

Appendices

Appendix A

Interview guide

In the interviews, the interview guide is used to aid the data collection. The interview questions are not strictly followed but rather a checklist to make sure all the important aspects are covered during the interview.

General questions

What is the respondent's position within the company? What are the responsibilities for this position?

How many expatriates are within the MNC?

How long have you been working abroad, and what is the expected length or period for your expatriation?

Have you been to the host country before? Or do you have any other prior international experience?

How long have you been notified prior the commencement of expatriation?

Essential training questions

Have you received any training before taking the expatriate assignment? What is the training about?

Who instructed the training? Is the training performed by the person who was on an international assignment before or is it outsourced to a specialist company? How long did the training last?

Have you met any problems during your expatriation, can you explain?

What kind of support or practical information have you received at the host company? (accommodation, etc)

Have you received any training after your arrival?

What methods are used in the training, such as seminar, case studies or role play?

What do you think about the training you have received according to your experience?

Appendix B

Interview transcript

B.1 Transcript of interviewees from ZTE

B.1.1 Interview of Mr. Shen

Interviewee: Mr. Shen

Position: Sourcing Manager

Expected expatriation period: 2 years,

Current expatriation duration: more than 1 year

Marital status: Single

Age: 27

How long prior the assignment have you been notified that you would be assigned to an overseas assignment?

I got notified to be transferred to the ZTE Belgium branch 2 months before departure.

Have you received any training before your departure?

Yes, I had training before I came here.

What is the training about?

It's mainly about language training.

How long did the training last?

2 months.

Can you tell me more about that?

The company offered English classes for all the employees who are going on the international assignment. The lecture is mainly focus on the practical communication, such as the basic surviving English which could be used at the border control, restaurant and hotel. There is also an upper level English class which is mainly focused on the communication with the clients. All the trainees have been divided into 3 different levels depending on the results of the prior English test. For me, this was a review to refresh my English skills.

Is there any training about French or Flemish?

No.

Have you receive other training beside English training, such as job-related training, cultural training or management training?

I didn't receive any job-related training or management training. I didn't receive any cultural training either. Besides the language training, the lecture also introduced a bit about Belgium. I also did some research by myself on Internet so I got some information about this country.

What was the method of the training, such as seminar, role play or case studies?

The lecture is given by ZTE University, the enterprise university built by ZTE Corporation. The method is mainly lectures and seminars. During the lecture, the instructor has given the real case scenarios and guided the analysis, which is used in the English class. The teacher gave us some scenarios and asked us how to respond.

Have you receive any training after you arrive in Belgium?

I didn't receive any training after I arrived here.

Did you receive any support or practical information after you arrived here?

The company here provides much support. You know Sasha, she is in charge of the expatriate issues. The company here provides free accommodation to us expatriates. It's a shared apartment and it's just 2 blocks away. The company has offered other helps, such as insurance and visa assistance.

Have you met any problems during the expatriation?

Compare to my colleague who were sent to Africa, I didn't meet many problems here. The general working environment is good, and the company has provided much help. Yes, indeed, there are some problems, such as the language. Me, as a sourcing manager, I need to negotiate with outside suppliers and I have to take many trips to nearby countries. My English is OK since I'm from one of the top universities in China. However, my English is not perfect and I do meet problems sometimes. Since most part of our market is in the Flemish speaking area and most people from those area can speak English, Flemish and French can be an advantage but are not compulsory. However, it is very important to master one language, especially English.

Another problem I have met during work is with the Belgian government. Since our current project is building the 4G network in Belgium, there are some formalities which need the Belgian government's approval. It is really a headache to deal with the government since there are so many governmental departments and so many rules to comply with.

The cost of living is very high in Belgium. And it's difficult to find authentic Chinese food.

What do you think about your life here, professionally and personally?

In general, my life here is OK. It is very often that we have to work overtime, usually until after 9pm. The European engineers working in the next office finish work at 5:30pm sharp. I don't want to complain but I have to say sometime I envy them a bit. Anyway, as an expatriate, we don't have families here. So there is no much point to go back to apartment early. The life here is a bit dull. It is difficult to integrate to this culture and make friends.

What do you think about the training you have received? Is that helpful?

The training is OK. It has helped me to adjust to this new environment somehow.

B.1.2 Interview of Mr. Zhang

Interviewee: Mr. Zhang

Position: Technical Support

Expected expatriation period: 6 months,

Current expatriation duration: 2 months

Marital status: Married

How long prior the assignment you have been notified that you would be assigned to an overseas assignment?

I got notified 3 months before the expatriation.

Have you received any training before your departure?

Yes, I have received training before I came here.

What is the training about?

I received English training. Besides the basic English training, there are also job-related English training and tests, and vocabulary prepared for job-related scenarios. There is no fixed time for training as it is mainly self-study. By the way, there are exams. I had to pass the English exam for this expatriation.

How long did the training last?

2 months.

Have you receive other training beside English training, such as job-related training, cultural training or management training?

There is no other training.

What was the method of the training, such as seminar, role play or case studies?

The training is guided by the ZTE University. Most of the training is scenario analysis, such as life and work scenarios, how to respond to clients, etc.

Have you receive any training after you arrived in Belgium?

No training after I arrived here.

What kind of support or practical information have you received upon your arrival?

The company provides accommodation, which is kind of nice. The company also helps with visa and health insurance.

How do you think of your expatriation experience here?

In general is good. It is a good experience anyway. The life is kind of lonely here. I'm an introverted person. Usually there is nothing else to do except working. The price is relatively high so I have to cook myself. I also miss my family a lot.

B.2 Transcript of interviewee from Huawei

B.2.1 Interview of Mr. Wang

Interviewee: Mr. Wang

Position: Sales and Service department

Expected expatriation period: 1 year

Current expatriation duration: 5 months

Martial status: Single

How long prior the assignment you have been notified that you would be assigned to an overseas assignment?

