

Work Abroad

Telephone interviews are becoming an important part of the recruitment process. They are now used frequently by many organizations, as the first stage in selecting a candidate.

You are about to accept a job offer overseas. It sounds exciting and your friends are extremely envious. After the initial ecstasy is over, you suddenly realize that you do not have much information about what life and work will be like out there! You also have a lot of unfinished work to attend to here. You don't seem to have much time. What should you do?

You may have heard of or been through such an experience. Working overseas can be extremely challenging, but it would help you if you went for your new assignment well prepared. After all, you will not only be in a new work environment but also in a new country with its own unique culture.

Whether you are going to join a new company, or are moving on a transfer with your existing employer, there are certain issues you need to consider before making the shift abroad.

In this article, we intend to highlight the areas that you need to look into before going to work abroad. We presume that you will be in a position to go for a reconnaissance (look and see) visit before making the move overseas.

Get details of all financial aspects prior to your departure

What this refers to is details of not only your salary and benefits, but also other relocation expenses such as airfare, housing children's education etc.

It is important for you to clarify two points with your employer regarding these relocation expenses:

- Q1. Who will incur the different expenses involved in relocation?
- Q2. What is the limit/entitlement for each?

The answers to these two questions will help you in your choice of house or school for the children when you go for your "look and see" visit.

The kinds of relocation expenses that you need to check out on are:

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- Airfare (for self and family)
- Packing and moving charges (furniture, household goods etc.)
- Housing (your rent allowance)
- Installation and regular expenses of telephone and other utilities
- Schooling/education of children
- Cost of living
- Mode and cost of transportation

Of these certain need a thorough research like cost of living, education and housing. You may be able to decide on a house or the children's school during a reconnaissance visit. On the other hand, decisions on these may take time so you should get as much information as you can. This will enable you to plan in advance and make the move abroad easier.

In some countries like USA, opting for a public school for your children will require thorough research into the different school/neighborhood districts. You may need to choose the public school first, depending on which is good school district, and then your choice of residence will automatically be in the same school/neighborhood district.

Regarding details of your salary and benefits package, you need to clarify the following issues:

- Salary payment procedure (where you need to open a bank account)
- Medical aid entitlements
- Health insurance (who will pay)
- Your leave entitlements (including home leave/sick leave policies)
- System of taxes in the foreign country.

Regarding health insurance, you should clarify the details of the coverage of your policy/plan. What does it include? Does it cover routine medical expenses, hospitalization and emergencies? Does it also cover expenses such as dental care?

How about a situation where medical evacuation may be required e.g. in the event that you get seriously sick or injured and cannot work but need to return to your home country for prolonged treatment? Are these expenses included in your policy? When does your medical coverage come

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into effect? When you leave your home country or when you arrive aboard? How long is the insurance valid for?

You need to get information on all these aspects prior to your departure for your new assignment.

Ensure that all documentation is appropriately done

This would include getting all legalities and formalities done like passport, visas, work permit employment contract and an international driving license. The work permit is an important document, which your employing organization has to get for you. They have to approach the government of the country that you are moving to certifying that you will be working for them and so acquire a legal work permit for you.

Regarding your employment contract, make sure that all agreement are in writing. These would be issues such as when your contract expires, when it is to be renewed and on what conditions, is there a release clause, when can your service be terminated, who will arrange for the exit visas etc. With most professionally run companies operating overseas, there should be no need to worry on account of false promises where you could be left high and dry in a foreign land. However, such documentation is just a good back up for you in case anything does go wrong.

To be able to drive overseas, you may initially need an international driving license, officially known as an international driving permit. This is a recognized document world-wide but it can only be a stop-gap arrangement until you get a national license issued in the country that you are moving to. The international driving permit has a validity period of one year from the date of issue; it can be obtained from your home county where you already possess a legal national driving license (you could contact the Automobile association or the Traffic police for more information in this area).

Find out about the laws and customs of the foreign country

Information on laws and customs in the foreign country would help you adjust easier to the new living and working conditions there. You would know what to expect. You could try and find our experiences of others i.e. friends, colleagues and maybe get some tips on how they worked things out.

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Remember to have a medical check-up for you and your family before departure as well as all necessary immunizations/vaccinations. Depending on the country that you are moving too, these vaccinations could include cholera and yellow fever, hepatitis A and B meningitis etc. etc. Some countries may even require you to go through an HIV test before departure as part of your complete medical check-up.

An additional tip-in case you are carrying any medicines along that you are taking on a regular basis or are carrying for any emergency, be sure that you carry them in their original containers along with a medical prescription from your doctor. This should avoid any complications or chances of confiscation.

Talk to colleagues already there or who have visited that country, to give you information on the work environment in the organization.

Though there are definitely many benefits in working abroad like an attractive salary and opportunities for international travel just are sure you get your homework done before its time to move!