

A WORD FROM RELOCATION SPECIALISTS

We as HR professionals are often challenged by how to effectively communicate in our culturally diverse work communities, so imagine what it must be like for our newly arrived relocatees who are facing more immediate challenges as to where to live, what schools for their children to attend, how to settle quickly never mind how to prosper in a new dynamic work environment. No wonder most newcomers feel tired! It is people in our organisation like Karina Reynolds who work hard to reduce that stress for newcomers and ease the transition for all the family.

In addition to a snapshot of Adelaide we also have Trevor Phillis providing us with an overview of trends in expatriate assignments and the subtleties of differences in similar cultures.

Enjoy this issue!

Anita Fernandes – Principal, Sydney

Quote of the month

A culture may be conceived as a network of beliefs and purposes in which any string in the net pulls and is pulled by the others, thus perpetually changing the configuration of the whole. If the cultural element called morals takes on a new shape, we must ask what other strings have pulled it out of line. It cannot be one solitary string, nor even the strings nearby, for the network is three-dimensional at least.

Jacques Barzun

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**PROFILE OF
THE MONTH:
KARINA
REYNOLDS**

Karina started as a Melbourne based Relocation Specialists consultant in April 2002. Originally from Sydney, Karina relocated to Brisbane, America and has now settled in Melbourne. She commenced her working career in the airline industry and worked as a flight attendant, purser and cabin crew trainer for Ansett Airlines. She assisted in the establishment of the first frequent flyer program in Australia for Pan Am and then went on to work in Sales and Marketing for United Airlines.

After leaving the airline industry Karina worked for Mirage Resorts Trust, assisting senior executives with international travel arrangements and organising the relocation of a small group of executives to Hawaii for the development period of the Mirage Resort in Hawaii.

Karina completed a degree in Event Management in 2001 and decided to utilise her Project Management skills in the Relocation industry.

As a service industry veteran Karina enjoys the challenges of the relocation industry. From helping relocatees finding the right home to sharing her insights into life in Melbourne, sourcing their special shopping needs, to helping them network into their local community. When not 'on the road' Karina also assists with the administration of the Relocation Specialists' Melbourne office.

Karina is married and has two teenage daughters.



Written by
Cultural Trainer

Monita Mascitti-
Meuter

CITY SNAPSHOT: ADELAIDE, SA

Adelaide, also known as 'the city of churches' is the capital city of South Australia (SA). Founded in 1836, it is situated on a coastal plain between the Gulf of St. Vincent and the Adelaide Hills, with much of the city is divided by the Torrens River. Aside from offering beautiful beaches (Aldinga Beach, Maslin Beach and Moana Beach) close to central Adelaide, the city also boasts many historical sights: Adelaide Town Hall, Parliament House, the Old Adelaide Gaol; and St. Francis Xavier Cathedral to name a few. Adelaide is also well known for its exciting and popular festivals and events, throughout Adelaide and in other nearby areas of South Australia (SA) such as the Glenelg Jazz Festival, The Royal Adelaide Show, the Adelaide Festival of Arts and numerous sporting events

Notably, Adelaide is one of South Australia's most famous wine-producing areas with the majority of Adelaide's most prestigious vineyards located in the Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale, Fleurieu Peninsula, Encounter Bay, Mount Lofty Ranges, Mount Benson,

Clare Valley, the Yorke Peninsula and scenic Adelaide Hills. Other popular attractions of Adelaide and South Australia area include Adelaide whale watching tours; the Adelaide Entertainment Centre; Adelaide's Rodney Fox Shark Experience; the SkyCity Adelaide Casino; Adelaide Zoological Gardens; Cleland Wildlife Park; Adelaide Parklands ; and Adelaide Botanic Gardens.

Housing Market

According to Real Estate Institute of SA Inc (REISA), House prices for the Adelaide metropolitan area have remained stable at a median of \$270,000 in the first quarter of 2005, with very little fluctuation. Some areas have shown positive change, however: "Suburbs such as Belair, Banksia Park and Campbelltown performed well this quarter and maintained solid growth over the past 12 months. Their median house prices increased over the past year by 34.4%, 31.3% and 20.9% respectively." On average house sales easily pass the \$400,000 mark in the highly sought after suburbs.

