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HOW DO BRAZILIAN EXPATRIATE EXECUTIVES LIVE ABROAD?

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SUMMARY: The third millennium began with a very simple evidence : world became smaller and more complex than before. The globalization process has improved the circulation of goods, services, capitals and people around the world. The international scene continually strengthens the imperative need for flexibility and mobility of professional competencies. In this regard, the co-existence of multicultural work groups has become a reality with expatriation becoming an ever-more frequent alternative. Being an expatriate is not for someone who enjoys traveling but it is for those people who are able to change their way of living. The family is the great source of energy, of strength and merits full attention from the employer, because the success of professional experience will depend on its adaptation. According to our research we can say that it is the world of home that supports the world of work; also, the cultural adaptation, so important to the efficacy of business, depends on several organizational, professional and personnel factors that vary from the organizational support structure to the psychological availability of people involved in the process.

1. The intercultural scenario

The decade of the 80's was considered as lost by some countries, but the 90s have brought renewed efforts for internationally aligned economic development, with the consequent appearance of a world market and the world

company. The more stringent competition places a check on known business management methods and accentuates the search for increased productivity gains and qualitative differentials, all of which reinforce the importance of using ever more sophisticated technology.

The formation of economic blocks, together with a strengthening of various emerging economies, has caused companies to expand rapidly and a boom in foreign investments. This has multiple effects among which are the more and more frequent adoption of strategies such as alliances, joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions that have caused a diverse and geographically dispersed workforce to arise. To these factors must be added the growing migratory movements that gave rise to an increasingly heterogeneous work environment, which demands the development of new abilities and the need for multicultural co-existence.

The restructuring of companies that took place in the first half of the 90's, created a highly differentiated type of organization, not only in regard to new technologies, but also in regard to process flexibilities and administrative competencies. In addition, there was a rupture with regard to previously established standards that had guided the preparation and qualification of professional staff in that companies were increasingly required to present creative responses and spectacular performance. Attributes such as age and prior experience, for example, today are being severely reassessed.

On the other hand, the modernization of the public sector, resulting from the wave of privatizations, is exceptionally favorable to new international alliances. This has given new value to the private sector and the interdependent character of the present stage of Capitalism. The market economy and neo-liberal ideology began to be prescribed for all society's ailments, conferring special relevance on the role of internationally integrated companies (FREITAS, 1999; STIGLITZ, 2003).

Creativity and innovation become touchstones in this context and intellectual capital becomes the principal reference; here the word "diversity" assumes a special connotation. Companies lack new forms of synergy with which to face the rapid changes in the scenario and an ever-closer co-existence with complexity, making what is different the general rule. Competitive strategies such as the

previously mentioned alliances, joint ventures and consortiums imply inter-organizational and inter-group co-existences, which for the most part have different cultural roots. In this new universe, multicultural teams, which are highly mobile geographically and have great adaptive potential, come into being. Today, a modern company's great challenge and, particularly, that faced by the human resource area, is to be able to extract the best from this new work environment without losing internal consistence.

A field which might be called Intercultural Organization Studies is already in formation (DEMORGON & LIPIANSKY, 1999; D'IRIBARNE, 1997; ADLER, 2002; CERDIN, 2002; EQUILBY, 2004; FREITAS, 2001; 2005; 2006) and it aims to develop the research on the consequences of the meeting among people from different cultures and take into consideration the interpretation of those meetings in the organizational context and its concrete situations. These situations bring about a dialectical sense related to the near/far, open/closed, local/foreign, familiar/strange, durable/detachable, certain/ambiguous, stable/mobile (SCHÜTZ, 2003; SIMMEL, 1994) which reveals other elements from psycho-sociological nature of the concerning groups and their identity as self perception, recognition, alterity, belong sense and exclusion feelings. The cultural adaptation, so important for the efficacy of business, depends on several organizational, professional and personnel factors that vary from the organizational support structure to the psychological availability of people involved in the process (CERDIN, 2002 e 2007; TODOROV, 1996; JORDAN & CARTWRIGHT, 1998; LEWIS, 1997; GRAY, 1991; SALMI & PONT-HUMBERT, 2003; D'IRIBARNE, 1997).

This article will make a shot incursion into the theory produced on intercultural management and the expatriation process and then, subsequently, it will discuss empirical research undertaken in France with Brazilian expatriate executives. We also tried to hear what the expatriate's partners had to say about their new lives and the impact on the family of opting for an international career.

