CHAPTER 12. Strategic Human Resource Management of International Assignments
Waxin, Marie-France, 2007

TABLE OF CONTENT

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- The different approaches to staffing foreign operations

- The reasons for using international assignments: position filling, sharing and transferring knowledge, developing employees, and controlling and coordination of international activities

- The different categories of international personnel: parent country, host country, and third country nationals, impatriates

- The different types of international assignment for parent country nationals: expatriates, short-term assignees, international commuters and frequent flyers, global managers, and high potentials.

- The different steps of the strategic management of international assignments: strategic planning and job analysis, recruitment, selection, preparation to transfer, cross-cultural adjustment and organizational support, performance appraisal, compensation, repatriation, and retention.

INTRODUCTION

International managers constitute valuable resources that organizations do not always use to the best of their potential. Further, senior managers assigned to positions in foreign subsidiaries do not always live up to their bosses' expectations. When they succeed in their international assignments, they often leave the organization upon returning to their country of origin. Organizations can reverse this trend by encouraging managers' international mobility, through better planning of assignments, better recruitment and selection practices for international assignments, better pre-departure preparation, better performance management, and better management of the return of their international managers.

The following challenges are associated with the strategic management of international assignments:

- Assigning the right kind of international manager to the right position, at the right time

- Designing international HR practices for balancing generic and local needs on the one hand, and control, coordination, and autonomy needs on the other

- Establishing balance between global competitiveness and reactiveness to the local environment's peculiarities

- Identifying the needs for international personnel with a high degree of precision

- Strategic management of international assignments and of international personnel at the lowest cost: what type of international employee must be chosen, and to fulfill which position? Which type of contract must be drafted?

In the following sections of this chapter, we will first look at the different approaches to international staffing, the reasons for using international assignments, and the different types of international employees. Then, we will propose a model for the strategic management of international assignments. Finally, we will look at the role played by women in the global arena.

Exhibit. A Model for the Strategic Management of International Assignments
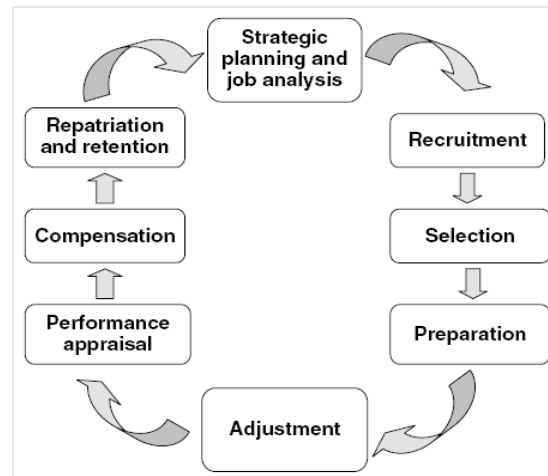
Source: Waxin 2008a

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Throughout this chapter, we have studied five topics related to international HRM. First, we have examined the four major approaches to staffing foreign operations: ethnocentric, polycentric, geocentric, and regiocentric. Secondly, we have examined the reasons for using international assignments: position filling, sharing and transferring knowledge, developing employees, controlling and coordination of international activities. Thirdly, we have detailed the different categories of international personnel: PCNs, HCNs, andTCNs, and impatriates. We have also presented the different types of international assignment for PCNs: expatriates, short-term assignees, international commuters and frequent flyers, global managers, and high potentials. Fourthly, we presented the different steps of Waxin (2006, 2008) model for strategic management of international assignments. The model consists of eight steps: strategic planning and job analysis, recruitment, selection, preparation to transfer, cross-cultural adjustment and organizational support, performance appraisal, compensation, and repatriation and retention. Finally, we have examined the position of women in the global arena today.

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