



Short-Term Assignments

December 2008

Long-Term Solutions to Short-Term Assignments

As an answer to cost-cutting measures, short-term assignments have become increasingly popular. This trend appears to be one answer to long-term assignments that normally last up to 5 years; whereas, the short-term assignment usually ranges from an average minimum of 4 to 14 months with the employee typically unaccompanied by family ("Duration of Short-Term Assignments," Worldwide ERC, 2006). By comparison to Worldwide ERC's data, Paragon's survey responses reflect 55% of respondents now stating short-term assignments last from 7 to 12 months with 27% experiencing a term of 6 months or less.



Short-term assignments are useful in completing specific projects, transferring knowledge and also offer possible solutions to employees who may decline a long-term assignment. The Pulse also indicates that 50% of companies benefit from the cost savings of short-term assignments.

As with any assignment requiring temporary separation of family, there are stressors associated with the short-term assignment including: working in a foreign country; family challenges; and leaving one's comfort zone, all of which may lead to less than stellar business results.

To ensure the success and viability of a short-term assignment for the employee, certain benefits should be offered and these include culture awareness training, a thorough overview of the assignment objectives and clear management expectations and results for the project. Family support considerations may include home maintenance assistance, more frequent return trips home, rotating the assignments more frequently among multiple employees, allowing the spouse to visit the employee in the destination in lieu of the employee returning home. Another consideration is to offer an International Employee Assistance Program initiated prior to commencing the assignment.

Providing proactive and sustainable benefit assistance will offer encouragement and support to the employee and left behind family so short range challenges do not become long range problems, defeating corporate objectives and expenditures.

Survey results are included on the second and third pages



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Survey Results

What is the typical length of your company's international short-term assignment?

6 months or less	27%
7–12 months	55%
More than 12 months	9%
Other, please specify	9%

Is your company utilizing short-term assignments in lieu of long-term assignments as a result of cost containment?

Yes	9%
No	91%

If yes, are the savings achieving the desired results?

Yes	50%
No	50%

Have you experienced an increase, decrease or stable volume of short-term assignments within the last 12 months?

Increase	36%
Decrease	9%
Stable	55%

How often is the assignee allowed to return home?

Once a month	0%
Once a quarter	64%
Other, please explain	36%

Survey results are continued on the third page

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Survey Results *(cont.)*

Does your company reimburse for a spouse or family member to visit or join the assignee in the host location? If yes, which one—visit or join?

Visit	45%
Join	45%
No	10%

Does your company offer financial assistance to help the spouse with home maintenance chores during the absence of the employee (i.e., babysitting, lawn-mowing, shoveling, etc.)?

Yes	18%
No	82%

Survey Participation

December's Pulse data represents results from corporate relocation professionals in the following industries:

Industrial Manufacturing	46%
Healthcare/ Pharmaceutical	18%
Technology	18%
Education/Non-Profit	9%
Financial Services	9%

Location of corporate headquarters for respondents:

U.S.	91%
EMEA	9%
APAC	0%

Survey completed by companies with assignees on international assignments.

Questions or comments? Email us at consultingservices@paragondri.com or visit the News section of our website at www.paragondri.com