We understand that the expatriation experience is complex and that it mobilizes competencies other than the professional, transcending the individual and his family's objective universe. To accept expatriation is to accept the

possibility of living another life, of cutting affective bonds, of breaking down certainties and habits, of participating in an adventure defined by new daily routine. In this, there are constant surprises and individuals do not receive any instruction manual together with their airline ticket (ADLER, 2002; CERDIN, 2002, 2007; LEWIS, 1997; JORDAN & CARTWRIGHT, 1998; FREITAS, 2005).

2. Managing Intercultural Human Resources

Since Taylor's time, management, while being a systemized field of knowledge, has sought to develop forms that result in greater productivity. The Human Resources area has undergone many modifications, even though a good part of these have not resulted in anything more profound than cosmetic surgery. The vocabulary and processes have become more sophisticated, however the rigor of the basic activities continues unchanged as does the challenge: how to make people more productive. During a certain period, a scientific approach was applied in selection processes and to performance evaluation. At the present time, we live in a free - for - all empire, which gives rise to an infinite number of fashions, some of which challenge the limits of imagination or simply testify to the fact that organizations are not exactly the domain of rationality that they intend being.

When accelerated internationalization of the economy appears on the scene, the question of how to manage human resources within the same, geographically dispersed, company begins to require special attention. The world companies define policies that can vary from homogenized treatment, with a minimum of adjustment to local laws and customs, through to complete differentiation of practices in their various units. Not only do the salary policies practiced become especially important, but recruitment, selection, the design of careers and of promotions, also gain international relevance (ADLER, 2002; D'IRIBARNE, 1997; JORDAN & CARTWRIGHT, 1998; LES ECHOS, 1990; URRY, 2005).

To face this easily-changed scenario and its growing complexity, companies have sought to increase their repertoire of abilities and have achieved this partly

thanks to greater geographic mobility among the ranks of their managers and specialists who, as a complement to local talent, move to install new projects or get them moving. Putting together a multicultural team imposes the need for some new definitions which range from the legal form for contracts (type of contract, social system, retirement, Social Security, partner's career, etc.) through to subjective aspects of diversity, as for example, the way in which this diversity is lived and perceived, as much by local members, as by the newcomers. A company could develop a so-called internal culture, in which diversity may acknowledge in various forms: it may be denied, be depreciated or valued as a potential advantage; each of these postures brings with it the need for a particular form of managing human resources.

International experience requires that the professional keeps an open mind, is stimulated by challenge, is curious about what is different, has a genuine ability to observe and read scenarios, as well as a respect for cultural and symbolic reality that differs from his own. As the different groups begin to interact with greater frequency, the potential for conflict and misunderstanding grows, which in turn implies the need for greater communication and negotiating ability. To deal with the new, with multiple prospects, demands outstanding ability to adapt and be flexible, while at the same time, it requires low anxiety, in order to tolerate the ambiguities and stresses that result from the lack of immediate feedback and, at times, prolonged isolation. This profile also prizes interpersonal abilities, cultural sensitivity, empathy, autonomy and a modicum of humility (GRAY, 1991; ADLER, 2002, LES ECHOS, 1990; JORDAN & CARTWRIGHT, 1998; CERDIN, 2007; AMADO, 1998; FREITAS, 2001).

Obviously, it was always easier for companies and human resource professionals to define the profiles desired, rather than to find them. Happily or not, the scientific process, which guarantees to select a human being who perfectly fits the ideal profile defined for the minor roles, which companies have considered for him, has not yet been invented. Human beings have the dreadful habit of escaping from the constraining molds, which were conceived to explain or control them, at least in total. There is a margin for flight here, on impulse, by

contradiction, by denial and irreverence, which is difficult to translate into a variable that leads to some form of predictability. In this sense, however good the model may be, it will always be arbitrary in relation to the attributes considered important and always a distorted approximation of an individual.

The challenge presented by multicultural diversity is to build favorable conditions for expressing it in a balanced form, which is both collaborative and complementary, without harming the psychological and emotional needs that are part of every human being. To a great extent, companies supply context and are responsible for designing the larger part of structural conditions within which people will undertake their activities. Thus, they play a fundamental role in adjusting the members of the team formed with these characteristics. Companies can stimulate development of a more welcoming atmosphere, which facilitates the expression of the differences and makes use of them.

