



## What's the secret to launching your global career? Wendy Kendall explains

➤ Moving abroad with your work is a process that's as old as economic activity itself. But, these days, many employers are linking promotion to international experience – and they don't just mean working with people from other countries or getting on a flight a few times a week. They mean uprooting yourself, and often your family, for a wholesale move to another country.

The best companies provide generous relocation packages that include training on topics such as intercultural awareness and learning the local language. Despite the support provided, however, many people who have moved abroad take a lot of time to get back to their previous

levels of success and can sometimes feel as though they have landed in a career backwater.

At the same time, you and your company will have high expectations for your overseas job move. People are moving for career advancement and companies are moving them to grow the business. Having a career that is just as good after the move as it was before is no longer good enough. Companies are examining the high cost of international mobility, which can be three or four times the cost of an annual salary. The implication is clear – high expectations abound on all sides, and you will be heading into a business-critical job

where you need to hit the ground running as soon as you land.

### **It's about more than language and culture**

Moving your career abroad is possibly the only professional activity that fractures your whole life, including many of the professional resources you have relied on to be successful to date. These resources are broader than knowing the culture and the language of the place in which you live. Think about what it takes to be successful in your job now. You have a strong understanding of your local environment, you know how the systems operate, you know who the key

players are, and, crucially, you know how you fit into this picture and how you create value. In addition, people know you. You have a network that is closely aware of your reputation, your strengths and weaknesses, and who likes and trusts you.

Yet all of these success 'threads' are severed when you move abroad and they need to be re-established if you're going to thrive. Your talents and strengths are key to your success, and they're all embedded in your local environment and the people around you now. The 'how' of your talent needs to adapt and change when it crosses borders.

### Take the right success map with you

It's tempting to be sucked into solving myriad everyday, practical problems when you move abroad. One of the most common coping strategies people use is running harder and faster on the corporate treadmill, working long hours to re-establish themselves. This might help in the short term, since the learning curve is steep. But it also results in you neglecting the personal and social relationships that need to be maintained and re-established after your move. Longer term, without that network of support and friendship, your global career move can take you to an extremely lonely and isolated place.

Another way your global career can fail to thrive is when you don't manage to find your niche – the place where you are able to shine and add your unique value. I see this in clients who feel they are drifting in a career backwater after their move. Typically, this happens because they've not yet found a way to translate their talents. A similar malaise comes from trying too hard to fit into the new culture by over-adapting. I've worked with clients who have given up some of their key talents and strengths because they felt they stood out too much as a non-native. The consequence of such an approach is feeling as though you've lost yourself in the move.

So how can you ensure that your career takes off after you move abroad, lives up to your high aspirations and gives your employer confidence in their investment? You can work smarter at this critical career transition by focusing on the following issues:

◆ **Translating your talent.** Your talents and strengths need careful translation after you move abroad. Just like currency,

their value is realised when you use them in transaction with someone, or something, around you. When the people and the environment change, so does the way in which you should use your talents and strengths. The first step in translating your talents is to become familiar with how you do your best and most enjoyable work. Then look for opportunities to grow and extend these strengths in your new workplace. Reviewing and repositioning your strengths and talents should be your number one priority since it will facilitate every other aspect of a successful transition.

◆ **Getting recognised.** One of the toughest things about moving abroad is that very few people recognise you. They don't recognise your face and most of them also don't know your personal or professional reputation. You need to be able to explain what you're about in such a way that someone can share your story and message with a colleague after meeting you just once. That way, you can enlist your new contacts in getting your reputation working for you again.

◆ **Being resilient.** You should find ways to grow and enhance your resilience. One of the best and simplest ways to do this is to have good self-care practices and take time to recharge, physically and mentally. Developing your resilience will ensure you have the strength and resources to reach out into your new environment.

◆ **Getting connected and growing relationships.** Growing and enhancing your networks and relationships needs to be a priority. Look for ways to participate in referrals and other strategic alliances, professionally and socially. You should also put some effort into nurturing both your old and new relationships. Don't neglect one side or the other.

◆ **Creating value in your new country.** Being different is a key strength you have after your overseas move. You can add value to your new workplace by bringing your differences into play positively, for example, by suggesting different approaches and perspectives. You can also create value through the influence and impact that you have in your new location, which will have been enhanced as you work through the steps above.

By following this map for global career take-off, you can avoid falling into the most common traps that lead to disappointing and stressful experiences. Taking your talent across borders will

## BUILDING A GLOBAL CAREER: SIX STEPS TO TAKE OFF

**1.** Be clear about your talents and strengths. What are you great at and what do you love doing? How are you going to use these strengths more often in your new job?

**2.** Formulate your positioning story. What are you famous for in your 'old' workplace and how does that relate to how you can add value in your new workplace?

**3.** Implement good self-care practices. All work and no play will make you a very isolated and stressed global business star.

**4.** Grow your connections. Make a point of saying 'yes' to social and professional invitations. Getting connected is an important part of your new job.

**5.** Do essential relationship maintenance. Remind the people that you left behind, and the ones you travelled with in the past, that they're still important to you.

**6.** Focus on where you can add unique value. Trying to 'fit in' by being like everyone else means your new workplace misses out on the unique value you bring. Don't be afraid of being different, since that's often where you can add most value.

help you to reconnect everything that made you so successful before your move, and will give your career the boost it needs to reach even greater heights. ♡



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