company whereas nine expected him/her to be local in the host company and 11% expected him/her to be the mentee's peer.

Respondents expect a mentor to have similar experience that he/she can share. He/she should be able to discuss about work related matters and give practical advice.

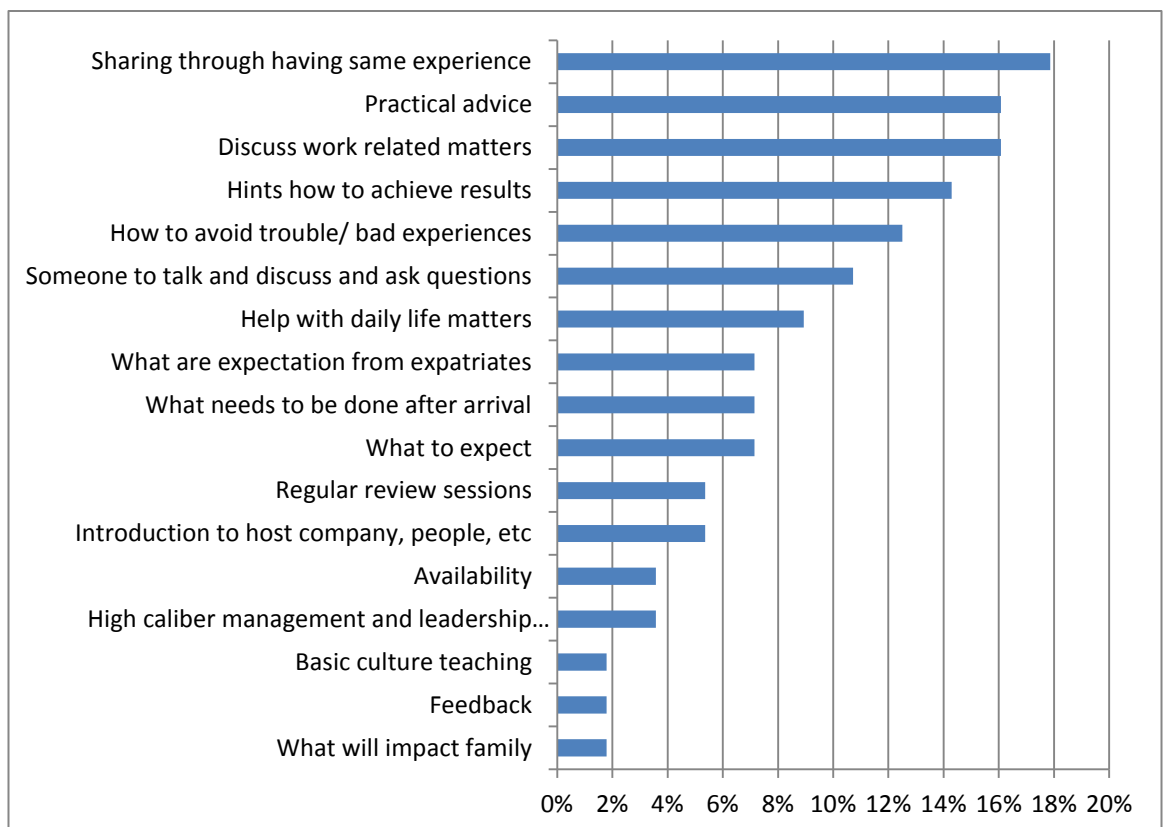


Figure 8. What respondents expect from a mentor (Attachment 9)

A coach is expected to be senior in working experience (55 %) and job position (27 %). Seniority by age did not matter to any of the respondents. The coach should be rather from the same company (34 %) than local in the host company (21 %). He/she could be coachee's peer (14 %) or another expatriate (18 %).

The respondents have varied expectations from a coach. The most frequently mentioned support is the one a coach would give to personal skills development and professional guidance.

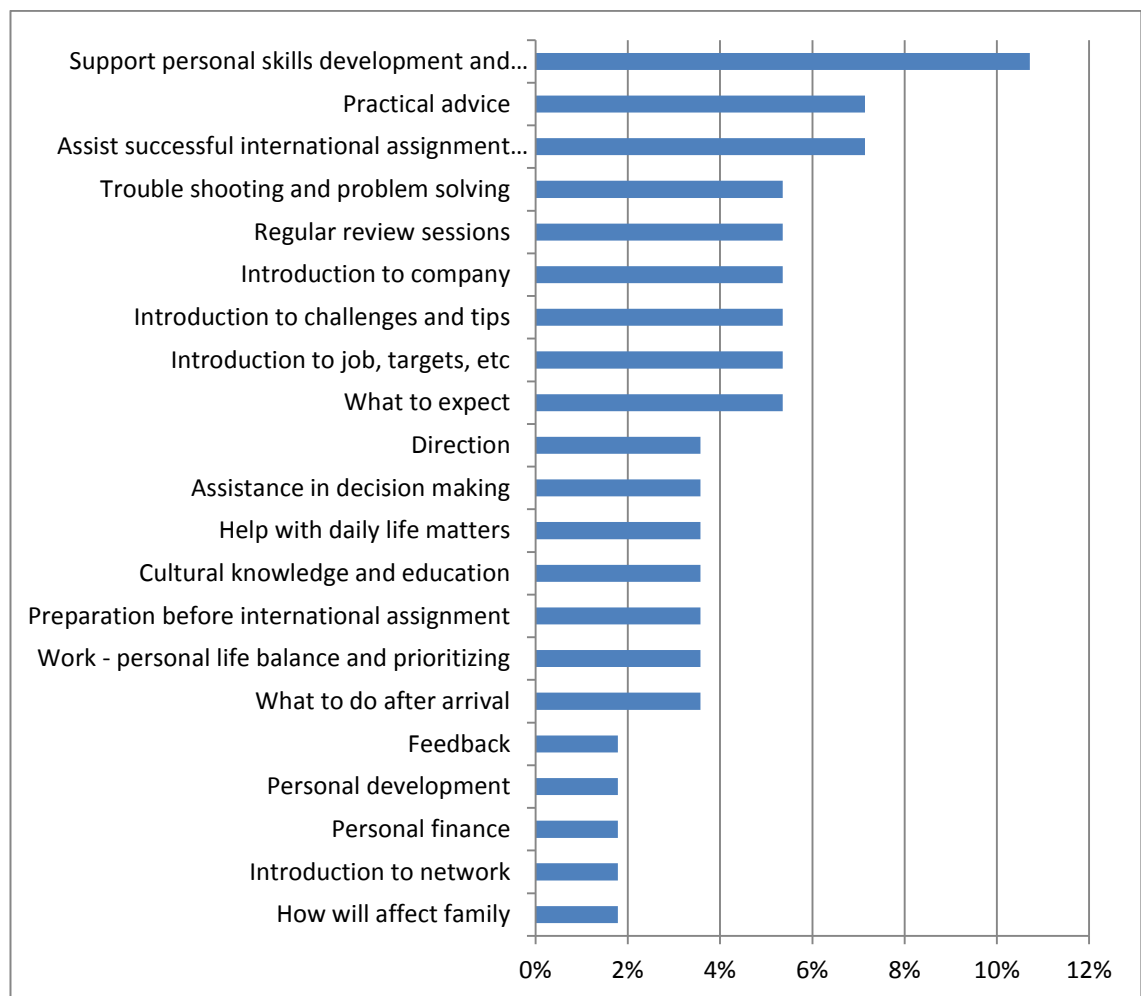


Figure 9. What respondents expect from a coach (Attachment 10)

### Peer support

Most of the respondents expect to be in contact with the parent company (88 %). The contact person should be someone from HR (71 %), previous manager (45 %), previous colleague (57 %), or previous subordinate (14 %). Additionally the respondents

mentioned a desire to be in contact with the potential new manager, the one he/she would have after return from the international assignment.

Out of the respondents 41 % expect to belong to an expatriate network before the international assignment, 73 % during the international assignment and 36 % after the international assignment. From the respondents 23 % do not expect to belong to an expatriate network at all. The expatriates in the network are expected to be other expatriates in the same host country (57 %), other expatriates from same parent country (30 %), other expatriates of Company X (63 %) or expatriates from other organizations (34 %).

From the respondent 38 % expected to have a local buddy in the host country, which is less than those that do not expect to have one (55 %). Out of the respondents 20 against 12 expect the buddy to be a host company colleague. The most important task of a buddy is to help in organizing one's daily life. That would include help with finding local service providers, help with paperwork, and so on.

