

A WORD FROM RELOCATION SPECIALISTS

Welcome to the 2006 Winter edition of Relocation Topics. In this issue we discuss the changes that are occurring to cross cultural training and how in our very diverse workplaces it is imperative to have all staff members skilled in cross cultural communication, not just those that relocate. Dina Zavrski-Makaric has also written an article for us on "How to Make a Friend". Again, important for newcomers and helps us in the business units of our organizations to understand a major issue for all our relocatees and their families. There have also been recent changes to the minimum salaries in the 457 Visa legislation, which I'm sure is of interest to many of you.

Please also note that the telephone number of our Melbourne office has changed. Theresa Le Duc can now be reached on 03 9531 7224.

Enjoy the pleasures the colder months bring and stay warm!

Happy Reading!

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FEATURES

- **A Word From Relocation Specialists**
- **Cultural Confidence in the Global Workplace**
- **How to make a Friend?**
- **Visa 457: An update**

Quote of the month

A Senegalese poet said 'In the end we will conserve only what we love. We love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we are taught.' we must learn about other cultures in order to understand, in order to love, and in order to preserve our common world heritage."

-Yo Yo Ma, White House
Conference on Culture and
Diplomacy



Written by

Anita
Fernandes

CULTURAL CONFIDENCE IN THE GLOBAL WORKPLACE

What does it mean to be working in today's Global Workplace? What does a global workplace look like and what does this mean for those of us interested in our staff being effective quickly working in a culturally diverse work force?

The skills shortage in Australia and other countries will mean an even greater number of people working in new environments and it is to everyone's combined benefit to assist those workers in both Australia and offshore locations so that they not only feel technically capable but culturally competent and comfortable wherever they find themselves.

Until recently it was expected that the relocatee was the only one having to adjust to a new cultural environment and that the new environment was predominantly one culture.

Globalisation is "a decoupling of space and time, emphasising that with instantaneous communications, knowledge and culture can be shared around the world simultaneously."

(Sociologist, Anthony Giddens, www.globalisationguide.com)

It is now reasonable to assume that all employees in any workplace have to be able to adapt to other cultures: many people work in multicultural virtual teams and the ability to communicate successfully is key to the success of those teams.

How does this affect the training support an employer can give to its employees? Traditionally, Cross cultural training has been for those relocatees and their partners who are moving to different countries at the request of their organisations.

In today's global workplace where it is expected that people are effective when they are working in culturally diverse workplaces in their home cities or as soon as they step off a plane on a business trip, the nature of cultural training is changing.

The type of training that should now be offered has to enable employees to understand the impact they have on those they work with and how others affect them and their ability to meet their goals. Keep in mind, however, that developing a business perspective that will improve intercultural communication throughout the organisation takes time and requires ongoing coaching in addition to the one off specific topic sessions.

Whilst we often recognise, for example, that some people are more comfortable being left alone to complete tasks and others require considerable interaction with people and that relationships are key to their success, do we understand that these attitudes and behaviours may be culturally based? By understanding each other we can work together to leverage those differences to benefit the organisation and add value to the lives of the individuals who are working there.

Instead of being critical of how "they" do things in a certain way, which will inevitably be different to how "we" do things, we need to concentrate on the strengths of each individual and how as a team we can prosper.

In conclusion, whilst the relocation briefings and business briefings offered by *Relocation Specialists* are effective for relocation support, human resource professionals and business managers should additionally consider implementing cross cultural programs that provide ongoing knowledge improvement and allow opportunities to have those new skills reinforced within their own workplace, which in turn will benefit the organisations that employ them.



Written by

Dina Zavrski-Makaric

HOW TO MAKE A FRIEND?

Good social relationships play a key role in a good quality of life. Recent research suggests that meaningful reciprocal relations with friends are more important to our well-being than spending time with our family!

When we relocate, our social networks are stirred from the bottom up. Maintaining personal and regular contact with friends and relatives left behind becomes hard, and we have to start building our new social networks from zero. Social inclusion is crucial to our well being and high self-esteem. If our social connections are inadequate we can soon start slipping into depression and feelings of low self-esteem.

