

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Training and Supporting an Expatriate Assignment

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Introduction	Implications for the Manager
Training	Summary
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The Shock of Return	Notes

18.1 Introduction

Ed, an American, was prepared by his company headquarters to take up a posting in Taiwan. Because he needed to network locally, Chinese language training was included. The human resource department arranged for him to be given intensive classes in the Cantonese dialect. On arrival in Taipei he realized that the official language was Mandarin Chinese and that the great majority of his new contacts spoke only Mandarin and knew no Cantonese.

This story shows a company investing in language training, but inadequately assessing needs. Resources were wasted, and Ed's sense of confidence in the human resource department supporting his expatriate assignment was lessened. So a well-intentioned mistake had negative effects and Ed's assignment was less productive than it might have been. Cross-cultural training must be appropriate if it is to be useful.

In a world where the selection processes operated perfectly, and the company could select from an unlimited number of candidates, training and support might not be needed. In practice, of course, neither of these conditions apply. The company uses imprecise instruments to select the best of the few candidates available. Added to this, the business environment is changing with increasing speed and unpredictability. This means that the initial job description may be very quickly outdated. The expatriate who seems to offer precisely the right qualities at the time of selection may be increasingly