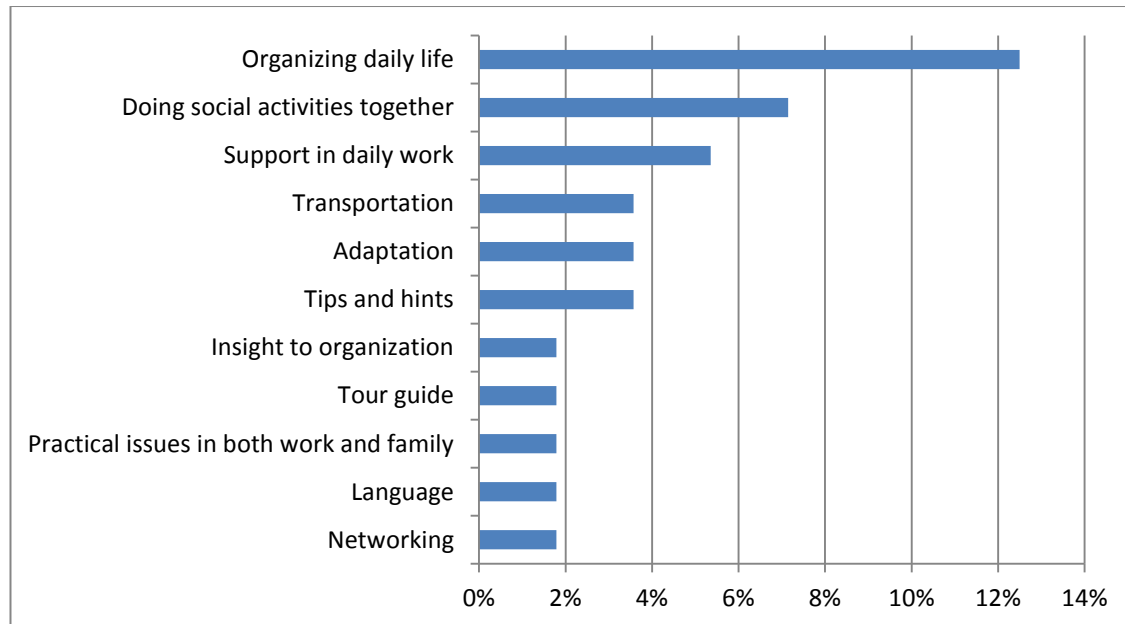


Figure 10. What respondents expect from a buddy (Attachment 11)

#### **4.4 Expatriate experiences**

All the data under this subchapter is from the narrative results. This chapter answers investigative question 3 for all three topics: cross-cultural training, mentoring and coaching, and peer support. In the direct quotes from narratives I have excluded information that could identify the case company or the respondent. This subchapter identifies key findings from narrative results that are necessary to make conclusions in the following chapter. The full list of narrative results can be found in attachment 12.

##### **Support services**

It is not merely about supporting the expatriate anymore. Expatriates also expect that their families will receive some support from the company. Few respondents emphasized how family is one of the biggest considerations when making the decision whether to go for an international assignment or not, and that family support is one of the key success factors.

Preparation process before and after departure can take a long time and includes many practical issues: vaccinations, visa, housing, relocation, residence permit, visit to embassy, and so forth. One mentioned that the paperwork took three months to finish. On the other hand work-related preparation is seen as a minor issue. There is no need for training on work as that is what the expatriates already feel confident about before departure. It is the personal life that feels the real change.

I was not worried about the future job because I know my skills and my faculty of adaptation. But I had more questions about clash of cultures, language barrier and the views of my future colleagues about me.

New schools, new hobbies, new friends, new pastimes, new routines and effectively a new “life” require both the employee and the family to rebuild most of what they would already have had in their home country. This takes great deal of time and effort but these new relationships add extra depth and intensity to an international assignment, for the employee and for their family.

Starting a new career in another part of the world was never going to be easy even though I had a lot of confidence in my technical ability and my ability to manage people

I knew learning new customs and different ways of working and fitting in with the local community life was not going to just as easy as it sounds.

There were 17 statements that directly commented whether Company X had been involved or not. Out of those 14 comments had a negative opinion and mere two had positive feedback. Overall it sounds that Company X was not involved at all in the preparation process or the support was not sufficient. The positive comments applaud Company X for arranging paperwork and formalities, and for doing great with relocation and support in schooling children.

HR did a great job in arranging the movement, housing, schooling for kids etc. The support they gave was really good.

[...] along with physical aspects of selling the house (no help offered or available from [Company X] unlike all other companies I know), packing our stuff to ship (no help offered or available from [Company X] unlike all other companies I know), etc. Most of it was done on our own with little or no support from [Company X] in the [country] or Global.

Some problems were that global HR and local HR disagreed who had what responsibility, HR did not aid with expatriation to a joint venture, host company complaints and lack of support, and shortage of time.

Support for the customs clearance and the like, not really happened so they (local HR) did not do their work. Then the accusations of whose responsibility each task was, local or global HR. That seemed to be an endless discussion and because of that, our timetable failed.

One respondent did not receive support but felt that s/he could manage it all by himself/herself as it was not his/her first international assignment.

[...] and made most arrangements by myself supported by HR. This was no problem for me due the fact I had the experience form [country].

There was couple of comments that suggested Company X should have HR people who work as drivers for different procedures. These people would tell what to do, when to do it, and how to do it.

Respondents were satisfied with preliminary visit opportunity given by Company X. It was seen as a good chance to see the place, visit new workplace, do some research on housing, schooling, and so on, and make a decision whether to accept the international assignment or not.

This month consisted of touring the area meeting people and looking at the job in hand, the area was very nice and the people very friendly the town [...]

The trip went well, we discussed some of the position and responsibilities and a lot on the culture and environment, especially for the wife and kids.

### **Cross-cultural training**

Unfortunately I didn't receive this training. It could probably have saved me from some mistakes I made while dealing with different cultures in different countries which I was responsible for.

Two mentioned that they received cross-cultural training for a day. All those who received CCT took it together with his/her spouse. One person mentioned that he/she did not receive CCT and that CCT would have helped him/her. One CCT had been arranged by a relocation company by request from Company X.

One commentator's CCT consisted of information on history, culture, rules, origins, and mentality. One respondent had first thought that they would learn about history, what to expect, and how to react to different situations. Instead they received minimal information on history and preparation for dark environment and cold shouldered people. This commentator mentioned that what he/she learnt from CCT did not correspond to the reality.

The bulk of the time we spent in our cultural training was preparing us for this dark side of [country]. The dark, damp days in November and December, the bitter cold and

darkness in January and February, all this will have a profoundly negative effect of the [local people]! We will also find them very rude...they don't make eye contact, wave or say hello. When you pass them on a walk or just out and about, they will ignore you and look straight ahead. [...] We both felt this was more about trying to prepare us for the "cold shoulders", darkness and the moody people we would experience all around [country].

Respondents say that it is important to share this experience with one's spouse. They believe that cultural preparation will aid the spouse to be of support to the expatriate during the international assignment. CCT can also act as a first realization of the upcoming international assignment. One commentator believes that everyone should have CCT.

A very important aspect for me was to share this training with my wife to prepare also her adaptation and to show her that she will have an important role in the success of this project.

Respondents also wrote about other methods of collecting information. These included internet research, reading expatriate blogs and websites, reading books, contacting future boss, and discussing with colleagues that are ex-expatriates.

Language studies were mentioned by a pair of respondents as an important part of preparation. One respondent hired a language teacher. Lacking skills in the host language may cause the expatriate to feel lost.

### **Mentoring and coaching**

The whole experience was very useful and valuable for me - at both a personal & professional level - and my initial concerns at the choice of selected mentor were incorrect.

Basically he coached me on how to approach the tasks I had to do, how to tackle the situation. [...] My coach helped me work out how to build up my credibility with my Asian colleagues so that they saw that I was able to help them [...]

Only one respondent wrote about his/her mentor. In this case the person had two mentors, one officially acknowledged mentor and one unofficial mentor. The official

mentor was a person from global HR team and the unofficial mentor was his/her line manager. The HR person mentored for two year and the line manager for the whole duration of the international assignment (5 years). The respondent only wrote about his/her experience with the HR team mentor.