Some useful tips:

➤ Any interaction with another human being is socialising, and an opportunity to expand seemingly superficial relationships into something deeper and satisfying. Situations like finding a new home, finding a doctor, a hairdresser, or a school for children, are all socialising opportunities.

➤ Children are good at making friends because they are curious and open minded. Their inner critic of self and others has not yet developed to spoil the fun. As adults, we don't need special training in curiosity and open-mindedness. Put the inner critic to bed, and reawaken these two virtues.

About the author

Dina is a professional and personal development coach and facilitator. In the last 17 years she created a successful corporate career with an international company. In 2003 she formed her coaching practice *Challenging Directions*. Her clients include executives, middle-managers and small business owners. Dina's articles have been published in The Australian News UK, and on a numerous global expatriate websites.

➤ Prior to the big move inform yourself about your new host culture and cultural differences. Increasing your knowledge will set your expectations to the right level and help you when forming new relationships.

➤ Everyone I've ever met liked a **friendly approach**. We all have a pretty good idea of what is appropriate to ask a person at a social function, and what is appropriate at a business function.

➤ People are **natural helpers**, helping others makes us feel good about ourselves. If you need help – ask for it.

➤ **Initiate the next get-together** and maintain the relationship. There is nothing wrong in inviting someone for coffee or to see a movie.

➤ Offer to prepare your national meal – food is a great way of bringing people closer to each other, and you will also teach your new friend something about your culture.

➤ **Don't take rejections personally**. You haven't been best friends with everyone in your home country, so it is unrealistic to expect that you will make friends with everyone in your new country.

➤ Initially you will probably look for **support of people of similar background** to your own. They provide a relatively safe environment to talk to about our first experiences, and are a source of initial practical information on where to go and how to do things.

➤ When looking to meet people who share your cultural background, look for people who have positive attitude and are keeping an open mind to accepting and learning the new.

Living Environment

➤ Living close to people who share your cultural background will initially give you a sense of safety, but may stay in the way of your integration with the new, holding back your personal growth.

➤ Find a suburb to live in because you like the look and the feel of it, and meet the locals: this will allow you to learn the language faster and become part of the new culture sooner.

➤ Joining expatriate groups is another way of building social networks.

➤ Other places to go and meet people are based around interests. Local councils and community centers usually keep brochures with information on various interest groups, from learning a new language, to yoga classes, craft, painting, writing courses and many more.

➤ Social networks are meant to be fun and spontaneous. If you approach people in a fun and spontaneous way, with curiosity and an open mind - they will respond the same. Those who don't are going to miss out on meeting someone new and interesting – you!

Visa 457:

An Update



Written by
Cultural
trainer

Monita Mascitti-
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INCREASE IN MINIMUM SALARIES OF TEMPORARY OVERSEAS SKILLED WORKERS

On May 1 of this year Minister for immigration and multicultural affairs, Amanda Vanstone announced that as of May 3rd there will be an **increase in the minimum salaries of temporary overseas skilled workers**. This means specifically that:

- ➤ Most professions' minimum salary will increase about 7% from \$39,100 to \$41,850, with workers still being paid "in accordance with Australian standards and conditions for employment."
- ➤ For occupations in the IT sector, the increase will be 12.9%, from \$50,775 to \$57,300.
- ➤ High skilled senior manager positions applying for permanent migration will increase to a minimum of \$165, 000.
- ➤ Changes to regional concessions under the Visa 457 scheme will see a limit set to salaries of at least 90% of standard minimum level as of July 1, 2006.
- ➤ It should be noted that the minimum salary level is the taxable base wage only and may not include superannuation, living away from home allowance or any other allowances.
- ➤ Temporary skilled workers will also have to have at least a functional level of English: "Employers will need to attest either that their employees have sufficient command of English or that they have put in place arrangements to provide English language training for both the employees and their families" (Minister Amanda Vanstone).

Source: Hamilton Watts Migration Services, Stirling Henry Migration services and the Ministers' Media Release on May 1, 2006.