Rental Market

In the first quarter of this year, the vacancy rate of Adelaide's rental market tightening to just 1.8%. It is reported by the Real Estate Institute of SA Inc (REISA), however, that there are still "quality properties available within the \$200-250 per week price range".

The rental market is strictly regulated and advice may be needed before signing a lease. One month's rent & bond is required up front to rent a property.

Education in South Australia

Adelaide has a wide range of educational and training facilities for all ages. All children between the ages of 6 and 15 years must attend school in South Australia, and the majority of students stay on to complete their South Australia Certificate of Education (SACE). School entry age is 5 yrs by 30th April. State schools provide free tuition. Adelaide has vibrant public and private education systems, both of which are funded by the South Australian Government, (though the private system only receives grants). Notable public schools include Brighton Secondary School; Unley High School; Norwood Morialta High School and Adelaide High School. Prestigious independent and Catholic schools include; Rostrevor College, St. Peter's College, Scotch College, Sacred Heart College, Siena College. University Senior College is a non-religious private school, run by the University of Adelaide. Fees can vary from \$5,000 at senior level at University Senior College to \$15,020 (senior level) at Scotch College.

Some schools provide boarding for added fees of \$10-15,000 per year. International Baccalaureate is offered at some schools and Steiner and Montessori are offered.



Written by
Trevor Phillis,
Principal of
TwP
CONSULTING

TRENDS IN EXPATRIATE ASSIGNMENTS.

AsiaPat [i], LoPat [ii], Stealth Expat [iii] – all emerging terms to describe the changing face and make up of expatriate packages. In August 2003 in HR Monthly I reported that the traditional expatriate package was under threat and that variations to the traditional package were well underway. Within a space of 2 years the pace of the movement towards hybrid type expatriate packages has accelerated. So what is contributing to this rapid shift?

ASSIGNMENT ARRANGEMENTS

- Change is a certainty – the new paradigm is instability as organisations continually change and adapt to the rapid changes in the economic and business environments across the globe which in turn flows onto expatriate package design.
- Through travel and communications efficiencies, the world is a smaller place, however, there are now more higher risk environments and locations emerging (eg the increased threat of terrorism).
- Expatriates from within the one organisation at the one location now come from a wider variety of home countries placing demands on both package design and the workplace environment.
- The value of cultural briefings and training is more and more gaining the recognition it warrants as it is realised the significant payback it provides not only for expatriates and their families, but also for those who have to work across different cultures. Specialised & individualised hybrid packaging is more common.

About the author

Trevor is the principal of **TwP CONSULTING** who provide a consulting and advisory service to private, government & institutional organisations in the areas of Employee Relocation (International & Domestic), Remuneration, HR Planning & Development, HR policy, HR process operation and effective project management.

- Rotational, commuter and short term assignments continue to grow.
- Despite the talk, repatriation is still identified as a major issue.

MIX OF EXPATRIATES

- There is a growing number of dual career couples.
- There is a growing number of family units where the female is the major provider.
- There is a higher percentage of females are taking on assignments.
- More and more people are making lifestyle choices when deciding to take on an assignment.
- More and more expatriates are doing back to back assignments because of the rewarding experiences of an assignment, the unknowns around repatriation and because the skills they have acquired whilst on assignment can not always be fully utilised in the home country.

TALENT

- right terms and conditions. Retaining top talent is now almost universally the top priority of all Human Resource Directors.
- Managing skill shortages comes a close second as a HR priority.
- “hot talent” is now becoming a “hot talent market” – those who have the talent are very marketable and are quite prepared to change employers for there is a growing incidence of hiring foreign talent locally, but on expatriate conditions.
- There is intense competition for good local talent because of the recognised skill shortages.

SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Procurement departments are wanting more say in the decision

making process around the engagement of service providers

- Cost control is becoming a major issue for many providers as clients continue to demand doing more for the same or less cost.
- The trend for service providers to grow bigger and offer a full service range continues, however this is plateauing as the additional value adding capability of the specialist service providers is being acknowledged

With the globalisation ratcheting up the level of competition among multinational companies, organisations are being forced to sharpen every aspect of their strategies – managing human resources on a global scale has become a matter of keen interest to executives. Getting the right people with the right capabilities deployed to the right spots is now at such a critical level that it may be the decider in determining who are the winners and who are the losers. Those of us who are involved in this process must be aware of this criticality and keep abreast of the changes in expatriate packing and be prepared to move with the needs of the organisation. The nature of international assignments is changing – policies must be able to accommodate this shift as too do those who provide services to them.

