

A WORD FROM RELOCATION SPECIALISTS



It is unbelievable how quickly time flies once the New Year has started. Before you know it we are already booking events for December without blinking an eyelid!

This newsletter covers a variety of topics that are currently quite topical within Relocation Specialists in 2007:

First, for those of our readers moving or about to move, you have probably noticed that the rental property market has gone through unbelievable changes all across Australia. Theresa Le Duc supplied us with a succinct overview as to the recent trends.

Secondly, the introduction of a new training exercise which may raise the quality of our cultural briefings is one we thought warranted a bit of attention.

Finally, on the home front, an article on the bilingual child may prove to be helpful for those readers battling through the bilingual expat experience!

As always we welcome your feedback and comments.

Happy Reading!

Anita Fernandes,

Principal, Sydney

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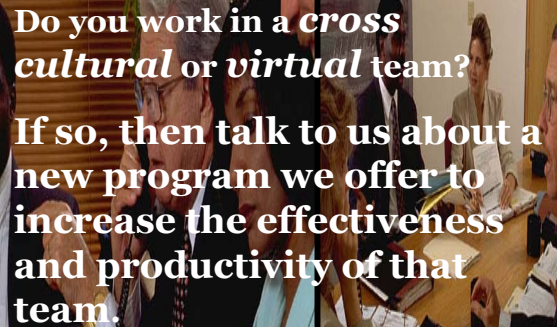
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Do you work in a *cross cultural* or *virtual* team?
If so, then talk to us about a new program we offer to increase the effectiveness and productivity of that team.

Call Anita Fernandes or your local office to discuss.

FEATURES

- **A Word From Relocation Specialists**
- **Housing Market – Boom or Crisis? – The Rental Shortage**
- **The Culture Compass**
- **Moving with Children: The Bilingual Child**

Quote of the month

The monolingual of whom I speak speaks a language of which he is deprived. The French language is not his. Because he is therefore deprived of all language, and no longer has any other recourse – neither Arabic, Berber, Hebrew – nor any languages his ancestors would have spoken – because... he is thrown into absolute translation, a translation without a pole of reference, without an originary language and without a source language (langue de départ). For him there are only target languages (langues d'arrivée).

Jacques Derrida, Monolingualism of the Other, 1998

Housing Market – Boom or Crisis? – The Rental Shortage

Written by Theresa Le Duc
Principal, Melbourne

In our major capital cities there is a rental crisis happening that is making life difficult for your relocating employees. The vacancy rate in some major capital cities has dropped to as low as 0.5% causing a drastic under supply of good quality rental properties in the inner city and sought after middle ring suburbs. Even some outer ring suburbs are suffering under supply.

Landlords are increasing rents by up to 15% and bidding wars are taking place for rental properties. In Sydney and Melbourne inner city apartments and houses as many as 40 people may attend an open for inspection and 20 people make application for a property. This makes it far more difficult for us to navigate your employees through the queue or to escalate them to a preferred position. Potential tenants are offering up to \$50 more per week to secure a property and even higher in the higher price brackets.

Rents rose faster in 2006 than in the last 15 years. Investors are finding rent returns on property too low and a healthy share market, interest rate rises and changes to superannuation laws have encouraged investors to liquidate assets and invest elsewhere!

Rents in inner city locations are set to rise up to 42% over the next five years if the trend continues.

2006 Housing Figures:

The recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures show that house prices grew in all capital cities other than Sydney over the last 12 months.

Annual Median Property Value Change (December quarter 2005 to December quarter 2006)

Perth	+36.9%
Darwin	+17.6%
Canberra	+9.2%
Melbourne	+8.1%
Brisbane	+7.1%
Hobart	+7.1%
Adelaide	+6.4%
Sydney	-0.1%

Source: A.B.S.

The Rental Market:

It is claimed to be the worst shortage since WW2. Although **Sydney** has experienced a negative growth in property values, the rental market vacancy rate is extremely low (1.5%) and availability is very limited. Rents are still on the rise and bidding wars to obtain a property is common place.

Perth has experienced a boom – house prices in Perth are approaching the level in Sydney (up an amazing 36.9%) and vacancy rates are less than 1.8%. Supply of housing is

exceptionally low and landlords are increasing rents to catch up (sometimes after experiencing high demand) and bidding extra is starting to happen in Perth, Melbourne and Brisbane also.

