



## **An asset overlooked**

### **International workers need more support**

*By Sandy Weiner*

With the growing emphasis today on intellectual property, HR value and knowledge management, one of the greatest assets a company has is often overlooked - the long-term retention of their specialized, upper-management workforce. This issue was the focus of a recent event in Frankfurt, organized by Expatica HR.

Multinational corporations as well as many small and medium-sized companies today are faced with a more diverse, often highly international workforce which is driven by faster paced productivity and market demands than experienced in the past. These new international mobile workers are often accompanied by their partners and children.

According to a recent study by Hilly van Swol-Ulbrich, an intercultural integration and relocation specialist, 66 percent of expatriate workers have children aged between 5 and 12 years old. According to Robin Pascoe, a specialist and author on the emotional issues around relocation, 40 percent of all expatriates leave their workplace after two years if they don't receive the assistance and support they and their families require. Yet, only 50 percent of companies provide this support.

Companies are essentially nurturing talent and then walking them out the door by not giving them the holistic support needed to counter the stress that relocation brings. Many companies fail both to recognize the effect of stress on expatriates, and its significant impact on performance.

The investment in providing support through a program is a small one compared to the overall cost of relocation, training and knowledge loss if the worker doesn't complete the assignment or leaves the company soon afterwards, was a clear message voiced at the event.

Expatriates are generally highly resilient people, however they as well as their families still need support to ease the strain of moving. It isn't enough to offer basic relocation services.

To help workers feel at home in their new environment and stay committed to the organization over the long term, companies need to offer an international program that covers support before the move, cross-cultural training, support for the spouse including career and life coaching, as well as tending to the needs of the kids.

Sandy Weiner, a Master Certified Coach and Fellow Career Practitioner is the Managing Partner of 1-Focus International.

Oct. 24, 2003

© Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 2000

<http://www.faz.com/IN/INtemplates/eFAZ/archive.asp?doc={EFAB5304-81B7-4F25-B033-341A6110EDA8}>