

Repatriation ROI: Policy & Program Best Practices



To achieve ROI, 46% of companies are looking at succession planning and repatriation earlier in the assignment process

As the final stage in the overseas relocation process, repatriation is a critical, yet unfortunately often forgotten chapter, of the assignment cycle. Yet, companies generally have made little progress in formalizing steps to improve repatriation policies.

With potentially high attrition rates amongst repatriated employees, a comprehensive repatriation policy is a vital tool in retaining key talent and maximizing valuable skills gained while on assignment. According to Cartus' *Biggest Challenges* survey, 46% of companies said that they are looking at succession planning and repatriation earlier in the assignment process to achieve the greatest value from international assignments.

The length of the assignment often correlates with the extent of repatriation services offered. Whether the assignee has children may also be taken into consideration, as additional tutoring or home country language lessons may be required. However, due to the importance of retaining talent and the potential for reverse culture shock regardless of assignment length, companies should always consider the value of repatriation services, despite fixed length of time or location.

TYPICAL COMPONENTS OF REPATRIATION POLICIES

Repatriation policies typically feature benefits that are often a subset of those services offered to the assignee and their family during their expatriation. These benefits vary based on short- and long-term assignments and the seniority of the assignee. For a long-term assignment, these would typically include:

- Household goods shipments
- Temporary accommodation
- Departure assistance
- Repatriation allowance

REPATRIATION CHALLENGES

Repatriation is more than simply "bringing someone back" to the same office or location they were in previously. The whole experience will have affected their quality of life, their aspirations, their motivations for working and, fundamentally, their psychological contract. Assignees return as more developed individuals and may not easily fit into the role they embodied before.

Many families struggle from reverse culture shock, especially when they have been abroad for a long time. It is also increasingly common for companies to repatriate assignees to their home country, but not to their original departure location. This can cause considerable stress for all family members, since the country is familiar but their hometown familiarity and support infrastructure no longer exist. In such cases, additional support may be provided like orientation and home finding trips. To have the desired impact, repatriation policies must address the specific concerns of the assignee and their family in a meaningful way.

Specific repatriation issues also exist in certain countries due to labor and demographic trends: as one example, the case of Indian and Chinese "returnees." These are individuals who have lived and raised their families abroad and are brought home to take roles in the company, which is hoping to capitalize on the knowledge they gained abroad. From the employer's view, the families are repatriating to a familiar home location. However, for the families, who have adjusted to their host culture so deeply, the perspective of home and host culture has changed and they may, in fact, be suffering from reverse culture shock as severe as if they were in a completely foreign location.

Despite concerns about ROI, few companies track **employee retention**.



Only **19%** track post-assignment employee retention

Even with the goal to facilitate the growth and retention of a repatriating employee, only 19% of respondents to Cartus' *Biggest Challenges* survey actually track post-assignment employee retention—an indication that there is much to do in this area if companies hope to capitalize on assignment expertise and truly reinforce their talent pool.

BOOSTING ROI THROUGH TALENT MANAGEMENT

With high potential attrition rates amongst repatriated employees during the first year of repatriation, organizations can quickly experience a loss in investment made in their employees to bring valuable experience and international skills to their organizations—and frequently, those employees go on to take those benefits to the competition.

For both employees and organizations to realize a positive result from global assignments, companies must take additional steps to develop, reward, and retain their talent. According to the *Biggest Challenges* survey, the top three strategies to link global mobility and talent management were:

- **Ensure that assignment objectives are incorporated** into the employee's performance review (40%)
- **Collaborate** with HR to ensure that employee performance ratings are considered (37%)
- **Implement a global posting process** for assignments (24%)

Repatriation Integration Program. Cartus has designed a Repatriation Integration program to ease the transition back to the home country and company and to enable assignees and the business to best capitalize on the international knowledge and skills that the returning employee has acquired whilst on assignment. The program guides employees and their family to develop their own action plans for reintegrating and adjusting to their home culture, identify the new experiences and skills they acquired while on assignment, clarify and set future goals, and determine how to use this new knowledge both professionally and personally. Such a program is a very small investment that can have a significant effect on assignment success.

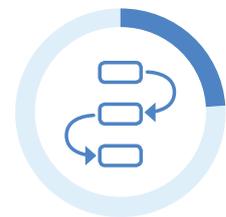
Best Practice Tips. Allowing repatriation to seem like an afterthought in a relocation program can lead to the employee leaving soon after returning home and the organization failing to achieve a return on investment from the costs incurred and time spent on international assignment. Studies have shown that the retention of repatriated assignees is linked to their ability to identify, articulate, and apply the new skills they have learned.



40% ensure assignment objectives are incorporated into employee's performance review



37% collaborate with HR to ensure employee performance ratings are considered



24% implement a global posting process for assignments



Recommendations and best practice tips for successful repatriation that many companies are putting into practice include:

- Taking steps before, during, and after the assignment to reinforce ties to the company and maximize the assignee's ability to use his or her knowledge on return.
- Mentors at home location during duration of assignment.
- Establish business objectives for the assignment prior to the move. Objectives should be discussed regularly between the assignee and 'home' business, as should the assignee's own personal goals. This ensures both the business and assignee are engaged throughout the assignment.
- Discussion on repatriation at least six months before it happens.
- Career discussion at the onset of the assignment.
- More focused career discussions within six to 12 months of the end of the assignment.
- Focused networking and HR/business conversations during home-leave trips.
- Assistance for spouse/partner to find employment at home (providing they want to work on return).

For more information on repatriation support and practices,
contact consultingsolutions@cartus.com.

www.cartus.com

© 2019 Cartus Corporation.

All rights reserved.

Cartus and the Cartus logo are registered trademarks of Cartus Corporation.

connect with cartus

