



## A WORD FROM RELOCATION SPECIALISTS

Welcome to our first edition of Relocation Topics for 2009. What a year 2008 turned out to be and I think we all understand that 2009 is going to be a challenging year for all of us personally and professionally.

Now more than ever we must all pay attention to the priorities our businesses demand. In addition to the cost cutting that all organisations are facing, we must also pay attention to developing and keeping the skills of our people. Although unemployment in Australia has risen we still face a substantial skill shortage in many areas.

For those of you relocating individuals and families then it is even more imperative to meet their practical needs such as finding a home to live in, the right schools for the children and being comfortable in their new community. Sometimes organisations think they can cut corners and let the newcomer handle all this themselves, often with disastrous results when they discover the area is not quite as they expected or their commute is much longer than desired.

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Today many assignees are new hires to their organisations and the cost of a failed international assignment is enormous, for the people involved and for the company. An assignee must succeed, so to minimise the risk and maximise the investment the company is making in that employee, providing them with intercultural knowledge and skills about their new country is critical.

Now is the time to ensure that if you are working in multi cultural teams or on a broader scale a virtual global team, that your staff is working with cultural intelligence and competence. Opportunity, growth and profit are what all businesses are looking to achieve and even with the global economic downturn the ability to communicate effectively with each other across the country or across the globe is key. Business no longer has the time to have intercultural communication misunderstandings which may delay or even derail projects.

Each organisation understands there is a current change in the order of things. This change can be positive with creative and original ways of not only surviving but thriving in your particular industry. Investment in relocation and global cross cultural skills for all your new assignees and current staff is one way to assist the business in this slower time and ensure you are prepared for when the better times return.

Please enjoy this issue and we look forward to talking with you during this demanding but surely rewarding 2009.

*Anita Fernandes*

## Relocation Topics

### Relocation Consultants: Why we are valuable?

In the current economic climate where controlling costs is paramount and internet technology readily available – it could easily be argued that people can manage their own relocations.

However, it often takes longer and can cause more stress going it alone as the relocatee has to make decisions with little or no local knowledge. Always efficient, and able to get relocation tasks done in a skilled manner, Relocation Consultants can make the difference between a successful relocation and a failed one.

Our service includes pre-arrival support which helps relocatees understand the differences in their new locations. We help manage their expectations and provide an opportunity for them to receive valuable information prior to arriving. This helps them to make a more informed choice as well as clear up any misunderstandings.

A failed relocation, or redundancy, is a costly and difficult situation for all concerned. In these hard economic times: not

only do organisations need to ensure they are selecting the right people, but there is also the need to ensure the new employee settles into the new location and roles quickly and easily. Relocation Consultants provide a valuable resource for local and real estate knowledge and schooling/education advice. They are also unofficial counsellors, confidants, and walking encyclopaedias with lots of practical relocation advice.

The value of a relocation consultant is to get the family settled quickly. Ascertaining which suburbs suit their needs and budget is crucial to this process. Singles and couples can sometimes make decisions based on budget that leave them located in an area that does not suit them which can cause loneliness and stress. Families making critical decisions about schooling, housing and recreational facilities can sometimes end up in locations that don't suit their needs or personal style. Again, this can contribute to unhappy family members and a stressed out employee.

Explaining the Australian education system or the differences between the states will assist them with making the right choice about schools and universities which is vital to the family's well being and can save a lot of heartache later.

Statistics show that 50% of international assignments fail due to unhappy family members. The cost to organisations is enormous – far better to ensure that the right decisions are made up front.

Sometimes our advice can be as simple as recommending a starter pack rental furniture option 'in lieu of' their temporary accommodation – until their shipment arrives from overseas.

It is also a cost saving to the company to get them into their permanent rental home sooner with a cost effective rental furniture solution. Or providing a good quality orientation / overview during the recruitment interview can be extremely valuable to the decision process of a prospective employee.

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There are also a lot of extras the consultants do to streamline the move and make the transition easier for the relocatee in our full package services. For example:

**Helping relocatees buy a car.** A client who purchased a car on line prior to arrival found assistance from the consultant during the process very helpful.

**City services overview.** Helping clients navigate the public transport system, understanding Medicare and explaining their obligations regarding drivers licence and any other statutory obligations has been invaluable. A general overview of living in the destination city. Introduction to doctors, dentists, local community facilities near their chosen home is useful as well.

**School and university enrolments .**

Sometimes things as simple as hand delivering enrolment documents for private schools or universities puts their mind at ease – particularly if they have chosen schools and universities on a look/see visit and are back in their home location prior to permanent

arrival. Helping to direct them regarding buying school uniforms and explaining the cultural norms at school and university can make a huge difference.

**Buying appliances and household items .**

It sometimes seems daunting for new arrivals to know where to shop for essential items and the consultants can show them how to easily find things in the right locations – like whitegoods, electrical appliances and a new mobile phone etc.

**Introducing relocatees to networking opportunities** to help settle in to their new environment has proven to be invaluable in facilitating a smooth transition into their new country.

Moving is stressful enough, whether it is around the corner, interstate or around the world. Relocation consultants can make this transition faster and easier which can significantly improve the success of a relocation, avoiding costly relocation mistakes for organisations and their employees. Having a happily settled employee who is productive sooner at the office is probably the most

consistent feedback we get back from our clients. The support of a Relocation Consultant has made the transition to the new location so much smoother for every member of the family.