The mentee and mentor had regular review meetings. First meetings took place via telephone. Being mentored was first hard to accept due to the personal feedback but that feedback proved to be useful and necessary. The mentoring process included tasks for mentee to complete. This particular individual was able to develop on personal and professional level thanks to the mentoring process.

We did this with regular meetings reviewing the status of the projects I was working on. He would give me suggestion on the way forward or how to resolve blocking issues.

Few respondents wrote about their coaches. It is unclear if any of them had an assigned coach. First one had a fellow foreigner who came from the same nationality. Second one had a group of managers and colleagues. Third one had his/her host company boss.

It was good to have someone to bounce issues off to help me give some perspective to my challenges.

The first one worked on work related issues with his/her coach. The fellow foreigner could provide insight how a foreigner can integrate into the host country working environment. The regular meetings took place for roughly a year and after that they kept in contact.

After two years my manager was changed and I started to get coached/ supported by my new manager and new colleagues. Some of them were experienced expats and teach me a lot of cultural differences and acted as buddies. This was really helpful and I learned a lot about the right way of approaching different cultures and how to get things done.



Well, I didn't really have a coach. Not nominated one anyway. Whenever I met any problems in the host country I just had to ask my boss who luckily is [of the same nationality as me] so there were no language barriers. He was the only guy in the new organization who I knew from the beginning. So regardless of business or private issues that arose in the first six months I had no other choices than to ask from my boss.

The respondent would ask the boss for advice and in response the boss would give the contact information of the person who to turn to or shared his/her own experience and propositions.

### **Peer support**

No one mentioned a clearly defined communication channel between home company and the expatriate that would have been arranged by Company X. In one case the expatriate had placed someone in charge while he/she was away and kept in contact with that person. Another one was in contact with some managers due to work.

My conception prior to arrival in the [country] was that these people did not know what to do or how to do it, in fact to my surprise it was totally the opposite the people in the factory were very knowledgeable, focused and very willing workers they would work [...]

Some expatriates find it easy to build networks just by doing their job in the host company. Working for the same global employer results in that everyone has something in common. For one respondent this makes him/her feel that the whole company is his/her family, even when he/she transferred to another location. For some it is tough to work and network at the same time.

As I was working I was able to settle in pretty quickly and got used to life in [country] and dealing with different cultures in the office.

I was traveling a outside [country] and didn't have close relationships with the local frontline people. Working space was changing all the time which didn't help to build a close relationship with local colleagues.

Some suggested ways to build relationships: to invite colleagues for lunch or work rides, to meet for coffee, or cocktail, to play golf, and to do sports.

One respondent happened to participate in a workshop prior to departure where he/she met some of his/her future colleagues. After arrival he/she attended a workshop in the host country where he/she met fellow expatriates from the same national background. This way he/she built relationships from the start and found people to join in the exploration of the new city.

One expatriate had an unofficial buddy. A fellow expatriate colleague took the expatriate under his/her wing by taking him to short trips near their city of residence. He/she also provided information on simple everyday life matters, showed around town, invited to join social activities, and acted as a discussion partner.

One of the very first things that we did was to go driving around [...]. That was extremely useful as we used the time to chat about life in [country], things to do/ see/ avoid, places to go, such as that. Those trips were every two weeks or so, which was not intrusive to his life but was frequent enough to get me out of the hotel. As well as those, I was often invited to his house to spend an afternoon swimming, lounging, doing laundry, etc. [...] But he is still invaluable to me, as I can discuss the challenges and changes with him, that I really cannot discuss with anyone else.

One respondent wrote about his/her experience with an expatriate society in the host country. They found the society through school. With the expatriate society the expatriate and his/her spouse were able to share experiences with fellow.

Once the school year started we were able to join a number of expat societies through the school. We found other people in the same situation as us. [...] We were able to ask advice such as where to buy this and that, how to contact emergency services, housing advice, places to visit that were good for the children and how to get the boys into the local football teams and attend social functions from other expats that had been living in Belgium for a while. [...] Without having these Expat Networks I do not think we would have made it past 2 years.

## 5 Discussion

This chapter uses the data from previous chapter to answer investigative questions 4 and 5. Additionally it includes assessment of reliability and validity, research ethics and my personal learning. I also provide further research suggestions.

### 5.1 Comparison of expectations and experiences

The following subheadings answer the investigative question 4 that compares the data received about expatriates' expectations with what they wrote to have in fact happened. There are suggestions to explain the reasons for commonalities or differences.

#### Support activities

I assume that all my respondents have read Company X's international mobility policy at some point of their expatriation process, most probably quite in the early stages. It is then no surprise that the respondents' expectations would be similar to the content of the policy booklet. The support activities mentioned in the booklet received higher scores than those not mentioned: coaching, mentoring and training on practical skills. Noticeable is that help with healthcare is within the top three expected support activities although it has only a minor paragraph in the booklet. Suutari and Brewster (2001, 564) received similar results in their study on expatriate management practices and the perceived relevance of them.

When it comes to help in relocation most of the respondents' comments were negative, saying that Company X did not support at all or otherwise the support had not been planned well and merely made matters worse. In my opinion the case company seems to have a clear intention to be of help in relocation, at least financially. In practice it does not appear to be successful. From the data and sources it seems that expatriates emphasize the importance of helping with the practical issues related to the matter.

This trend can also be identified in paperwork handling. Company X promises to pay certain expenses but not help in the practicalities. An expatriate expressed that it is tough to handle paperwork issues alone without having someone telling him/her what

to do, when to do it, how to do it, and where to do it. The respondents see this as a responsibility of HR of Company X. One expatriate had a positive experience of Company X's support in handling paperwork.

Expatriates expressed that they feel confident in their working abilities. Their personal life is the one to be under most change due to the international assignment. I found indications in the data that expatriates wish to be taught about host country business practices, but there should also be emphasis on personal life coping which is missing from Company X's policies. Studies support that even with prior international experience, expatriates will face challenges in general and interaction adjustment.

Expatriates expect that Company X would also provide support for their families. Spouse is allowed to join the expatriate in look-see trip and in cross-cultural training. These expatriates appreciate and see those as very important factors in successful international assignment. There are no comments from respondents about support to children. The booklet outlines some policies in regards to a child's schooling, but these were mainly about financial support. Theory supports that family has an important role as a provider of psychosocial support, which is the dominant type of support that expatriates receive during the international assignment.

### **Cross-cultural training**

Expatriates expect to receive host country specific cross-cultural training. Based on the results of narratives, this seems to be the tendency. The length is one day as expatriates prefer it and it takes place usually before departure. Someone also received training after arrival. Studies show that host-country specific CCT is better in facilitating expatriate adjustment.

What is left unclear to me is why some expatriates receive CCT and some do not. Among respondents I had both type of responses. The ones that received CCT found it useful. One who did not receive it believed that it would have been useful. Two respondents did not receive it and felt they did not need it as it was not their first as-

signment. Even for those with prior international experience, studies show that CCT is necessary for facilitating expatriate adjustment.

In CCT expatriates want to learn about culture, business practices, cultural differences in daily life and work life, and dos and don'ts. The couple of respondents that did receive CCT mentioned that they were taught basic information about the host culture, some minor information about dos and don'ts and what to expect. Some tips were offered here and there. A negative point that appeared was the incorrectness of the CCT content. CCT does not have any positive effect if the content emphasizes the negative parts of the host country and even provides incorrect information.

### **Mentoring and coaching**

Majority of respondents believe that having a mentor and/or coach during expatriation would be beneficial. Yet there is no company policy that each expatriate would have a mentor and/or coach. On the other hand only half of the respondents expect to have a mentor. There is not much expectation to have a coach. Is that merely because the company does not provide it by default? Only one narrative respondent had an official mentor.

According to the respondents, mentor should be someone who is senior in position and working experience. The only example of a mentor was an employee from Global HR team. I cannot determine whether this mentor was senior to the mentee in any aspect. This mentorship lasted for two of the first years of the international assignment. The traditional mentor is a formal hierarchical mentor. Nowadays studies are also looking into the benefits of peer and informal mentors. This far studies show that there are different benefits from different types of mentors.

The top expectation that expatriates have for their mentor is that he/she would be able to share his/her expatriation experience. This indicates that the mentor should have a background with at least one international assignment, or that the mentor is at the same time doing an international assignment, but has started earlier than the mentee.

