

Culture Briefings for Relocation

Though large scale expatriation may be a thing of the past, companies continue to send key personnel on assignments abroad. This may be a senior appointment or part of a person's career development. In most cases, the family goes too.

It is well documented that up to a third of expatriate assignments fail or underperform, resulting in either early return or poor performance during the period abroad. Sometimes this may be due to the wrong choice of person or assignment. More often it is a result of poor preparation of the assignee and their family, either in terms of practical information about the country they are going to, or sufficient knowledge and understanding of the culture of the people they will be living and working with.

Our culture briefings for relocation are tailored to the specific situation of each assignee and their family. Usually run over one day, with a pre-session needs assessment and post-course follow up, they give the assignees a full introduction to living and working in the host country.

Objectives

The aim of these seminars is to enable the participants to:

- learn more about the host country – its society, its institutions and the habits and customs of daily life
- have a better understanding of the host country's culture and cultural values, and how these influence behaviour in both social and professional situations
- examine the similarities and differences between the host country's culture and their own
- develop awareness and skills which will help them to develop effective social and working relationships with colleagues and friends in the host country

Benefits

If the assignee and their family are well prepared for their relocation, and well informed about their host country and culture, they will be better able to:

- settle in more quickly and with greater assurance
- reduce the risk of simple misunderstandings due to language or behaviour
- acquire a better understanding of how to work with or manage host country colleagues more effectively
- as the accompanying spouse, often the person who has greater difficulty adapting to the new environment, gain a better understanding of both practical matters and people's customs, habits and behaviour
- show their local colleagues and friends that they are well informed about their country and customs
- concentrate more fully on the new job

Organisation and Methodology

The course is normally run either at the home or office of the assignee or at another convenient venue. The approach is informal and interactive, using quizzes, case studies, short simulations, extracts from video and print material, as well as question and answer sessions.

A detailed needs analysis questionnaire is sent before the course, usually followed by a phone conversation to complete the picture. Each course is then tailored to the specific circumstances of the participants, taking account of their home culture, family situation, location where they will live and work in the home country, and their professional and leisure interests. Each participant receives a detailed course manual, containing the full course content and also containing a list of useful addresses and websites.

Course content

The course outline below is for a family with children relocating from Germany to the UK.

Contemporary Britain – background information

- facts and figures
- recent history
- the current political scene
- Britain's attitude to Europe
- regionalism
- the role and status of the monarchy
- religion
- women in Britain
- social trends – eating and drinking, leisure, holidays

Practicalities of living in Britain

- opening a bank account
- driving
- shopping and clothing sizes
- health services
- the education system
- the climate
- the media – newspapers, TV and radio
- internet and telephone services
- relevant local information

Culture and Communication Styles

- what do we mean by culture?
- the nature of communication
- German perceptions of the British
- British perceptions of the Germans
- core values: British and German culture compared
- key cultural variables – attitudes to time, information, planning
- British communication style – irony, humour, informality, understatement
- social and cultural aspects of behaviour

Adjusting behaviour

- degrees of intercultural sensitivity
- the culture shock curve

Working with British colleagues

- establishing credibility
- leadership styles, motivating people
- giving and receiving feedback
- decision making
- meetings and presentations
- teamwork

LTS Experience

LTS trainers and associates have run relocation culture briefings for the following clients:

- Amersham Health
- Amersham Biosciences
- Deutsche Bank
- Fisher Investment Services
- Lucent Technologies
- Johnson & Johnson
- MBNA
- Rohm and Haas
- Conoco
- Pharmacia
- EMC
- Enterprise Ireland

The home and/or destination countries have been: US, UK, Norway, Ireland, Sweden, Germany, France, Denmark, Australia, Colombia, China and Japan

We currently have associates and partner organisations in the US, Canada, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Italy, Denmark, Switzerland, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan and China.

LTS Training & Consulting

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