3. Expatriation: the process, psychological contract and cultural shocks

The possibility of having an international career is becoming more frequent and, with this, so is the possibility of executives being transferred to other countries. It is common knowledge that one of the greatest difficulties a human being faces is to pull up his cultural roots and adapts to a new environment. Although the great ease with which information on any kind of subject is produced and disseminated is a feature of the present world, living in another country is not only defined by cognitive elements, or that is, knowledge about a certain culture does not fit the holder of this knowledge to live there satisfactorily (ADLER, 2002; CERDIN, 2002; LEWIS, 1997; GRAY, 1991; FREITAS, 2001; 2005).

When an executive and his family depart to live in another country, it is not merely his relationship with a job that is at stake. It is a relationship with life, a different life, removed from his habitual code and from all those previously established relationships, especially those of a familiar and affectionate nature. A global human being does not exist, who can dispense with his historical, cultural, social and affective references, which raises the question of the individual living the

process of psychological breaking down and restructuring. (JOLY, 1992; FREITAS, 2001, 2005; ADLER, 2002; CERDIN, 2002)

To live in another country signifies another life, making new representations and giving different significance to things that were familiar; it is to renounce what is established; it is to pay attention to common and habitual behavior which may be considered inappropriate, bizarre or offensive; it is to try to see the world through other people's eyes to understand how one is seen by them. In this sense, it is an experience of once again associating emotions with facts and gestures that are both familiar and, at the same time, strange; it is to learn to read the lines and between the lines, which simultaneously reveal the strange and the familiar, causing confusion with regard to already established references, feelings and emotions. It is unlikely that a human being undergoes an experience of this nature without being touched intimately, because none of its content is devoid of affect.

In contrast to the tourist, the expatriate is someone who cannot merely be content to be voyeur, because he is rebuilt in his daily round, with its routines, details, expectations and disappointments. He also makes things happen and, therefore, should face and adjust psychologically to eventual discomfort and frustration (FREITAS, 2005).

The other's necessity to construct his own reference is part of the human design and therefore the other is present whenever we talk of identity (FREITAS 1999; 2005; RUANOBORBALAN, 1998;). Two vital aspects arise from this necessity: a) on the one hand, the necessity for us to be recognized as a unique subject, singular and subjectively different to any other; b) and on the other, within each of us, there is the necessity to belong to some group, affiliation, clan or tribe that assures us of being recognized as part of something larger, with which we share a secret, a code and which is inaccessible to the foreigner. These two necessities or these two forms of recognizing existence are intrinsic to man and constitute a great driving force for his actions, although they may be expressed in different forms, according to each culture's symbols and own values (AMADO, 1998; SIMMEL, 1994; FREITAS, 1999).

Contact with another culture exposes the individual to risks, a consciousness of loss and makes him confront himself; ignorance of the simplest tools may shake his self-esteem for the simple fact that he feels himself to be incompetent to deal with such apparently simple matters, which assume proportions of a survival test. These "tests" go directly to the heart of the question of identity in that when an individual is faced with the unknown, which offer a challenge to his references, he tends to weaken with the fear of committing errors, of being ridiculous, of calling attention negatively, of declaring his incompetence and, sometimes, his impotence to understand and live by a code very different to his own. We need to understand what is happening around us, to give names to things, to reduce the zones of uncertainty and ambiguity in order to control our environments a little more and fill in the gaps, which are a source of uneasiness and anguish (AMADO, 1998; GRAY, 1991; LEWIS, 1997; SIMMEL, 1994; SALMI & PONT-HUMBERT, 2003).

When we say the word "shock" we want to give a name to a psychological experience which cause suffering and pain to an individual, which throws him into confusion, into insecurity and disorientation with regard to himself and his world. The intensity and duration of the state of shock varies from individual to individual, depending on the dynamics of his intra-psychic productions. Cultural shock is a normal and natural process, in that it signifies: *"a) loss of familiar reference points, among which are notions of context, time and space; b) a rupture in interpersonal communication and in the impossibility of establishing and maintaining a contact, because of problems of context, codes and of translation; c) a crisis of personal identity, in that each one of us perceives the world in a certain way and organizes and uses information in accordance with this perception. When you are in an intercultural situation, this system does not allow comprehension of what the new stimuli mean to say and does not know how to deal with the situation; there is chaos and the need for a new organization"* (READ, 1995; pp.12-3).