*A collaborative work by the Relocation Team at Relocation Specialist*

## Organisational Culture II: A Cursory Glance



Written by  
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In the last newsletter I briefly introduced two theories of organisational culture, namely that of Geert Hofstede, which, although outdated and highly contested is still widely used and secondly the three tiered model of Edgar Schein. Why this sudden interest in organisational culture? It

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has a lot to do with the fact that when relocatees have to settle into a new national culture, they often have to adjust to the new organisational culture of the company they joined as well.

It should never be assumed that these are automatically the same. Aside from the previously mentioned theories in defining organisational culture, Charles Handy has also made a significant contribution in this area by building on the 1972 work of Roger Harrison, and is worth discussing.

Handy purports 4 types of basic, easy to understand organisational structures which are linked to organisational culture. What is fascinating is that rather than looking at organisational culture as something that is 'seen, felt and heard' like Schein does, he analyses organisational culture as something influenced by how people think, where the power lies, what motivates people and the like, and then neatly limits the outcomes to four possible structures. Each structure has been named after a Greek God, which helps illustrate them in turn. Namely (1) the Power Culture (Zeus) – where power is

derived from the top person(s); (2) the Role Culture (Appollo) – a highly bureaucratic structure, depending on procedures; (3) Task Culture (Athena) – a network, small team organisational culture; and lastly (4) Person Culture (Dionysus) – where “all individuals believe themselves to be superior to the organisation”. To some extent the division is extremely helpful in trying to determine the successful nature of a company's organisational culture, and trying to determine whether new employees would be the right fit, merely by ascertaining which type of culture they associate with. Not only that, but by understanding how the company works, there also will be a deeper understanding of *where* the company is going, what may have to change, what is promoting it and what is holding it back. If many employees seem to be leaving and breaking their contracts, clearly, there is something wrong. If most employees seem to be staying for the long haul and putting in 110%, something within the culture of the organisation must have achieved the right balance/fit and found those employees that thrive in the culture. It has developed. After having looked at these different theories it is quite plausible then, that a cross cultural conflict does not necessarily have to happen

from the fact that a foreign assignee brings in different cultural values. He or she may be very well capable of adjusting quickly to the national culture and value system of the new host country. Acclimatizing to the new organisational culture, however, is an aspect that has to be taken into consideration as well and may pose very different challenges.

To explore this further for yourself why not have a look at the following reference material:

Handy, C. , 1985, *Understanding Organisations*, Penguin.  
Hofstede G., 1991, *Cultures and Organisations: Software of the Mind*, London: McGraw-Hill.  
Schein E, 2004, *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

**Monita Mascitti-Meuter**

## Human-Nature Relationship and Black Saturday: A Cultural Perspective

On Sunday February 22, 2009, Australia officially mourned the loss of life due to the bushfires of Black Saturday . Some of you may have heard the poem on the ABC Radio of Peter, the Poet from Flowerdale, a CFA Volunteer. It voiced his feeling

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of how his relationship with fire had changed from something he thought he understood and could tame, to something that went beyond any training, expertise and logic.

The poem poignantly highlighted the feelings of many that day, but it also reiterated the fact that the relationship between human beings and nature has always been very volatile, and that perhaps the end result tends to be driven by our cultural values.

Home-owners were told to either flee or defend their property.

Depending whether they stayed was not only determined by the ferocity of the fire, but their attachment to their property and more importantly their conviction of being able to dominate nature. Historically it can be seen that some cultures chose to either work with nature or against it, choosing to integrate and accept the natural elements or try and change them. Early settlers in Australia cleared the land to serve their immediate purpose, causing irreparable damage in some places. The colonial mentality saw a separation of human and nature in western cultures

whereby current behaviour can be said to reflect this still: one's life is seen as something one can take ownership of and creating conflict means you have convictions. More externally inclined cultures see life as being pre-determined, and their role is to keep harmony, peace, and avoidance of conflict (Trompenaars, pp 145-60). Accepting natural elements for what they are, for instance, underpins the environmental politicization of Japan, whose concept of nature and the environment is influenced by the principle of harmony. Negative and positive elements are accepted as both *needing* to be present. Pollution, for instance is only protested against if it impedes the enjoyment of human life, not because of what it is. Added to this, it is said that Buddhism purports the philosophy that everything is temporary and nothing remains, which means that attempting to conserve aspects of the environment for future generations becomes difficult if not impossible. (Mert, pp. 1-13).

Having said all this, exploring the relationship between humans and nature cross culturally won't make what happened that Saturday any

less devastating. There are many questions still left unanswered, and many of the 7,000 left homeless will take a long time to recover from the emotional and material damage of the fire. It may, however, help a little in understanding an aspect of it during this long road of healing.

For more information on the relationship between culture and nature you can visit the following sites:

Poem by Peter, CFA volunteer from Flowerdale can be listened to on:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/breakfast/stories/2009/2493232.htm>

Websites on the relationship between nature and culture to which this article refers:

Klein, David R., 1994, "Wilderness: A Western Concept alien to Arctic Cultures", *Information North*, Vol 20, No. 3 .  
<http://arcticcircle.uconn.edu/Histor yCulture/wilderness.html>

Mert, Aysem, 2003, *Human-Nature Relationship in Japan and its effect on environmental politicization in Japan*.  
<http://www.hicsocial.org/Social200 3Proceedings/Aysem%20Mert.pdf>

Trompenaars, Fons and Charles Hamden-Turner, 1998, *Riding the Waves of Culture*, Mc Graw-Hill, New York.  
[http://www.7d-culture.com/Content/dim\\_7.htm](http://www.7d-culture.com/Content/dim_7.htm)

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