

WExecutives Headed Overseas Benefit From Expat Coaching

But only 7 percent of companies surveyed by the American Management Association offer executive coaching to top-level managers bound for foreign assignments.

By Michelle V. Rafter

When Dianne Landau started traveling to Asia for work years ago, her then-employer gave her a valuable gift: sessions with an executive coach to help overcome the obstacles she was bound to face as a high-level manager and woman doing business in that part of the world.

"It was one of the most wonderful growth experiences I ever had," recalls Landau, who left a 20-year corporate career to become an Executive Coach in 2002.

Experiences like Landau's are not unusual. In fact, according to a 2008 coaching survey by the American Management Association and the Institute for Corporate Productivity, companies that provide business or cultural coaching for expatriates report a significant correlation between it and overall business success, as measured by things such as revenue growth and market share.

Even so, the number of companies that offer coaching to expats is surprisingly low: only 7 percent, compared to 60 percent who offer it to high-potential employees, 42 percent to executives and 37 percent to problem employees, according to the AMA survey.

Coaching makes expats more successful in their overseas assignments because it heightens their awareness of cultural differences before they step foot on foreign soil. "They become sensitized to things that they might not otherwise be aware of," says Ed Reilly, AMA's president and CEO.

Expat coaching is a wise investment for reasons other than helping executives quickly get their cultural bearings, Landau says. Corporations have already poured a lot of resources into the caliber of upper-level managers who get sent overseas, and they want those executives to do well—not just personally, but for the company. So it stands to reason that a company would do whatever it took to make sure that happened, including coaching, Landau says.

"The logic of investing in their performance is cost compelling."

Landau, who now heads a five-person executive coaching firm in Malibu, California, agrees that the coaching she got before starting to travel to places like Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong as a Senior Executive for Seagram gave her the leap "I had to make to become effective at a high level internationally."

Companies that don't offer any expat coaching risk "the possibility of some catastrophic mistakes and failures that could affect someone's career and performance for a long time," AMA's Reilly adds.

Innovative expat programs offered by pharmaceutical and other companies include coaching for spouses and kids as well as the employee, according to the 2008 edition of a global relocation trends survey published annually by GMAC Global Relocation Services. It's in companies' best interest to include spouses in coaching, as family-related issues are cited as the most common reason expats quit an overseas assignment early, according to the 2008 GMAC report.

Companies that want to start an expat coaching program can check with the Landau Coaching Associates, an Executive Coaching Group, which runs an expatriate coaching special interest group. Relocation service providers are another source of coaching and counseling for expatriates and their families. Worldwide ERC, a trade group, provides a [search engine](#) that identifies member organizations that specialize in such coaching and counseling. Other options are a Google search, which will turn up listings for executive coaching firms that offer specific expat programs, and expat coaching blogs.

For more information, [contact Landau Coaching Associates now!](#)

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