If it is true that the human being has to coexist with the new, with change and the excitement of the unknown, it is also true that he has a need for a certain level of stability, of order, of a known world, which forms the foundation on which

he builds his various edifices and with which he identifies. It is common in expatriation situations to see a contact with other people from the same country of origin being sought, as a means of partially reducing the anxiety resulting from "everything new". One can reasonably suppose that when an expatriate and/or his family looks for contacts with those from their country or possibly from a neighboring country, they are not merely sharing perceptions, interpretations and cognitions but also the complicity of being understood emotionally. Thus, there is a great and understandable temptation to take refuge with similar beings and build a protective wall; and it is this wall, this congregation with fellow countrymen, this solidarity in the face of uncertainty, which may, or may not, be transformed into what is commonly called a cultural ghetto. Courage and psychological well-being are needed to reduce dependency on this " affective uterus" represented by fellow countrymen and the familiar, knowing that venturing forth from this hideaway represents some dangers and wounds that could bleed, but also could bring many pleasant surprises and a great deal of learning. Here certainly the old saying is pertinent "you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs" (DEMORGON & LIPIANSKY, 1999; EQUILBEY, 2004; CERDIN, 2004; TODOROV, 1996; SCHÜTZ, 2003; D'IRIBARNE, 1997; GRAY, 1991; LES ECHOS, 1990; SALMI & PONT-HUMBERT, 2003).

Apart from these normal and abnormal missed personal encounters, both predictable and unpredictable, common and unusual experiences in expatriation, there are still those that result from expectations that were created in regard to the new relationship with a job and the company. In this sense, we have a notion of a psychological contract (LEWIS, 1997; SALMI & PONT-HUMBERT, 2003), which allows us to add something in analyzing a typically professional situation and to which companies may dedicate greater attention to avoid traps for themselves and their executives. This contract is eminently subjective in nature, defined from unexpressed expectations, which the individual develops in his interface with the organization. Organizations are there as suppliers of the stage on which these expectations are referred to, realized or frustrated.

If, on the one hand, an executive builds a fantasy with regard to the company's responsibility and support in relation to his needs and those of his family, it is also true that the living space that an expatriate has, at least in the beginning of the experience, is significantly less than that of his colleague in the same position in the mother company. In the final analysis, this expatriate left behind his family connections, his friends, his hobbies and his interests. Consequently, his life outside the workplace is more limited and the influence of his employer much wider, in that the company will be practically the only source of stable reference open to him for guidance in the new world. And, in addition, if expatriation was seen as a good alternative for the executive's career, it was also considered and evaluated as a necessity for company to deal more effectively with some local difficulty. At all events, this new situation represents the possibility of greater returns than previously, as much for one party as for the other (CERDIN, 2002; ADLER, 2002; FREITAS, 2001; 2005).

It is important that expatriation be considered within the context of the professional person's career, so as to avoid grave problems at the time of repatriation. A substantial number of executives submit their resignations before they complete the first year after returning to their originating company (EXAME, 1998; JOLY, 1992; ADLER, 2002; CERDIN, 2002; 2007; GRAY, 1991; FREITAS, 2001). This certainly points to something important, at least that repatriation could be considered as a new cultural shock, be that because the person who returns is no longer the same, or because those who remained developed other interests which may exclude the person who went abroad, or simply because companies do not think about what to do with the person at this moment.

4. Research with Brazilian nationals in France

In France there is not a large Brazilian population, however this country was chosen for the research because of the author's familiarity with the language and some aspects of French culture. This research was personally conducted between

the period from october/2003 to june/2004, with Brazilian expatriates working and living in Paris, Lille, Dunkerque, Senlis, Abbeville, Chantilly, Étapes-sur-Mer, Le Bourget, Créteil e Archamps (FREITAS, 2005). As it was the first research on this subject focused on Brazilian executives, we didn't have any basis to compare the results.

a) Methodological aspects

This article analyzes how the Brazilian expatriate professionals live abroad and to do so we'll explore the results of an empirical research of qualitative nature, which was conducted with 32 expatriate executives in France and 05 of their partners. Our sample was formed by: 17 professionals that work in 6 Brazilian firms, 15 executives in 11 French enterprises, 4 wives and 1 husband.

We made an ethno-methodological option to study the personnel life of these professionals and their family as an ethnological group affected by an expatriation process, not their organizational lives only. The main characteristics of our executives are: 27 are men and 05 women, 29 of them are married and 21 of them are parents. The average time of working in those organizations vary according to the nationality, so we can find 11,4 years when they work in Brazilian companies and 5,9 years when they work in French organizations. An important data related to partner sample is that only 12 (in 29) had a visa with permission to work in France.