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[i] An individual of Asian decent prepared to work in China on a hybrid expatriate package.

[ii] An expatriate who has been localised.

[iii] An accidental expatriate, who goes on so many business trips or temporary assignments that they inadvertently incur new fiscal liabilities or overstay their welcome as a foreign visitor.

The English Language: A Coffee by any other name....



Written by
Cultural
trainer

Monita Mascitti-
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Ever tried ordering a long black in the UK or USA? Sometimes it is the subtleties of difference between similar cultures that make our mutual interaction difficult at times. Central to attempting a way to bridge this gap is realising that upon embarking on a secondment to a country with a culture that is similar to our own (in this case, the UK, Australia and the USA, for example) we may make particular assumptions that put us on bad footing from the start. One of the greatest fallacies concerns the use of the English Language:

'We speak the same language, therefore we are able to communicate'

Does the fact that we speak the same language mean that we can communicate? Not always. Simply expressing an idea does not mean that the receiving party has understood all the nuances and slang, body language, humour, and hidden meanings with which it was intended (mind you, this is a problem when communicating in general!). Famous Australian expressions such as "up woop woop"; "cozzie"; "arvo"; "to be crook"; "to be knackered"; "to take

a sicky" have no or little meaning in the US or the UK. Asking fairly personal questions, or volunteering personal information is a bit out of place when you meet someone for the first time in the UK. And talking about humour: what would a comedy improv between Seinfeld, Judith Lucy and Ben Elton be like? I'd like to be in the audience that night.

Then there are words that are spelled the same way, but have a different meaning or are pronounced slightly differently (eg to root vs to barrack for a team springs to mind here) or different words that are used for the same object (eg tap/faucet; torch/flashlight; lift/ elevator; flat/ apartment; tin/can; Hungry Jack's/ Burger King; and so on) writing style and spelling (honor/honour; agonizing/agonising). The list goes on.

Lastly, what about the way social intercourse is conducted? In a recent interview in the Good Weekend magazine of *The Age* (Saturday August 20), Jennifer Saunders most famous for her role in *Absolutely Fabulous* said: "the English art of social intercourse is to start with general small talk, and then, sideways, you gradually find out what they do and whether you might in any way be interested to know them at all, and at any point you can put the conversation off. You don't have to know who they are or where they're from. It's just awful knowing that sort of thing." Of course, Saunders is no leading cross cultural analyst or theorist, but she does make a very good point: While it's probably more likely for an American to come up to someone and say "Hi, I'm Jack, and I'm from Idaho" the reaction by the British person as described by Saunders hints at the need for distance, anonymity and privacy, all cultural values that can be said to be at the centre of the British culture.

The difference between how social intercourse is conducted amongst similar cultures can be illustrated by looking at leading talk shows. If you were to compare interviews conducted by Andrew Denton, David Letterman or Michael Parkinson, I think it would be fair to say Denton manages to maintain formality (remains very respectful throughout the interview, very careful not to overstep boundaries), asks the personal questions uncovering layers of the guests personality to a depth not seen before (an interview with Mark Latham and Rolf Harris spring to mind here), with a dash of irony, extremely quick humour through play of words. Letterman on the other hand immediately asks those personal questions first off, plays at being offensive, is very direct, trying to create the 'drama' the show needs to attract better ratings by, for instance, gawking at his attractive female guests. Finally Parkinson manages three brief interviews, a few personal questions, quickly moving on to the next topic if it gets too personal (to maintain and respect that sense of privacy), giving the audience a taste of what the guest is like, but not allowing the guest to reveal too much of him/herself. Clever.

So how can we bridge the language gap? The following are a few of many suggestions *Relocation Specialists* gives to its clients to help them bridge the gap:

- Use *Discreet Language* (discreet meaning, the use of 'neutral' simple, non slang English, using expressions, syntax and vocabulary all English language groups are familiar with. The trick is knowing what is slang and what isn't!)

- Use and Abuse the Local Media A great way of finding out what's going on, and, of course, how things are expressed. There's no harm in asking the obvious.

- Don't forget your sense of humour

- Be patient. Be patient. Be patient.