Even Darwin's house price growth peaked in 2006 with a 17.6% rise in the December quarter (see table above) and the rental market is tight as a result.

Melbourne has had a positive growth but the rental market is extremely limited and drastically under supplied – vacancy rates are about 1.6%. Canberra is as low as 1.1% and Adelaide shows as the tightest rental market – 0.5% vacancy rate- a market normally under supplied now experiencing drastic shortages.

Brisbane vacancy rates are as low as 1.3% in some areas and a rental shortage crisis is evident from the 2006 figures.

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

•**Prepare** employees expectations prior to arrival (HR and Relocation Specialists)

•**Review** rental budgets in your policy regularly & be flexible about them

•**Understand** the challenges we face in finding them suitable accommodation within agreed time frames

•Employees need to be pro-active and **realistic** in the process of finding rental properties to help us achieve an outcome in the current market

Main sources: ABS and domain.com.au

The Culture Compass

Written by Cultural trainer

Monita Mascitti-Meuter

One of the new exercises that will be introduced within the cross cultural training session in 2007 is the *Culture Compass*. Divided in two parts (one which focuses on identifying individual culture, and the other organisational culture) it is designed as a tool to enhance and help structure the discussion of cultural difference in the workplace. It most notably incorporates a wide spectrum in a cross cultural training session namely:

- How to measure world views (through the four dimensions or orientation toward activity, time, human relationships and the environment/nature);
- One's assumptions about other cultures and how this may affect our interaction with others;
- *and* it helps in assessing organisational culture.

Its main purpose is to maximise the participants communication and organisational effectiveness.

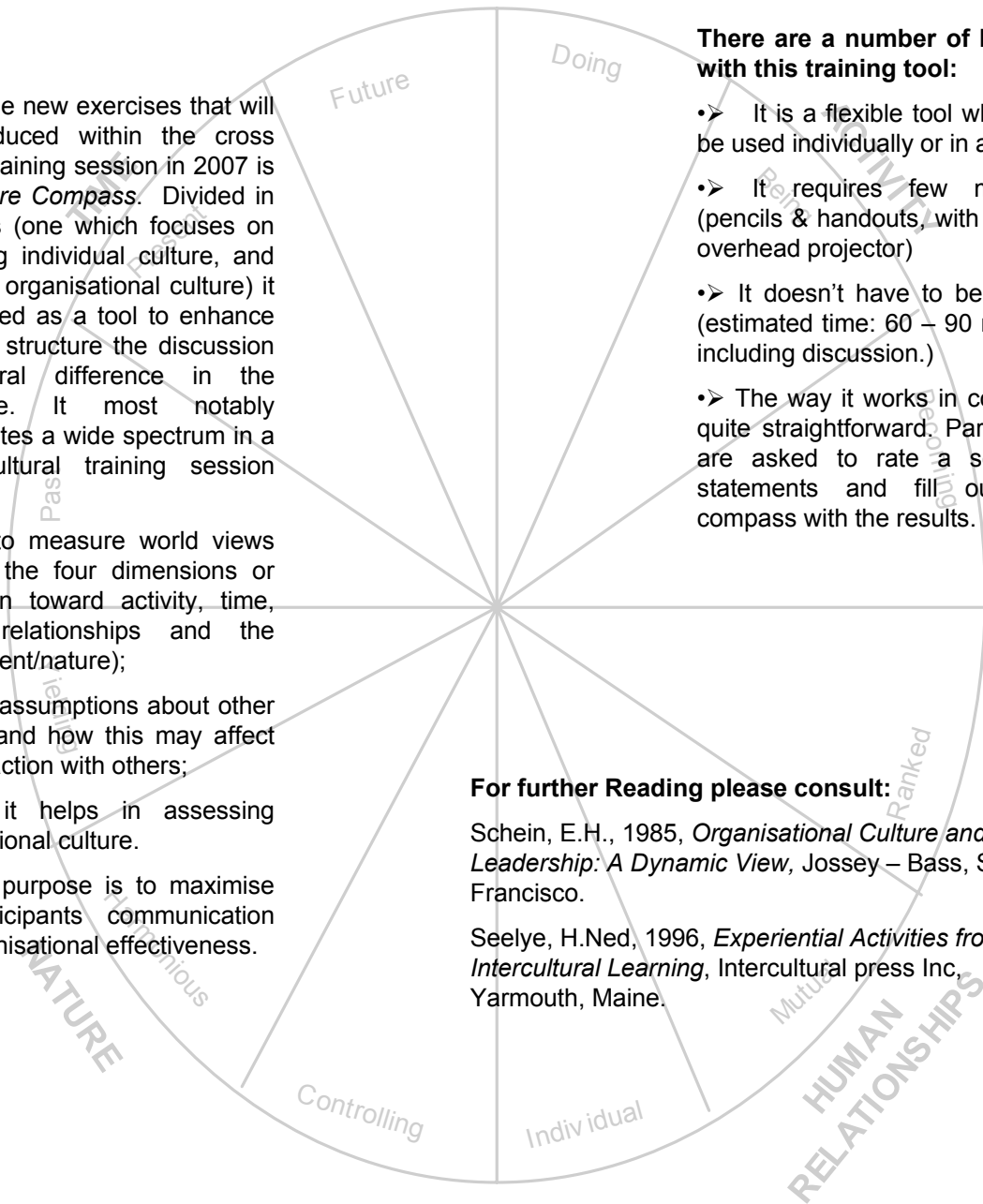
There are a number of benefits with this training tool:

