

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Expatriate Assignments

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Introduction	Implications for the Manager
Expatriate Functions	Summary
Expatriate Success and Failure	Exercise
Selecting for Success	Notes

17.1 Introduction

The Italian fashion house, Po, is a global company that has achieved its great success by innovating in design, building highly centralized management structures, and developing a standard uniform image. The company projects the same image in its many branches worldwide.

The company employs a team of highly skilled shop fitters that are sent off to create the environment of every new shop. All designs are prepared in the Milan headquarters and discussed in detail with the shop fitters before they leave. Usually though, these discussions are brief. The company attempts to project the same brand image everywhere, and the basic designs never change. In all, the same color paint is used, as well as the same furniture designs and if possible the same layout.

At the foreign branch, the premises are ready prepared. No local materials are used. Everything needed is flown out by headquarters. The shop fitters complete the assignment as soon as possible and then return to Milan. They have minimal contacts with the local population. The job has been determined entirely by headquarters and they have not needed any expatriate training to do their jobs. Hence their success or failure on a particular assignment is not dependent on an ability to adjust to the foreign culture.

The company succeeds because it emphasizes Italian sophistication, and deliberately does not make any concessions to local values. But this is an extreme example.