We used the semi-structured interviews method, they are undertaken personally and based on 21 open questions about subjects like previous experience, motives of this expatriation, expectations before traveling, negotiation and decision make process in family, the career of the partner and type of visa, arrival and local reception, familiar adaptation, life of singles, stereotypes related to Brazilian' and French' cultures, everyday life, social contacts and relations, professional life compared to the previous one, support available in the organization, suggestions to get expatriation better, evaluation of this experience and future projects.

The interviews with the 5 partners were based on 18 open questions and they were concentrated in everyday discovers and feelings associated with them, building an autonomous life, the lack of a self professional project, stereotypes related to Brazilian' and French' cultures, challenges of restructuring life in other bases, dependency of the children in a strange environment, possibility to accept or not a new assignment.

b) Our main findings

Our findings showed us:

- i) For most of our interviewees that this one was their first international assignment even though most of them has been abroad for studies or tourism. Three of them were developing another international mission when they were called to assume this assignment. Some of interviewees have had regional expatriation, which was considered so important as international one, particularly when it happens in a country so huge as Brazil. All of them evaluated this experience in very positive terms and emphasized both personnel and professional gains.
- ii) For most of them this expatriation happened more by accident than because organizational policies or a career plans. Few enterprises both Brazilian and French were mentioned as having clear international policies or clear procedures to expatriate their professionals.
- iii) As most cases happened by personnel initiative of the professional, it facilitated the familiar negotiations and reduced the domestic resistances. In general, families received news with enthusiasm and several of them mentioned this experience as a family's project, because they considered it a great opportunity for better education to their children face a new intercultural world.

- iv) Arrival is considered the most delicate moment and in the first third months all family are very vulnerable, mainly partners and children. There is a consensus that in this stage there are two main sources of vulnerability: the house and the school. Once this micro-universe is set up, people begin to live what they called “almost a normal life”. Some of them mentioned cases of failure by colleagues because of difficulties to overcome this risk-period, and also criticized the support provided or not provided by their companies. Nevertheless, all executives said they were welcome in their workplace and they could count with help by other expatriate colleagues.
- v) The difficulty of the adaptation process and cultural shocks vary from person to person. Each family deals with uncertainty, distance and idealization of past in a very different way and deep degree. We consider adapted a person or family, which is able to give appropriate answers to different situations without feel great psychological discomfort. In other words, adapted is a person whom realized that he/she is able to live in between two cultural codes without great conflicts and he/she can take the better of each one. Professionals seemed to have their adaptation process supported by all sacrifices from their partners; only when professionals and children have organized their routine, partners might think on themselves.
- vi) People miss the original routine and they idealize their mother culture. Interviewers mentioned they missed the Brazilian easy-going way of living, they easy-talking, the easy manifestation of joy and living together, the complicity air of friends, the gestures, the intimacy, optimism, and affective way of express themselves. In some sense they missed themselves in easy interactions or *la joie de vivre* they feel when they are among their country partners. However all mentioned their efforts to interact and integrate with natives and try to enrich their social life. They mentioned how important is to develop local interest; otherwise it is very difficult to interact with local people.

- vii) Even though single people have more mobility and represent less cost to the firms, they are considered more adequate to take part in project of the short or middle term, and depending on the local culture singles are not taking serious or not welcome. Also, our respondents considered singles might have more problems to adapt because they have in workplace the only source of social interaction. In some way they are seemed as more vulnerable to face the psychological demands, they show a trend to spend all their energy on their job, avoiding other social contacts. The same happen with professionals that don't have their family with them, they try to compensate their loneliness and rejection fears working hard. It is not healthy – at least in middle and long term - if one can live just for working.
- viii) There are lot of differences among the quality of work, managerial style, organizational climate and culture of the unities of the company. For most interviewers work changed more in content than in its load and most of them had financial advantages in this experience. Quality of work life was considered better than previous situation. On organizational culture and climate our findings were very distinct. In Brazilian firms, which are considered a king of legend in Brazil, expressions of lost feelings were very frequently. Some enterprises have hybrid cultures formed by mother culture, local culture and people from different national origins, and these differences living together are seemed as very rich and positive not problematic. On management style the main differences mentioned were related to the French high respect to hierarchy, what was perceived as a French negative feelings on work, what means consider work as something painful and also the difficulty of flexibility in some managerial procedures. Other aspects were mentioned as the way Brazilian and French colleagues were building a hybrid organizational culture more opened, more flexible and less amateurship.