- It is a flexible tool which can be used individually or in a group.
- It requires few materials (pencils & handouts, with optional overhead projector)
- It doesn't have to be lengthy (estimated time: 60 – 90 minutes, including discussion.)
- The way it works in context is quite straightforward. Participants are asked to rate a series of statements and fill out their compass with the results.

For further Reading please consult:

Schein, E.H., 1985, *Organisational Culture and Leadership: A Dynamic View*, Jossey – Bass, San Francisco.

Seelye, H.Ned, 1996, *Experiential Activities fro Intercultural Learning*, Intercultural press Inc, Yarmouth, Maine.



Moving with Children: The Bilingual Child.

Written by Cultural trainer

Monita Mascitti-Meuter

One of the major benefits of the expat experience with children is without a doubt the opportunity to expose your children to other cultures and languages. Acquiring a second language and then maintaining both languages is challenging, but not impossible. Based on my own personal experience in raising two bilingual children (English & Dutch), I have found that the success of my method boiled down consistently following three main philosophies.

First, you must agree as a family what method you will choose, and, depending on the circumstances it could be:

- “One parent one language” (OPOL) (variations could include grandparents, nannies, au pairs and baby sitters as well, but according to research the child needs to be exposed to a language “30% of his waking time to actively speak it” (Christine Bosemark, *Raising Bilingual Children*).

- Speaking the minority language at home, the majority language outside the house.

Secondly, now that you have decided on the method, you need to be consistent.

I found that although tactics had to vary depending on the age of the child, they needed to stay consistent. As soon as my children were born, I started speaking to them in the minority language (Dutch) and never (even in mothers group) opted for English ‘out of courtesy’. Teaching my children Dutch was far more important than another mothers’ hurt feelings! It is a well-known fact the babies recognise their mothers voice in the womb, and that they also react to their mother’s language switching abilities. At the age of two, when they are starting to reproduce a few words, the concept of ‘Mummy speaks Dutch and Daddy speaks English’ is one the child can comprehend. Reinforcement beyond the age of 2 happens by asking them to be your translator, because “Mummy can’t understand anything Daddy says!”. The next step (when they quickly find out that you *do* understand English at the age of three) is to say: that you have forgotten a few words and that you need their help. They need to feel empowered and start to get confident in their language skills. Most importantly, however, whatever the child’s age, **you have to be consistent in your language use.** Your interaction has to always be in the target language. I went as far as ignoring anything said in English

to me by my children (and still do). If I don’t force them to think about translating what they want to say, no-one else will.

Thirdly, and most importantly, both languages need to be supported by a community. If you speak the minority language at home, you will quickly find that your linguistic skills will suffer by the mere fact that you are not living within a community that supports your language skills. You will easily lapse into syntactical errors, direct translations and a dwindling vocabulary, all of which will not be able to support the growing language skills of your child. The easiest way to resolve this is by joining a special interest/ cultural playgroup/ school for each language/culture, or, if you can afford it get a nanny! Language based playgroups allow migrant and expat families to expose their child to the language and culture, whilst also functioning as a resource for community links, support networks and cultural events.

In short, the commitment to help a child along its journey of being bilingual is by far not easy, but unbelievably rewarding. For the gift of a second language to a child, and the appreciation of other cultures is one that lasts a lifetime!