This particular mentor was not an expatriate so he/she could not share his/her expatriation experience. The following top three expectations (Table 8, 36-37) were received from this mentor. From this one occasion we cannot say what mentors in general provide expatriates.

A coach is expected by the respondents to be senior in working experience and in job position, just like a mentor. The examples from narratives had coaches that were at least senior in job position, probably in working experience as well. The expectations of expatriates do not make it necessary for a coach to be an expatriate, unlike mentor.

Expatriate coachees received support in personal skills development and professional guidance, practical advice, trouble shooting and much more. As the results for expectations of coaches are so varied, there is no definite ideal coach for an expatriate. This is probably due to the fact that often people do not know a clear distinction between a mentor and a coach. It is possible that some of the respondents tried to come up with some other expectations for coaches than they had for mentors. For certain, couple of respondents had the exact same expectations for both. The expatriates received a variety of input from their coach. The situation would be different if Company X had a coaching program with a framework of the content.

### **Peer support**

Out of the respondent 88 % expect to be in contact with their home company during the international assignment. Yet Company X had not assigned a person to be in contact with its expatriates, at least none of the respondents commented to having one. The expatriates would prefer to have someone from HR assigned to keep in contact with them. The expatriate booklet says that headquarters keeps its expatriates up-to-date on major matters. For me it seems that the expatriates wish to be informed of minor matters as well, and on a regular basis.

Some respondents commented that just doing one's job in host company ensures that he/she creates a network in the host company. For some this multitasking is too taxing. There is no policy by Company X to ensure that its expatriates have the oppor-

tunity and energy to build up relationships at the work place. Yet expatriates are usually expected to create high work results from the start.

Only one narrative respondent was part of an expatriate network although most of the respondents expressed the wish to belong to one. The network is beneficial during the international assignment and could have other expatriates from the same company or expatriates in the same host country. There is no evidence that Company X provides a forum to its expatriates. Studies show that fellow expatriates can offer psychosocial support and share expatriate experiences, which expatriates find assuring during adjustment period.

Close to no respondents expected to have a buddy. Probable reasons could be that the expatriates expect Company X to help out with paperwork and many of the other after-arrival-issues they expect to be supported by a mentor or coach. This might indicate that a mentor and/or coach are seen more important than a buddy, or buddy is felt unnecessary as the same support can be received from a mentor and/or a coach.

Only one narrative respondent had a buddy. The buddy was another expatriate and not assigned by Company X. This particular buddy provided the expatriate with almost everything that the expatriates would expect from a buddy. The expatriate commented that the buddy relationship was not too taxing to either party. The support from the buddy helped out to start a new life in a new country. There seems to be a variety of benefits that expatriates can gain from local buddies. If the buddy is a company colleague, the expatriate will perceive the buddy to be part of host unit support, which facilitates work and interaction adjustment.

## **5.2 Development suggestions to improve support activities**

This subheading answers investigative question 5, offering development suggestions to Company X. The main purpose of expatriates in the case company is to transfer knowledge. Theory explains that some knowledge is hard to transfer, that knowledge transfer moves to and from the home company, and that mentoring relationships can facilitate knowledge transfer. Obviously it is important to have a successful interna-

tional assignment so that there can be benefits like knowledge transfer. The following suggestions provide potential actions that can decrease expatriate failures and improve knowledge transfer.

Expatriates seem to be satisfied in general with compensations and financial benefits. Company X could now take a new step and establish clear processes and possibly even partnerships to handle practical relocation matters. It should make sure that they can provide each expatriate with someone who can aid with paperwork before departure and after arrival.

Understandably companies put emphasis to work related issues rather than social life. But during international assignments the work is not merely to do one's tasks but to adjust to the culture, life, and organization in a new place. All the personal facets of the expatriate are crucial for the success of the work tasks and goals. Company X can consider additional ways to support the personal lives of expatriates.

Company X can consider providing cross-cultural training to first-time expatriate prior to departure and after arrival. Studies show that CCT after arrival facilitates adjustment the most. As expatriates with prior international experience do not need as much cross-cultural training, it would be natural to make the following separation. Cross-cultural training prior to departure could emphasize work-related cultural matter and the basic host culture knowledge to start the international assignment. Cross-cultural training after arrival would then be more of a course, with couple of hours a week for a month to support the start of adjustment and teach expatriates in more detail about the host culture. Additionally the second cross-cultural training could be more based on discussions than lectures. This second training would be the one offered to experienced expatriates. The pre-departure training could be done by a repatriate who has been to the host country and after arrival training could be done by a local host person.

Studies show that mentoring has many benefits to expatriates and expatriates believe it themselves too. This is one potential way for Company X to increase its support for expatriates' personal life. Company X could provide each expatriate a formal and hier-



archical mentor who would be most involved before departure. During the international assignment he/she could act as the communication linkage between the expatriate and the home unit.

If Company X finds it too much to arrange a mentoring relationship during the international assignment with a host country mentor, then it can promote the benefits of mentoring relationships to expatriates and encourage them to seek out informal mentoring relationships. No matter what Company X's contribution to formal mentoring relationships is, it should facilitate the natural formation of informal mentoring relationships.

Peer support is essential for expatriate adjustment. Expatriates want to communicate with other expatriates. This relieves stress and helps to adapt to the new situations. Fellow expatriates can provide detailed information that no one else can. Company X should create some type of forum for its expatriates to communicate efficiently all around the globe. It can then also be used to find fellows residing in the same host country. Even more beneficial would be to cooperate with some other organizations so that expatriates can connect with other expatriates residing in the same host city. There may already be external online expatriate societies that Company X could take advantage of.

A host country national is also beneficial support person. This person can influence the adaptation to a new daily life and help with small day-to-day issues. For this purpose works an assigned buddy. Optionally a host country mentor could provide the same support. The relationship does not need to be formal but it is of essence to make sure then that an informal relationship appears.

### **5.3 Reliability and validity**

Attachment 13 lists out potential risks acknowledged prior to the beginning of this study. It includes a prevention action for each risk and some have an additional back-up plan.

The online survey had a high respondent rate and was sent to most of Company X's expatriates. On the other hand the narratives were only sent to volunteers and the data received is personal and cannot be considered to present the viewpoint of all expatriates in Company X. This study provides an overview of Company X's expatriate's expectations of support services in a limited extend. The results from narratives give a direction of possible experiences of the general population. Thus the development suggestions may not be applicable to all expatriates in Company X but in individual cases.

My suspicions about narratives were correct. They were practical for my study but did not compile enough useful information. Narratives allowed respondents to choose the time they filled in the form. It was beneficial to have my raw data in written form. I can trust that I do not make mistakes in my quotations and that I did not miss any data. On the other hand I might have misunderstood some of the narrative contents but that is a challenge with interviews likewise.

#### **5.4 Research ethics**

The company representative was very much involved in data collection. He/she offered me the list of expatriates to send the online survey to. Obviously, he/she knows who received the survey. He/she does not know who filled in the survey.

At the end of the online survey for on-expats there was the question whether they would like to participate in the second phase of the data collection by answering two open questions. At that point I did not call them narratives as my company representative believed the word might scare some of the potential volunteers.

It was necessary for me to collect the e-mail addresses of those who volunteered to participate in open questions (e.g. narratives). It was informed there that the e-mail is only used to send the narrative form. I never revealed the narrative volunteers to the company representative. I know the names through the e-mail addresses.

Overall this report does not specify by name any of the respondents or the name of the company representative.

Before I sent an e-mail with the online survey invitation, the company representative sent an e-mail to explain why they would receive an e-mail from me soon. He/she already provided some information on the topic of this study and I further defined the object of the online survey in particular. At the end of the survey I provided information for the purpose of the open questions which was re-explained in the narrative form front page.

## **5.5 Further research**

This study is strictly demarcated. Although I sought to understand what are the general support services that expatriates expect to receive, I knowingly did not offer them options that were not considered important for the rest of the study. Additional support services could be related to health care and a company's support to an expatriate's family, for example. Both are valid points for further research.

The effect of family on expatriate process has been acknowledged for years and there have been studies on it. The company's part in expatriates' family's expatriation has increased during these years, making this topic relevant to research continuously. Expatriates expect companies to support their families as well which was not the case when expatriation trend first appeared.