- ix) Part of Brazilian cultural stereotypes was confirmed and the “jeitinho” was considered as an important trait, which might generate more flexibility and fast answers to fast changes. Also, some negative aspects were mentioned like short-term decisions and lack of planning by Brazilians. Some mentioned that Brazilian seemed more prepared to deal with an instable environment than with stable one, which most consider as monotonous. Also Brazilians seemed to have more difficult to their French colleagues to keep focus on solving problems meetings.
- x) French people were considered quieting receptive to our interviewers and in general they seemed to have a positive image of Brazilian people, what facilitated their social relations.
- xi) This expatriation in focus was evaluated as a very good experience and education of children and cultural learning were remarked; as already mentioned, expatriates seem a trend to an intercultural world, so these experiences can help their children to improve their education; for all it is considered a king of new patrimony or a legacy to their children face their future. Intercultural education of the children was very emphasized as one of the best sub-product provided by this experience.
- xii) To improve expatriation process the consensus was to take the partners into consideration, help them in their professional projects and give them support during the first months. As mentioned before, partners might been considered the principal element of success or failure of the expatriation process. Several said enterprises are very negligent to this question, as they were not concerned by it. It is a fact that the partner doesn't have a life while the professional and children don't have theirs comfortable. Some other aspects are presented bellow.

- xiii) It was suggested to the future expatriates try to make it works living the good things that can be found in local culture and trying to integrate with natives since the beginning.

c) two or three words about the partner's life

From a professional point of view the most common situation is that in which the partner does not have a visa that allows him/her to work in the host country. To start with, he/she has to give up his/her career and profession, for a period of time, which can signify being out of touch to a greater or lesser degree on his/her return. This condition is generally negotiated by the couple and does not, as such, become a determining variable in the decision to accept expatriation or not. On the other hand, it is a variable that has great weight in the context of all resignations submitted.

The epic begins with the installation in a hotel, while the couple looks for a house and school for the children. What appears to be simple tends to turn into a veritable nightmare. The partner generally does not speak the local language, receives little or no support with regard to domestic issues, doesn't know anything and does not know who to ask for information. He/she does not know the city, does not have friends nor family, not even a psychiatrist. Further, his/her children are unhappy and insecure, not understanding anything and fearful of what takes place around them, with only the parents are able to comfort them and tell them all is well.

Our interviewers said they were terribly fragile during this stage of almost total dependence on the partners and the urgent necessity to overcome many changes at the same time. Health problems, especially those arising from adapting to the new climatic conditions and the pressure are common, especially among the children. To them medical relations were considered traumatic because of difference in hospital and professional health procedures and systems, for example what is considered urgency in the hospital. Usually in France you call a doctor to

visit you in your home instead of going to the hospital in emergency case. Impotence is the common feelings in these cases.

Finally, we remark that few of our interviewers have received financial support from their partner's firms to improve their professional education. In these cases were they very recognized for this budget and had used it to up grade their qualifications that let them to find a job in their field. When it happens a couple living in balance and the family's adaptation is easier. It is very intelligent if companies take into consideration that earlier family is autonomous to deal with day-t-day life, earlier their professionals can concentrate in their missions.

5. Conclusions

The great paradox here, and we believe companies are either unaware or tend to handle this without due care, is that it is the world of the home which supports and guarantees the performance of the executive in the corporate world; his creative ability and fantastic performance will depend on the peace he gets, knowing that his family is well. Really, the company's success will depend more on the partner than on the expatriate. Intelligent companies take into consideration when decide on foreign assignments, because they know that the family can be a great ally or a great enemy. There are a series of steps that can be taken and support that can be given to reduce to a minimum the traumas that arise in the implementation stage, which is a decisive period. What needs to be stressed is that companies can facilitate tremendously the adjustment that depends on infrastructure, thereby allowing the couple to spend their energy on the things that are really important to build a new life.

We also remind the reader that not everyone is fitted to live an experience of this nature without suffering violently; everything different may be construed as a personal attack on his physical and psychological integrity, as being hounded by the world. There is certainly a measure of glamour in living internationally, but this cannot be received without paying some price. A tourist's life is easy because he can simply leave when he's not happy, he can choose what he wants to see and

where to live, he can protect himself in superficiality, and is not obliged to get it right. The executive and his family are being evaluated by others and themselves, the latter probably a more severe judgment. The life which they led cannot be forgotten like an unfortunate trip and cannot be torn up like a poor photograph. The decision to become an expatriate is not a decision on a trip, but a decision that changes life.

When an expatriation process is well succeed is not only a good investment that was made but also an organizational policy that was well built in an organizational scenario that has mobility as in irreversible value. To the professionals and their families the expatriation is a part of their biography and it belongs to them forever.

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