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# Relocation *topics*

## A Word from Relocation Specialists

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#### Crossing Cultures

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Welcome to our Winter 2009 newsletter. We do hope you like our crisp new look and more importantly the topics we have brought you this issue.

Talking with our clients it is apparent that whilst the number of relocations are currently facing budgetary restrictions, there is a sense that a skills shortage might just be around the corner. This may help explain why unemployment rates in Australia have not been as grim as first forecast. HR and line management are paying attention to their strategic planning and requirements so that they are fully prepared for the change in economic conditions.

All is not doom and gloom as many employees are embracing the opportunity to work slightly less hours and enjoy a little more work/life balance.

Taking the lead from our musical quote it was wonderful news to hear today of the discovery of a flute that is approximately 35,000 years old. How extraordinary and inventive we humans are.

Happy Reading!  
Anita Fernandes

*When the violin can forgive the past it can start singing.  
When the violin can stop worrying about the future,  
You will become such a drunk laughing nuisance that God will  
then lean down and begin combing you into his hair  
When the violin can forgive every wound caused by others  
The heart starts singing. -Hafez*



# Cross Cultural Programs on India

Anita Fernandes

*Crossing Cultures* is the division of The Relocation Specialists Group that delivers tailored cross cultural programs. Our aim is to build excellence in cultural competency that is both needed and demanded by global businesses. At present, however, we have noticed increased interest with organisations wanting to ensure their multi cultural teams work effectively and they recognise that without this competency there will be a negative impact on business partnerships and the bottom line.

I want to highlight a successful series of programs we delivered for a large Australian organisation in WA and QLD in Q4 2008. Our client was outsourcing a major Business Process to India and asked us to work with senior professional and management staff that were part of the program on an ongoing basis.

The programs were designed to assist the participants to better understand their own cultures, (predominantly Anglo Australian) gain an understanding of the Indian culture and how to successfully integrate them both. A few of the participants had been to India for short periods to meet their counterparts, but predominantly people were being expected to meet the business objectives without the opportunity of meeting their

opposite team members from the other country. *Crossing Cultures* worked with the Australian company and we understood that the Indian company were also providing some cultural awareness training to their staff via e-learning.

The **ISSUES** generally were around the following topics:

❑ Other than a few having a brief one or at the most two week trip to India, no one had any knowledge about India, it's heritage or customs (and this was pre *Slumdog Millionaire* taking the world by storm). No one had travelled there for pleasure.

❑ There were concerns around communication styles, which resulted in issues around decision making, management style and dealing with conflict to name a few.

❑ The Australians felt under enormous business pressure to achieve results in a very short period so tended to concentrate on the tasks and processes that needed to be completed, rather than learning about their Indian counterparts and the constraints they faced.

We **EXPLORED** these in the following ways:

❑ India is a multi cultural, multi religious, multi lingual country so don't make assumptions around religious, linguistic, geographical or ethnic diversity. As Australians believe we are all different then no one Indian is the same.

❑ Professionals in India see long term collaboration as an essential part of long term success and sustainability in their business and want to be seen as partners not subordinates. Australians tend to focus on tasks rather than relationships.

❑ An engaged relationship, ie beyond the pure business, is critical when doing business in India. By building trust and confidence you can break down business and social barriers. For example: when being asked questions about family, this is not time wasting but an important part of understanding the person and their place.

❑ Australians can sometimes be seen as inflexible as we want contracts or processes in place rather than being



# Cross Cultural Programs on India

*continued*

comfortable with changing situations.

❑ Australians see themselves as being very direct in their communication style and see people in India as being more indirect. Whilst many in India, particularly those who have been educated or travelled to Western cultures, like the “American or Australian way”, many others are not so comfortable. Conversely some Indians see people from Australia as indirect in speaking style as we tend to use shortcuts in our conversations. An example would be when asking feedback from an Australian they are likely to say “fine” without explaining what this actually means.

❑ Another example is that the Australian workplace is quite egalitarian with everyone expected to have an opinion and freely express it. In a more hierarchical culture people will often wait to be asked for their opinion and if not asked will remain quiet. This can often mean that ideas are not heard when they should be drawn out and discussed. This can sometimes mean that people in India are wary of confronting their business

partner with what to them seem like unrealistic demands, timelines etc. This can have a negative impact on the delivery of any project but also on the long term business relationship.

These examples all have an impact on how decisions are made, the speed of decision making, managing negotiations, manager/subordinate relationships to mention a few.

The **OUTCOMES** were:

❑ Gave the employees in Australia a “quick look” at some of the areas of similarity and differences between the cultures and communication style clues to help recognise when things might be different to expectations.

❑ Gave the employees in Australia confidence in their dealings with their India counterparts, to not make judgements as to what is right or wrong and to pay attention to the nuances that are imbedded in each culture.

***In conclusion:***

When embarking upon an expansion into any new country it is essential for Australian

companies to have an internal culture within their business that will support their staff to deal effectively with their global partners. This will have a positive impact on their external dealings with their customers and suppliers.