This study is only a scratch on the research about cross-cultural training, mentoring and coaching, and peer support. Cross-cultural training has been a central topic in multiple expatriate researches. Mentoring and coaching and peer support are not so. Especially peer support of expatriates does not have conclusive theoretical background to support its relevance but my study shows that not only peer support but support from different kinds of people is crucial for expatriate success. A future research could go deep into finding out the connection between different human support providers (wife, children, other expatriates, host company colleagues, host country acquaintances, etc) and expatriate success.

Mentoring and coaching is not at the moment regarded in general a part of expatriation. Some companies provide either a mentor or coach to their expatriates but are they intended for work-related practical support or also for the emotional daily life support? Another question is that whether mentoring and coaching are practices that will gain popularity within expatriation or will it stay as it is. Research on the correlation between mentoring and/ or coaching and expatriate success could be a topic of interest.

## **5.6 Assessment of my learning**

This has been an interesting experience. It has been my privilege to cooperate with Company X for this study. The expatriates surprised me with their interest in my study and that way they showed also their commitment to Company X.

Expatriate management is a part of international HRM that I find fascinating. This study has allowed me to look deeper into the theories prevailing in this topic area and to get first hand information from expatriates themselves. At school there is not much chance to take a deeper look into a limited topic area. This process has allowed me to learn how I can on my own learn more than what school can teach me. This research allowed me to not only learn new theory in this topic area but I also had this opportunity to compare those theories to what really happens in a company. I have been able to connect theories to each other on a practical level.

Using narratives as a data collection tool was a valuable experience. I had never used narratives as data collection tool before. Shortly prior to this research I had the opportunity to be a respondent for a narrative. That gave me one perspective and this study provided me with the chance to learn about narratives. I believe this is a skill that I will use again in the future.

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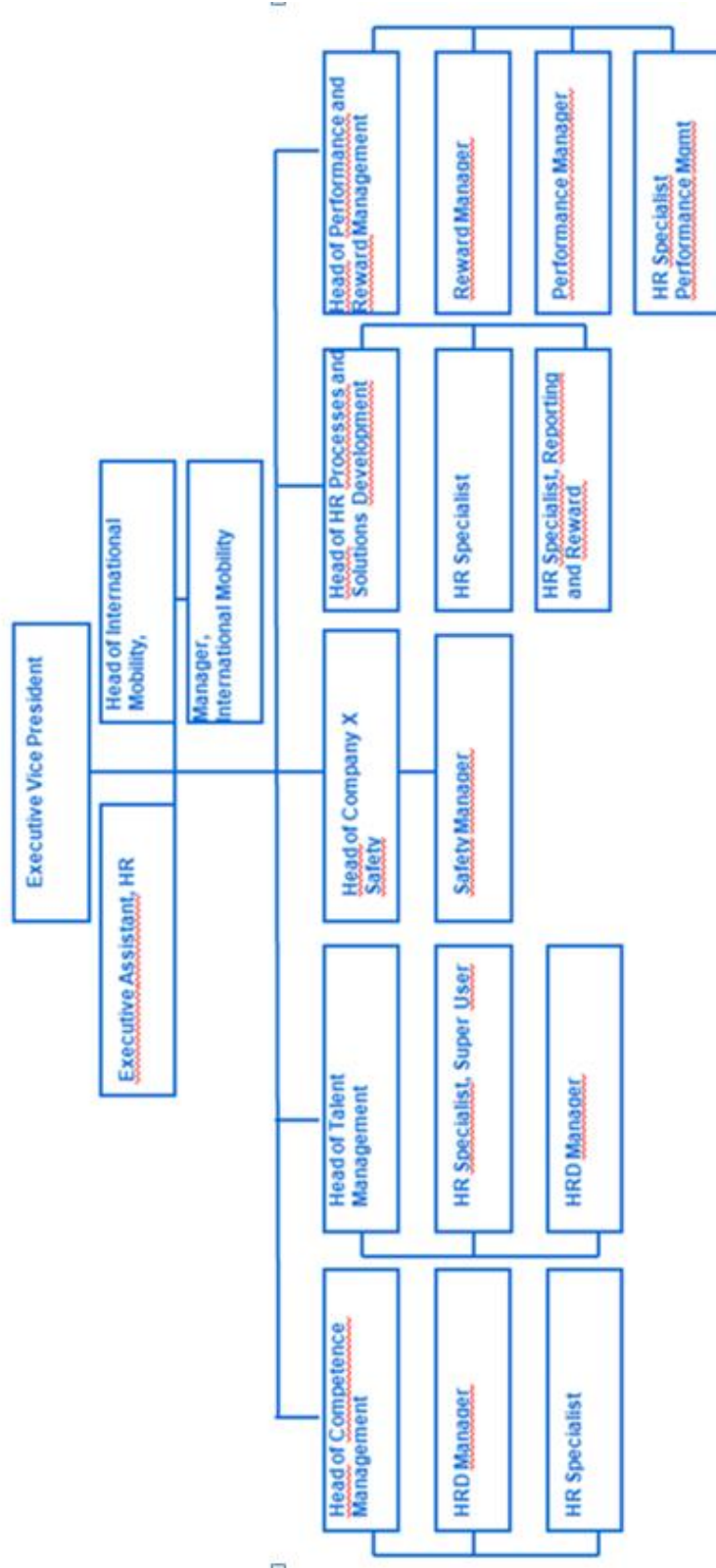
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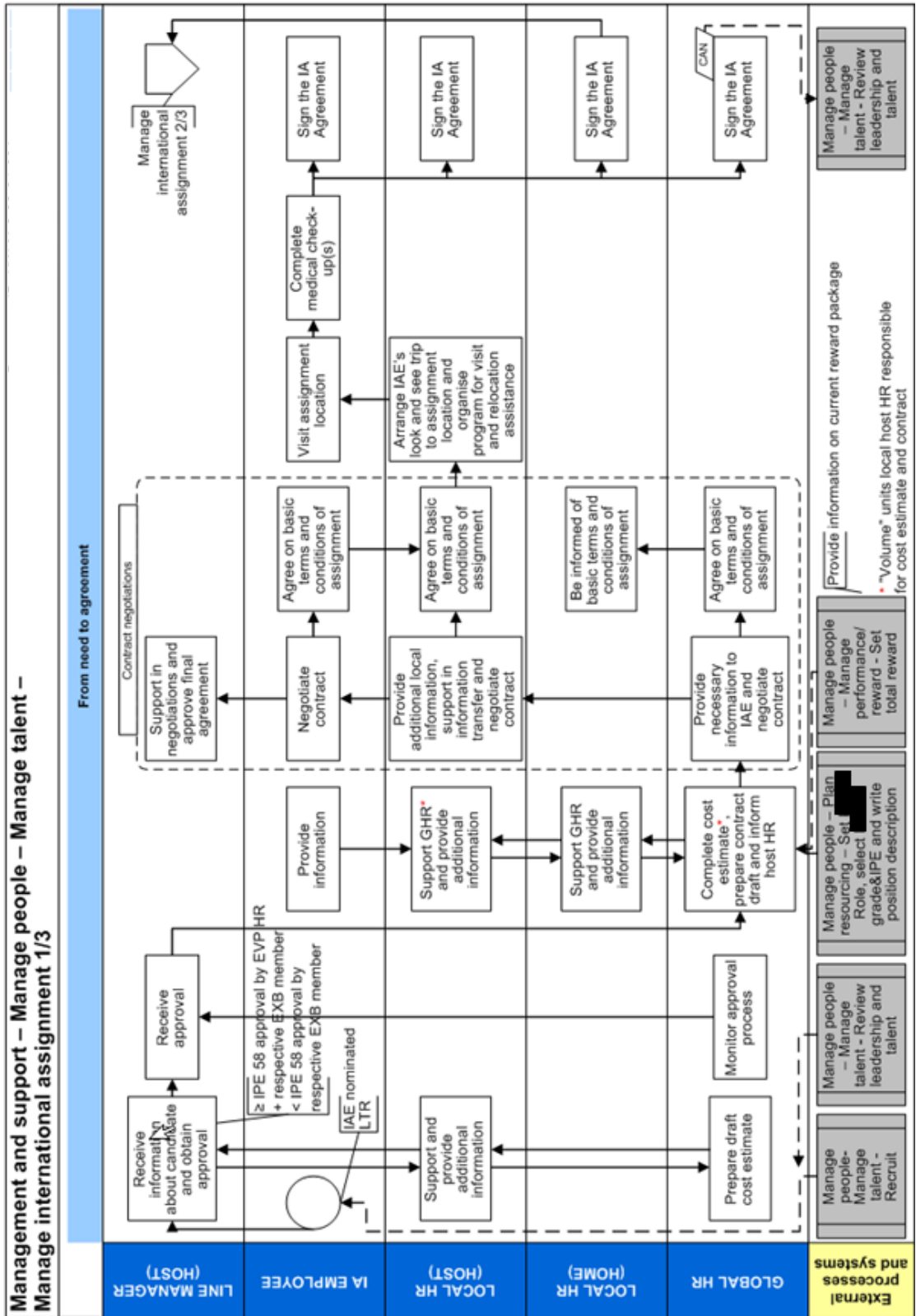


