



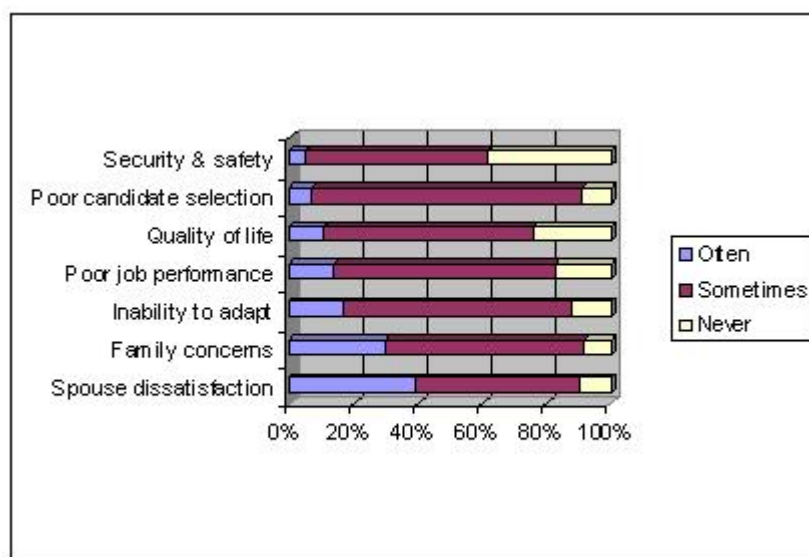
## The Rationale for Cross-Cultural Training

The reality of today's global marketplace requires companies to relocate staff to foreign locations in order to establish and nurture a business presence abroad. Many executives and managers sent to staff foreign operations are usually chosen for their skills and accomplishments within their native country. The assumption is that 'if they can do it at home, they can do it abroad'. Research suggests this is not the case – cross-cultural differences usually make such skills defunct in a new environment.

Maximizing the chances of an employee's success in a foreign location is a critical business priority. If a manager or executive is sent abroad and fails to either settle into the new culture or work effectively with his/her new colleagues, the whole venture will be a waste of valuable time, effort and money.

Expatriate relocation assignments fail for a variety of reasons as the chart below shows. Cross-cultural differences account for or impact upon many, such as the inability to adapt, spouse dissatisfaction and poor job performance.

### *Why do expatriate relocations go wrong?*



Research and analysis of expatriate relocations have highlighted how culture shock, i.e. being impacted by cross-cultural differences, can negatively impact upon a relocation assignment if not properly managed. These cross-cultural differences affect both the employee and his/her spouse or family.

A manager/executive may find it hard to communicate or gel with their new colleagues. Negativity starts to creep in, motivation and patience are lost and the work environment becomes one tainted with stress and pressure. In addition,

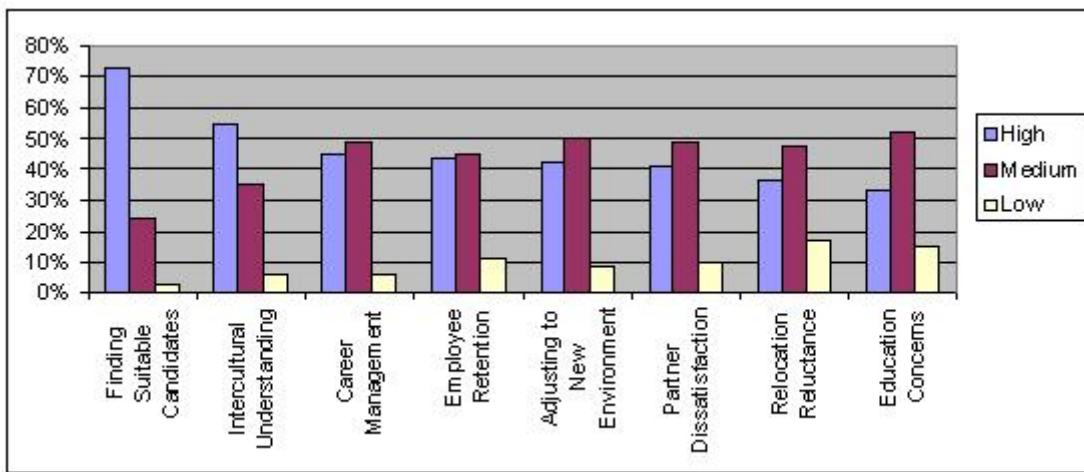




if the spouse or family is having a difficult time adjusting to the new culture the pressure increases. If proper training is not administered to coach the employee and/or the family the whole experience can turn sour, leading to failure. This, in turn, costs the company money, results in a demotivated workforce in the foreign location, and possibly damaged relationships with clients or customers.

Cross-cultural training can and does reduce the chances of expatriate relocations going wrong. Employees have now realized the importance of intercultural understanding and its potential impact upon relocations, as highlighted in the chart below. Cultural training aids the employee and family to better approach and deal with the relocation, ensuring that the negative consequences of culture shock are greatly reduced.

### ***Critical Challenges to Successful Relocations***



Cross-cultural training, in essence, helps the expatriate understand the culture of the target destination and provides them with coping strategies to support them when feeling vulnerable. Although the content of a cross-cultural training course will vary according to who is receiving it (i.e. employee, spouse or children) they all benefit the participant by highlighting the cross-cultural differences they will face in their new office and/or lifestyle.

The manager or executive will receive coaching in areas such as business culture, etiquette, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, management and other key areas that will help them communicate and work effectively with their new team. A family or spouse will receive guidance of cultural issues relating to their new environment such as schooling, lifestyle, local culture, etc. Again, this aims at familiarizing the family with their new destination.





The benefits of receiving cross-cultural training prior to relocation are that it:

- Prepares the individual/family mentally for the move
- Removes some of the 'unknown'
- Increases self-awareness and cross-cultural understanding
- Provides the opportunity for questions / anxieties to be addressed in a supportive environment
- Motivates and excites
- Reduces stress and provides coping strategies
- Eases the settling-in process
- Reduces the chances of relocation failure

### **Conclusion**

The importance of cross-cultural training is clear. Feedback from those who have undertaken cross-cultural training overwhelmingly indicates that it is of great benefit. If global companies are to truly maximize their potential abroad, cross-cultural training must become a mandatory element of expatriate relocation assignments. To ignore this would mean a continuation of failures, loss of potential growth abroad and a staff base that lacks international cultural competencies.

*Sources: Global Relocations Trends 2003/2004 Survey Report*

