

## Expatriate Coaching

Every foreign assignment represents a great development opportunity, but also a personal and professional test. Usually, the expatriates managerial responsibility is enhanced at the foreign location and they are faced with a much more complex structure of internal and external stakeholders than in the home country. The expatriates themselves and their families are challenged to adjust to a foreign culture. At the same time expatriations are associated with high costs for the company and expatriates play an essential role in the transfer of expertise. In addition, it is not uncommon for them to play the role of ambassadors and representatives of the company in joint ventures and in the political environment of the host country. All of these are more than enough good reasons to support the international assignment of executives with accompanying coaching.

In expatriate coaching (expat coaching for short), intercultural differences and culture-specific challenges naturally play a certain role. The coach must be familiar with cultural dimensions and values and have an awareness of his or her own culture-specific assumptions. However, it would be far too short-sighted to focus exclusively on intercultural differences in coaching. As a coach, it is much more important to keep an eye on the expatriate's individual situation, the often complex local structures, and the sometimes contradictory *expectations on the part of the parent company, the foreign location, and the family environment*.

Typically, there are three phases in expatriate coaching (see figure): preparation for the assignment, sparring during the assignment, and repatriate coaching, i.e. preparation for the return and reintegration. Expat coaching can be used in each individual phase or over the entire course of the assignment to support the process.

### 1. Preparation phase

Reflection of cultural imprints, clarification of expectations and deliberate design of the entry point

- › reflect on intercultural preferences and challenges
- › clarify professional and family expectations
- › role definition and self-presentation
- › communication starter

#### possible tools:

- › Intercultural Preference Tool
- › expectation panorama
- › preparation of the inaugural speech

### 2. On-site sparring

Networking, positioning and work-life-balance reflect on intercultural preferences and challenges

- › preparation of introductory meetings with stakeholders and sparring in relationship management
- › working on (intercultural) conflicts / challenges
- › identifying and clarifying areas of tension (central vs. local)
- › readjusting work-life balance

#### possible tools:

- › stakeholder analysis
- › panorama of interests

### 3. Return and reintegration

Contact management and self-marketing

- › Networking in the head office
- › designing and maintaining CV, intranet and social media presence
- › identifying target positions and vacancies

#### possible tool:

- › Employer Experience Journey