I got notified to be transferred to the Huawei Belgium branch 3 months before the departure.

What is the selection process?

I had a meeting with the HR when I was asked if I wanted to take an assignment in Belgium. In the meeting I was also told the work I would do and the compensation I could get for this position.

Have you received any training before your departure?

Yes, I had training before I came here.

What is the training about?

I had a language course, a course regarding sales and service, and a course "Cross-cultural communication", which lasted one day.

How long did the training last?

The training lasted 3 months.

Can you tell me about the language course?

Sure, it's an intensive English course. I attended a course which is given by a native English teacher. There is a lot of interaction in the course. Everyone has to speak in the class.

Is there any other language course besides English?

No.

Can you tell me more about this cross-cultural communication course?

I still remember this course because it was quite interesting. The teacher has lived in the United States for 6 years. In the course, the teacher presented more than 100 pictures of many countries all over the world. I still remember she says, "You need to hold an open heart to appreciate this world, you also need to be tolerant and be prepared to accept the darkness of this world", which gave me a big impression.

What was the method of the training, such as seminar, role play or case studies?

The English training I have received is mainly interacting with the teacher. Most of the teachers have the experience of living abroad. In the class, they also told us their experience of living abroad.

Where did you get the training?

I received my training at Huawei University in Shenzhen.

I read on your company website that the company assigns a mentor for the expatriate in an overseas branch, is that real?

It is true. I have my mentor here. He has already worked here for 2 years. He has helped me a lot on adjusting to the new life here and also guided me with the work. It is really helpful.

What do you think about your experience here?

It is a great experience. The training I have received in China prepared me well for this expatriation. I mentally prepared to the culture shock I could meet here. But to be honest, I didn't meet any, or not much. With my mentor's help, I adjusted quite well

to this new environment, both in work and life. I feel it's like a family here. On the other hand, the company cannot do everything for you. You have to be self-motivated to learn and adapt to the culture here, to make this whole expatriation experience more meaningful.

B.3 Transcript of interviewee from Bank of China

B.3.1 Interview of Ms. Li

Interviewee: Ms. Li

Position: Front desk supervisor

Expected expatriation period: 1 year

Current expatriation duration: more than 3 months

Marital status: Married

Accompanying family: Daughter

How long prior the assignment have you been notified that you would be assigned to an overseas assignment?

I was informed 6 months prior the transfer to Belgium branch.

Have you received any training before your departure?

Yes, I had training before I came here.

What is the training about?

I have received English training before I came here. It was given at Beijing Foreign Studies University. It was intensive training. It is focusing on practical exercises like comprehension and communication. The English mainly focuses on financial English.

How long did the training last?

3 months.

Have you receive other training beside English training, such as job-related training, cultural training or management training?

I didn't receive any training mentioned above except the English training. During the English course, I have learned many expressions which are commonly used in daily life and work here.

Have you receive any training after you arrived in Belgium?

I didn't receive training after I arrived in Belgium.

Did you receive any support or practical information after you arrived here?

My company here has provided much help. My accommodation here is free, and the company has also provided visa assistance, insurance and transportation.

Have you met any problems during the expatriation? How did you adjust to this new environment at your first arrival?

The company has offered a lot of help, which made my life here much easier. However, I have to say that it is necessary to know the local language to live here. That's why I've been taking French evening class myself.

What do you think about the training you have received? Is that helpful?

The training I have received is helpful in the daily life and work here.

What is missing in the training you have received but you think is useful for expatriates?

Learning the local language is useful. That's why I'm taking French class here myself.

B.4 Transcript of interviewee from CETC in Algeria

B.4.1 Interview of Mr. Gao

Interviewee: Mr. Gao

Position: Interpreter

Expected expatriation period: 6 months

Previous expatriation duration: 6 months last year at the same place

Martial status: Single

Age: 24

How long prior the assignment have you been notified that you would be assigned to an overseas assignment?

When I applied for this job I was told this position requires expatriation to Algeria.

Have you received any training before your departure?

The only training I had is “foreign regulation”, which includes matters to pay attention to foreign countries and financial matters.

Have you met any problems during the expatriation? How did you adjust to this new environment at your first arrival?

I have met many difficulties. The living condition is very poor. We don’t have an apartment to live. We all sleep in a common living room. The quality of the food is low as well.

But the bigger problem I met is during work. The Algerian workers don’t have any contractual spirit, they just deny it to your face even it’s written on the contract. They like to take advantages. For example, this project is to build a long fiber optic backbone. The Algerian workers are always asking the spare components which are not included in the contracts, no matter it is expensive or cheap. There were many arguments, and we are all very angry with them.

This is our first project in Algeria. And we are the first batch to be here. Nobody in my company has come here before or had experience with Algerian workers. The boss is far away in China. Even if we reported the problems back to China, the company paid no attention to us. They just left us alone so we had to figure out the problem ourselves. The beginning was really difficult. I have been in many kinds of oppression. I had to crawl over all these.

What happened after? How did you solve these issue?

We only can solve the issues ourselves. Since I am the only two who can speak French here. The negotiation tasks have mainly fallen on my shoulders. The Algerian workers always behave very rude and unreasonable. Finally I figured out, no matter what they say, do not argue with them, especially with the lower level workers. I just listen to them, agree it is reasonable, but don’t do anything they asked. For example, for the spare parts they asked, I don’t give to them while they are asking. Instead, I hold this issue as a leverage until the acceptance check, in case they delay the acceptance check deliberately.

How do you think of your experience here?

I really don't like to stay here. Sometimes I want to quit my job and go back to China. If it's not because of I receive double salary and some subsidy here, I would have quit my job long time ago.