# Attachments

Attachment 1. Company X's organizational chart of Global Human Resources (Company X representative 13 Dec 2012)

## Global Human Resources (GHR)





Attachment 3. Which expatriate need benefits from what type of mentor? (Mezias & Scandura 2005, 531)

**Table 2** Summary of needs-driven approach to mentoring relationships in expatriate assignment

<i>Propositions</i>	<i>Stage of international assignment</i>	<i>Expatriate protégé's developmental need</i>	<i>Formal or informal relationship</i>	<i>Hierarchical or peer mentor</i>
Proposition 1	Pre-departure	Advice on accepting assignment	Informal	Hierarchical
Proposition 2	Pre-departure	Host-country adjustment	Formal	Peer
Proposition 3	Pre-departure	Work role adjustment	Formal	Hierarchical
Proposition 4	Pre-departure	Host-country office culture	Formal	Peer
Proposition 5	On-site	Host-country adjustment	Informal	Peer
Proposition 6	On-site	Work role adjustment	Formal	Hierarchical
Proposition 7	On-site	Host-country office culture	Formal	Peer
Proposition 8	Repatriation	Home-country readjustment	Formal	Peer
Proposition 9a	Repatriation	Work role adjustment	(Sponsoring mentor) informal	(Sponsoring mentor) hierarchical
Proposition 9b	Repatriation	Work role adjustment	Formal	Hierarchical
Proposition 10a	Repatriation	Home-country office culture	(Sponsoring mentor) informal	(Sponsoring mentor) hierarchical
Proposition 10b	Repatriation	Home-country office culture	Informal	Peer

## Attachment 4. Online survey

### Survey on the expectations of Company X's expatriates

In this survey you are asked to comment based on your personal feelings. There are no wrong answers. This survey seeks to understand what did you expect as an expatriate. The focus is on support activities.

This survey consists of 6 parts:

Part 1: Your background information

Part 2: Your roles

Part 3: Support provided by Company X

Part 4: Cross-cultural training

Part 5: Mentoring & Coaching

Part 6: Peer support

#### **Background information**

1. Is this your first international assignment?

Yes

No

2. What is the length of your current international assignment agreement?

Please write down the duration in months.

---

3. What is the country of your home company?

---

4. What is your host country?

---

5. Did you move to the host country...

- Alone
- With spouse/partner
- With spouse/partner and children
- With children
- Other, what

6. What were your reasons for accepting this international assignment?

---

**Your roles**

7. What was your position title before the international assignment?

---

8. What is your current position title (during international assignment)?

---

9. Did you expect Company X to provide you a job description for your role during your international assignment?

- Yes
- No

10. If yes, did you expect the job description to be...

You may choose more than one option

- Detailed
- Flexible
- Negotiable

Something else, what

**11.** How were the targets of the international assignment defined?

Very poorly  Poorly  Well  Very well

**12.** Upon return from your international assignment, do you expect...

Original position refers to your position before your international assignment.

To return to your original position

To have a new position of same level as your original position

To have a higher level position than your original position

To have a lower level position than your original position

To take employment in another company

Other, what

### **Support provided by Company X**

**13.** Indicate what kind of support you expected to receive from Company X before and during your international assignment.

You may choose more than one option

Cross-cultural training

Language training

Training on practical skills

Job specific/ host company orientation

Mentoring

Coaching

- Preliminary visit to host country
- Help in finding housing
- Help in relocation
- Help with healthcare
- Other, what?

### **Cross-cultural training**

**14.** Did you expect to attend....

- A cross-cultural training that educates in general about different cultures
- A cross-cultural training focused on your host country's culture
- Both

**15.** For what period of time did you expect to receive cross-cultural training?

- 1 day
- 2-3 days
- A week
- 2-3-weeks
- A month
- More than a month
- Other, what

**16.** At what point of time in your international assignment did you expect to receive cross-cultural training?

You may choose more than one option

- Before departure to host country
- After arrival to host country
- During the international assignment
- Before return to the home country
- After return to the home country

17. What did you expect to learn in cross-cultural training?

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### **Mentoring and coaching**

18. In your opinion, would you benefit from mentoring/ coaching during your international assignment?

- Yes  No

19. During your international assignment, would you have liked to have

- A mentor
- A coach
- Both

20. Should your mentor be...

You may choose more than one option

- Your senior by age
- Your senior by job position
- Your senior by working experience



- Your peer
- From the same company
- A local in the host company
- Another expatriate
- Nothing particular

21. What would you have expected from a mentor before departure and during the international assignment?

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22. Should your coach be...

You may choose more than one option

- Your senior by age
- Your senior by job position
- Your senior by working experience
- Your peer
- From the same company
- A local in the host company
- Another expatriate
- Nothing particular

23. What would you have expected from a coach before departure and during international assignment?

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### **Peer support**

24. Did you wish to be in contact with your home company during the assignment?

- Yes  No

25. If yes, with whom?

You may choose more than one option

- HR
- Previous manager
- Colleagues
- Subordinates
- Other, who?

26. Did you wish to be part of an expatriate network group?

You may choose more than one option

- Before departure to host country
- During the international assignment
- After return from the host country
- No

27. In the network, did you wish to be in contact with...

You may choose more than one option

- Expatriates in your host country
- Expatriates from your home country
- Expatriates from Company X
- Expatriates from other organizations
- Other expatriates, who?

**28.** Did you expect to have a local host country guide/ buddy?

Yes  No

**29.** If yes, should the guide/ buddy have been your host company colleague?

Yes  No

**30.** What would you have expected from this guide/ buddy?

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Thank you for your time.

The data collection will continue with a new phase of open questions. The researcher invites anyone interested to participate in answering these open questions. In practice it means that a volunteer receives a form with two questions that the volunteer would answer with approximately half a page of text per question. The topics will focus on your expectations from the viewpoint of which of your expectations have been met and which haven't.

**31.** Are you interested in answering open questions? If yes, please provide your e-mail address below.

The e-mail address will be used to send back and forth the question-form.

The participants will be kept anonymous.

Yes

No

**32.** If yes, please mark the support activities that you have participated in.

Cross-cultural training

Coaching

Mentoring

- Expatriate network
- Host country guide/ buddy
- Other, what



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## NARRATIVES

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Thank you for your interest.

Narratives are a type of open questions.

What is a narrative?

In simple English narratives are the same as stories: they have a beginning, middle, and end.

For this assignment your task is to write two narratives, two stories, about the topics given. The main character in the narratives is you. The story is about what you expected, experienced and felt. The main theme is your international assignment.

The answer block suggests a length for your story. You may write more or less as you wish. For research purposes, I would need at least half a page.