Ways to equip your Australian staff might include:

❑ Tailored cultural briefing programs to suit the specific requirement.

❑ Investing in team development in both countries to encourage cultural cohesion.

❑ Employ Australian staff in India to “build a bridge” between the cultures. Bring Indian staff or business partners to Australia to assist them to better understand the organisational culture they will be working in.



# Relocation Policy Reviews

*Aysegul Kayahan*

During the current economic downturn, recruitment activity has diminished substantially for many organisations, allowing HR professionals time to look at neglected “housekeeping” activities such as reviewing HR policies and processes. At **Relocation Specialists** we have many years experience reviewing the relocation policies of our clients, helping to fine tune policies to the different situations they may face in their day to day management of staff and new hire relocations. If you are new to relocation management or the types of relocations you are managing has changed, this task can be complex.

A single relocation can involve staff in HR, line management, finance and procurement. Relocation related expenses can vary wildly from individual to individual and it is not always easy to apply policy fairly to everyone involved, although that must ultimately be the aim. Relocation costs can easily exceed budget and *how* relocation budgets are managed can have a great impact on the success of mobility programs as well as improving the relocation experience for employees and their families.

Many organisations differentiate between domestic and international relocations and between new employees and existing employees.

However, there is increasing evidence from our own clients and the media to suggest that a consistent approach to relocation management will ensure the greatest overall satisfaction.

### *Some things to consider:*

In most cases where an organisation asks an existing employee to relocate, the primary motivator is that they are needed at the new location for their specific work skills. Thus it is important to ensure that the employee’s transition to their new position and community is as seamless and as stress-free as possible. It goes without saying that if the employee has a partner or children their successful transition is a critical component of a successful relocation.

Domestic relocations can be as challenging as international ones and yet the general perception appears to be that they must be easier. Similarly, when relocating between countries that speak the same language, there is a perception that these are much easier and yet the general feedback we get is that the transition was more difficult than anticipated.

Organisations sometimes offer less funding or support to new hires than existing employees. This may be a false economy. If you have already gone through a costly recruitment exercise it is important to ensure your investment is well looked after.

Successful recruitment and relocation activity greatly impact on retention. Raising the awareness of management to these relationships and what is considered best practice in your industry is an important step towards delivering more effective relocation support, and keeping your staff whether you manage your relocation in-house or outsource.

Regularly surveying employees that you have relocated will provide useful feedback on how to improve your policies and processes.

Some key components to include when developing or updating your policy are:

- Reasonable temporary accommodation terms
- Logistics expenses
- Permanent Housing expenses
- Schooling expenses where required
- Miscellaneous expenses
- Cultural Briefings for international moves
- Tax advice (for internationals)
- Defensive Driving courses (for internationals)

In conclusion, it is important to regularly review your relocation policy to ensure it fits the changing needs of your organisation.



## Take the Fast Track to Fitting in

*Patti McCarthy*

Undeniably, the most challenging thing about moving is establishing new friendship and support groups.

Being new, however, can be a great way of getting to know people. Use your 'newness' as an advantage: ask people's advice and let them feel good about being able to help you! Don't wait to be invited or asked, shyness is a luxury you can't afford, but do ask someone you have connected with if they will have a coffee with you and answer some questions you may have about the neighbourhood or workplace.

The biggest barrier to friendships is that people feel threatened by something they are not familiar with. As a newcomer you may be worried about fitting in, but will seem very exotic to someone who has lived in the same suburb all their life. They may worry that you may view their lives as inferior. Take the time to learn about their lives and when they are comfortable, their curiosity will encourage them to ask about your experiences.

If you need to have a whinge to someone about Australia, then make sure you do it to supportive friends back home, not new friends here!

Moving to Australia can be unexpectedly challenging. While on the surface Australians are open and friendly, it may take a while for them to actually invite you into their home. Of course this is not to say that you won't ever make friends with Australians, but you can and should take the pressure off yourself by exploring something that interests you. Other members of these groups also want to make friends, and you will find that your Australian friendships develop quicker when you are more relaxed.

Finally, accept any and every invitation that is offered to you. Even if the event doesn't appeal, there will be other people there you may connect with – and making connections is the fastest way to feeling at home in a new environment.

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### Renters' Dreams Come True

Principals of *Relocation Specialists* have identified a new service designed to take the hassle out of house and flat hunting on a Wednesday or Saturday morning during the open for inspection times.

For a modest fee, *Relocation Specialists* will locate and qualify the properties matching the requirements of their clients.

The client will be given an extensive list of 'needs and wants' for completion (eg. floor boards not carpet, ground floor or above, pets allowed).

*Relocation Specialists* will do the research, source the relevant properties and provide an itinerary of the qualified properties rather than the renter rushing from one unsuitable place to another in the short time allocated during the open for inspection times.

Once a suitable property has been found, we will also assist to complete the lease process.

Please contact your local Relocation Specialists office for this fantastic new service.