Send this form back to Sanna Tilli by e-mail: [sanna.tilli@haaga-helia.fi](mailto:sanna.tilli@haaga-helia.fi)

**DEADLINE: Monday October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012**

Attachment 6. Reasons for doing an international assignment

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Frequency-%</b>
Professional challenge.	22/56	39
Discover new culture Culture exchange Personal interest in the culture.	22/56	39
Career development	20/56	36
Experience.	16/56	29
Benefits to family	8/56	14
Develop skills.	7/56	13
Change in work	7/56	13
Increased salary and/or compensation	6/56	11
Learning opportunity.	5/56	9
In general interesting	5/56	9
Emerging market exposure	5/56	9
Encouragement from someone	4/56	7
Personal adventure.	3/56	5
Putting skills into use in host country	2/56	4
Changes in home organization	1/56	2
Bring back experience to home country	1/56	2

Attachment 7. Expatriates' expectations of support activities

<b>Support activity</b>	<b>Pre-expats</b>	<b>On-expats</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Help in finding housing	5/5	48/51	53/56	95	<b>1</b>
Help in relocation	5/5	44/51	49/56	88	<b>2</b>
Preliminary visit to host country	4/5	44/51	48/56	86	<b>3</b>
Help with healthcare	5/5	43/51	48/56	86	<b>3</b>
Cross-cultural training	5/5	34/51	39/56	70	<b>4</b>
Job-specific/ host company orientation	4/5	26/51	30/56	54	<b>5</b>
Language training	3/5	26/51	29/56	52	<b>6</b>
Mentoring	2/5	16/51	18/56	32	<b>7</b>
Coaching	1/5	17/51	18/56	32	<b>7</b>
Training on practical skills	1/5	11/51	12/56	21	<b>8</b>

Attachment 8. Learning expectations from cross-cultural training

<b>Learning expectation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Frequency-%</b>
Basic information on local culture	20/56	36
Work/ Business practices	12/56	21
Cultural differences in work life	11/56	20
Cultural differences in daily life	10/56	18
Dos and don'ts	10/56	18
Rules and regulations and paperwork	8/56	14
Most common misunderstandings	7/56	13
Work related law and management	5/56	9
What to expect	4/56	7
Communication and interaction	4/56	7
Key elements for successful integration/ adaptation	3/56	5
Tips	3/56	5
Religion	2/56	4
Language-related	2/56	4
Unusual basic information	1/56	2
School systems available	1/56	2
Culture shock	1/56	2
Understanding and appreciation of home country	1/56	2
Speed up learning curve by learning from others' mistakes	1/56	2



Attachment 9. What respondents expect from a mentor

<b>Expected action/ aid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Frequency-%</b>
Sharing through having same experience	10/56	18
Discuss work related matters	9/56	16
Practical advice	9/56	16
Hints how to achieve results	8/56	14
How to avoid trouble/ bad experiences	7/56	13
Someone to talk and discuss and ask questions	6/56	11
Help with daily life matters	5/56	9
What to expect	4/56	7
What needs to be done after arrival	4/56	7
What are expectation from expatriates	4/56	7
Introduction to host company, people, etc	3/56	5
Regular review sessions	3/56	5
High caliber management and leadership mentoring	2/56	4
Availability	2/56	4
What will impact family	1/56	2
Feedback	1/56	2
Basic culture teaching	1/56	2

Attachment 10. What respondents expect from a coach

<b>Expected action/ aid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Frequency-%</b>
Support personal skills development and professional guidance	6/56	11
Assist successful international assignment and positive support	4/56	7
Practical advice	4/56	7
What to expect	3/56	5
Introduction to job, targets, etc	3/56	5
Introduction to challenges and tips	3/56	5
Introduction to company	3/56	5
Regular review sessions	3/56	5
Trouble shooting and problem solving	3/56	5
What to do after arrival	2/56	4
Work - personal life balance and prioritizing	2/56	4
Preparation before international assignment	2/56	4
Cultural knowledge and education	2/56	4
Help with daily life matters	2/56	4
Assistance in decision making	2/56	4
Direction	2/56	4
How will affect family	1/56	2
Introduction to network	1 /56	2
Personal finance	1/56	2
Personal development	1/56	2
Feedback	1/56	2

Attachment 11. What respondents expect from a buddy

<b>Expected action/ aid</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Frequency-%</b>
Organizing daily life	7/56	13
Doing social activities together	4/56	7
Support in daily work	3/56	5
Tips and hints	2/56	4
Adaptation	2/56	4
Transportation	2/56	4
Networking	1/56	2
Language	1/56	2
Practical issues in both work and family	1/56	2
Tour guide	1/56	2
Insight to organization	1/56	2

Attachment 12. Narrative analysis blocks

Support activities	
<b>Family</b>	Family --> big consideration to accept or not
	Family is what makes the experience worthwhile. Work is just work
	Family: needs to have realistic picture of country. Needs to feel like home in host
	Success of IA based on support from family and friends, advice
	Before: saying goodbye to friends and family: showing pictures helped
<b>Interview</b>	Flew to host for an interview where agreement reached
	Interviewer flew to home to interview. then decision made I would move
<b>Preparations</b>	Prepared to hand over responsibilities to another and made formal application.
	Good welcome to new job
	Government officials difficult to find in city
	Before: vaccinations, visas (took time and effort), housing insurances, cars, furniture, etc
	Work preparation: small part, work is same no matter country and support exists when needed
	Paperwork took 3 months
	Had confidence in technical ability and ability to manage people, but knew starting a new career abroad wouldn't be easy
	Challenging was to handover own old position to someone and inform customers of the change
	Paperwork: family worked on them, work visa, legal right to live and work, permit to enter high school
	Before: medicals, visit to embassy
	Pre-departure: vaccinations and health checks
	Kept home in FIN for visits, asked a relative to check on it now and then. car parked insurance
	All issues were settled with no loose ends (pre-departure)
	Wife working abroad, no kids, easy to move, just necessary items in bag and go
	Contract made based on individual research
	Physical preparation: selling house (no help from X), packing stuff to ship (no help from X), etc.
	Doesn't want to do lots of traveling during IA and leave family alone
	In contract: furnished accommodation --> did not bring household items.

	Logistically challenging to move in two parts, me and then wife: confusion and higher possibility of mistakes.
	Not worried about work: know my skills and faculty of adaptation
	Saudi requires the rest of the family to move later s residence permit takes months to get. So two moves had to be done.
<b>Pre-visit</b>	Pre-visit helps to make decision and to have first impression
	Pre-visit, only I was able to go because of host visa issues: searched for an apartment, few days.
	Visit: First task to pick up rental car from airport and pick up boss to deliver him to the hotel
	Pre-visit offered before contract. One month visit. Not family. Touring, meeting people, looking at the job at hand
	Trip: position and responsibilities, culture and environment, environment for wife and kids, place of living
	Look and see trip (wife couldn't join due to legal issues. Usually done after contract signed but I suggest doing it before for countries like Saudi
<b>HR</b>	Most preparation done on our own without any help from Company X
	In the beginning had to figure things out on his own, like the neighborhood
	Company X arranged application for work visa and normal procedures after arrival to get residence permit and driving license, and other formalities
	HR did a great job in arranging moving, housing, schooling for kids, etc. Really good support
	Made most of arrangements by myself with support from HR, not a problem as not the first IA
	Assigned to an international removal company: audited belongings to be moved
	Expected more from Company X HR in support (after arrival stuff, housing, etc)
	Host company complained about moving expenses and the content
	Local HR didn't support customs clearance, etc
	There were accusations whose responsibility is what: global or local HR, endless discussion --> caused timetable to fail
	Paperwork only done if HR tells what to do when, where, how and by whom. Accompanying HR person would be helpful vs going alone
	Sent to IA with a mission and lack of support due to lack of time and urgency to fill the position --> tough to achieve targets

	When people supposed to help failed their deadlines, they did not accept criticism from me, but became upset
	Contracting process was painful, slow and not well managed. Biggest problem that I was going to a joint venture, not Company X --> Company X policies didn't apply but everything had to be agreed on and marked in contract, which was not possible due to Company X's standard contract. Much relied on verbal discussion. Many things were missing and became issues later. Contracting handled centrally, no home or host country local could help.
	Expected to join professional team but there were no coaches, mentoring system or support from HR + Finance, not even company policy paper
	Important to establish professional HR department where the help can be asked when needed: drivers to take control of new employee's issues. I had to be my own driver without any knowledge

Cross-cultural training	
Information re-search	Family used residence waiting time to continue with culture/ language training (self-paid)
	Hired a culture/ language teacher once a week for few months. Should be standard but everyone said it was host not home country responsibility, so we have to pay it ourselves. Host country cannot hire someone abroad
	Lots of internet research on culture, regulation, laws, religion, etc. Lot of helpful resources available
	Research on expat blogs and websites to understand the challenges of being a non-Muslim
	Discussion with colleagues that have been expats with Company X; process and is it worth it
	Knew host country so no preparation of culture etc needed. Had done project in same place before.
	In preparation focus on country and cultural awareness
	Extra effort to study and practice local language is useful --> creates stronger bond and greater intensity how IA is viewed in later years
	Had heard stories/ stereotypes about Finns --> could it all be true?
	Impression of Finns: warm, friendly, helpful, wanting us to become more Finnish in our understanding and actions, help experience real Finland
	Studied host country: internet, library books (were old and not really reliable), contact future boss for hints and tips in living conditions, traffic, healthcare, safety, etc
	Expatriate feels lost due to language barrier and cultural differences
	Questions about clash of cultures, language barrier, views of my future colleagues about me

<b>CCT</b>	Company X arranged cross cultural training to wife and I to integrate into our new environment, after month+ arrival, CCT arranged with relocation company
	CCT. full day: thought; Finnish history what to expect, suggestions how one should or shouldn't react to next experiences
	CCT: dark and damp Nov and Dec. Bitter cold and dark in Jan and Feb. Negative effects on Finns. Finns are rude, don't make eye contact, wave or say hello, ignore when passing by
	CCT reality: minimal history, preparation to cold shoulders, darkness and moody people. But initial first-hand experience had been nothing like that and we did not believe it
	CCT: me and wife + one day: discover culture, rules, mentalities, origins, history --> everyone should participate before departure,
	I didn't receive CCT. It could've saved me from some mistakes I made while dealing with different cultures in different countries which I was responsible for.
	CCT: Instructor had lived in the host country --> more interesting and capturing training
	CCT: realization 1 <sup>st</sup> step of expatriation
	CCT: share with wife --> helped to prepare her adaptation and show her that she has an important role in my IA --> got encouragement and reassurance from wife to face my fears

<b>Mentoring and coaching</b>	
<b>Mentor</b>	More than one mentor: official acknowledged mentor Global HR EVP for 2 years and line manager mentored strongly for 5 years (IA duration)
	Mentor GHREVP: surprised to have as mentor, prior relationship high and general level, work experience good but doubts how mentor would look at me as an individual
	Mentor GHREVP: first meetings via telephone were constructive, feedback insightful and well directed. 360 degree feedback peer review --> more focused discussions aimed at my style --> first uncomfortable to receive 100 % accurate observations, embracing it able to start to make my style less aggressive/ more collaborative
	Mentor: GHREVP: simple follow-up tasks and take-aways
	Mentor GHREVP: Useful and valuable experience, personal and professional level.
<b>Coach</b>	Coach: another fellow nationality person who had worked in host area for a long time.

	Fellow foreign coach: how to approach the tasks I had to do, how to tackle the situation, helped me work out how to build up my credibility with host colleagues, how to ensure we got buy-in from host senior managers to ensure we were trying to do would get done. give suggestions on the way forward, how to resolve blocking issues
	Fellow foreign coach: regular meetings reviewing my working status. For roughly a year. After that informal sessions now and then to discuss some issues. Helpful to have someone to bounce issues off to help give perspective to my challenges.
	After 2 years manager changes and received coaching/ support from new manager and colleagues. Some of them expats that taught about cultural differences and acted as buddies. Helpful. Learned the right way to approach different cultures
	No nominated coach: asked boss who was of same nationality, only person I knew from the beginning
	Boss coach: No other choice but to ask boss about business and private issues (6 months), he gave contact info who to contact --> slowly learnt names and faces of colleagues and other interfaces. If no name, he shared own experience --> guidance

Peer support	
<b>Communication</b>	Work front: in contact with department managers daily and weekly to keep up to date
	Sent a colleague to the factory to watch over my things in my absence and was informed of everything
	Expectation: people did not know what to do or how to do it Reality: people were very knowledgeable, focused, willing workers, dedicated to customer satisfaction
	Important to communicate frequently with family and friends in home --> smooth transfer
<b>Peer support</b>	Father has been an expat: he and I knew people who had been expats in host country
	Built relationships at office which offered lunch company, work rides, etc.
	Long residence permit wait: couldn't have car, bank account, live anywhere but hotel: valuable to have someone with experience
	While working I was able to settle in pretty quickly and got used to the life and dealing with different cultures in office
	IA was hard on wife: didn't know anyone, didn't speak language, everything was different, not allowed to work, felt isolated --> affected her --> affected me
	Most enjoyed/ benefitted: people that I met/ worked with/ became friends during IA



	Employee has a ready network of colleagues whereas family has to start from zero
	sports are a good way for adults to build and develop out-of-work relationships
	Neighbors: local: invite to home, out to dinner, pick mushrooms and berries
	Dogs with us. They opened doors or broke barriers to locals (FIN), neighbors loved how the dogs were well-behaving ones
	Work included lot of traveling and working space changes continually --> difficult to build relationships with local colleagues
	I felt connected to local frontline people who involved me in frontline problems
	First had to establish relationships with management team while assign who was capable of doing a good job and being able to move plant forward as had been request from high management
	Management team close community, outside consultant to assist with ongoing problems complicated matters --> ended up being good to me as I was seen as a way to get out of 5 to 9 scrutiny
	Whole senior management had changed when I came so I was easily accepted as a new guy. everyone wanted me to help with big tasks
	Good friend in host who had lived in host for several years
	Easiest way to get to people was to meet after work for coffee, a cocktail, on a round of golf
	Participated in a workshop before decision to take AI where met host colleagues
	was worried about religion: Muslim name but catholic --> became a curious thing that facilitated integration with colleagues
	In first two weeks in a workshop with other Frenchmen --> not alone to discover the city and to create new relationships
	Wife comes later --> hopes support from her and she can adapt well without having done pre-visit
	Feels part of a family/ group = Company X, knows that X values each and support evolution of each. Expatriation promotes good personal development.
<b>Buddy</b>	A colleague arrived a month late and became buddy. Fellow expat which was the best thing. In Saudi a local would not be of much help. Too many issues dealt only by expats in the company.
	Local guide/buddy was a life saver. There was no official relationship.

	<p>Expat buddy took on trips in nearby areas. Grocery store. Chatting about life in Saudi, things to do/ see/ avoid, places to go, etc. Trips done every 2 weeks or so. Not too much for buddy, and enough to give me time off the hotel. Invitations to buddy's house to swim, do laundry, relaxing, etc.</p>
	<p>Throughout IA can discuss challenges and changes with expat buddy</p>
	<p>Work has put me and expat buddy in two locations. Not so frequent contact.</p>
	<p>My wife has leaned on expat buddy's wife for information, help, contacts, etc.</p>
<b>Expatriate society</b>	<p>When school year started we were able to join a number of expat societies through the school. Found people in similar situation. Wives had similar experience and acted as discussion partners to my wife</p>
	<p>Expat societies: ask advice as where to buy this and that, how to contact emergency services, housing advice, places to visit, how to get boys to local sports teams, attend social functions with other expats</p>
	<p>Expat societies: made life-long friends. Made the difference that could finish IA. Without would probably have quit in middle.</p>
<b>Other</b>	<p>I and my family have to rebuild most of what we had in home: school, hobbies, friends, activities, routines, etc. --&gt; takes time and effort but add extra depth and intensity to IA</p>
	<p>I have learnt to be more tolerant, to understand and more appreciate language and cultural diversity --&gt; useful things to learn first-hand</p>

Attachment 13. Research risks and solution suggestions

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Prevention activities</b>	<b>Secondary plan</b>
How to involve informants?	Incentives, clear guidelines, make it non-time consuming, make it beneficial, anonymous responses	
Will there be enough volunteers to write narratives?	Make it beneficial, incentives, keep the narratives simple and short, anonymous responses	Skype interviews, ask company representative to assign informants
Will the researcher find sufficient theory on internal support services?	Broaden search outside of business, make definition of internal support activities an investigative question, ask Company X for their opinion, ask informants for their opinion	
How to secure that the case company remains anonymous?	Ask Company X to check all text before it is shown to others/ published, do not take too much information from public sources	Persuade Company X to reveal itself
What if narratives do not provide deep enough information?	Gather multiple narratives, make slight differences between the narrative assignments, use online survey results to pinpoint focus points	Gather additional narratives, make Skype interviews
Summer holiday	Make a timeline that takes holiday into account, use holiday time for tasks that do not require communication with Company X or informants, schedule advisory meetings well in advance	
Company X contact person becomes too busy or is too slow	Create deadline dates with the contact person, reach a common understanding on what issues communication is	Find a secondary contact person

to provide answers	very important, establish rules on what communication tools to use for what purpose	
Author's internship	Have a clear timetable and follow it. Try to have the second internship with regular working hours.	Have a break between current and second internship during which to write thesis.
Author's school courses	Only take ones that you can manage along with thesis and work.	Drop out from the courses that are not mandatory.
Author's involvement in AIESEC	Promise to only do what you have time for.	Graduate from AIESEC earlier than planned.