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An Acculturation Program for Foreign-Born Workers at Multinational Companies Transferred to Offices in the United States

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to create an acculturation program that multinational companies can use to ease the transition of foreign-born employees who are transferred to the United States. There are a number of challenges for these employees, from navigating the logistics of finding a place to live, setting up a bank account and filling out taxes to the social emotional issues of trying to adapt to another culture, build community and be successful in a new work environment. Through interviews with foreign-born employees, Human Resources professionals, and intercultural trainers, qualitative and quantitative data was collected to understand current gaps and best practices in acculturation programs at multinational companies. The findings show that some companies have no formal acculturation programs and while others have well-developed processes, they only address practical aspects of living in the United States, and ignore social emotional needs. Using the data collected, the study contains a proposed acculturation program framework which multinational companies can adapt to their organizational culture in helping to implement clearly defined processes and procedures to ease the foreign-born employee's transition to the United States.

Introduction

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 16.5 percent of the labor force (25.7 million people) in the United States is made up of foreign-born persons (BLS News Release, 2014). A number of these employees are members of multinational corporations who have been transferred from the offices in their home countries to the United States. These employees might have been accustomed to the organizational culture while working in their home countries, but upon transferring to the United States the organizational culture changes. While there are many benefits from moving to, living and working in the United States, there are challenges as well. One of these is decreased job satisfaction that occurs because of the inability to acculturate to the office culture and life in the United States (A. Soylu, 2007).

This was the experience of my partner, Gisele, who was working as a sustainability consultant in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and was transferred to Oakland, California for a certification-training program. Having worked for her company for four years, she was used to the policies, procedures and systems of her organization, but even though she was working for the same company in Oakland, the culture of the office was very different. In addition to adapting to the American professional environment, there were practical matters that were challenging to navigate such as finding housing, shopping in grocery stores, setting-up a bank account, and creating a community for herself, just to name a few. For Gisele, it was overwhelming to try and figure all of this out on her own, and with little support in terms of acculturating

to life in the United States, her productivity as an employee and quality of life was negatively affected.

As globalization increases the ability of multi-national companies to conduct business in foreign countries, the trend of foreign-born employees moving to the United States will continue to grow. Having processes and procedures in place to ease their transition will help individuals and their businesses become successful. It is very difficult for individuals to succeed in a business context if they do not have their basic physical and psychological needs satisfied. Both my partner and I have experienced this phenomenon personally, and the proposed program addresses gaps that we and many others have faced.

Upon moving to Argentina, it was hard to create a life for myself without knowing where I was going to live, where I was going to buy food, how to best communicate with the people around me and who to go to for support. In my role at a private high school in San Francisco, I assisted new students acculturate to life at our school so they could become comfortable with themselves and take full advantage of the opportunities. This capstone paper is inspired by these three intersecting experiences: Gisele's move to the United States, what it was like for me to live abroad, and building acculturation programs for students coming into a new environment.

This study explores the acculturation process of foreign-born employees working in multinational corporations who get transferred to offices within the same organizations in the United States. For the purposes of this study, a

multinational corporation, according to the International Encyclopedia of the Social

and Behavioral Sciences (Kogut, B. 2001, p. 10197)

> is a business organization whose activities are located in more than two
>
> countries and is the organizational form that defines foreign direct
>
> investment. This form consists of a country location where the firm is
>
> incorporated and of the establishment of branches or subsidiaries in foreign
>
> countries.

The researcher has created an acculturation program multi-national

corporations can use to create an inclusive, engaging environment for foreign-born

employees in order to improve the experiences of these individuals so they will be

happier, more productive employees.

Theoretical Foundations

Taylor & Finlay (2009) define acculturation as the "process experienced by

immigrants and workers from other cultures as they adapt to a host culture" (p.

683). This involves many aspects of an individual's experience in their personal and

professional lives, and is affected by factors including where one comes from, their

family dynamic, the values they hold and how they were raised. While there is no

one program that will work the same for everyone, there are some defining

characteristics that can be applied to improving the acculturation experience of

foreign-born workers who are transferred to the United States.

Adequately socializing foreign-professionals to the United States heavily

relies upon acculturation. Early theories defined this as a "three stage process of

contact, conflict and adaptation" (Torres, 2011, p. 192). Contact occurs upon the

first exposure of an individual to a new culture; conflict happens when foreigners

and individuals in the host culture accept or reject each other, and adaptation takes

place when foreigners try to adapt to the culture of the host country (Taylor &

Finlay, 2009, p. 683). Learning how to navigate these stages is often burdensome for

these individuals. "A consistent finding is that the acculturating process can be

stressful, as a result of the challenges that come with an individual's ability to fit into

their new country while maintaining their national self-identity" (Soylu, 2007, p. 7).

        According to Erikson "the concept of identity is defined as how individuals

organize their experiences within the context of the environments in which they are

situated" (Torres, 2011, p. 187). When moving to the United States for professional

reasons, one's identity will be affected by the need to adjust to "national culture, the

general business culture and the specific corporate culture" (Varner, 200, p. 45).

Foreign-born individuals have the burden to adapt in the United States since they

are most likely not a member of the majority group from a cultural standpoint.

Social identity theory states that foreign-born individuals are subject to oppression

because they are not part of the dominant group. "The dominant group holds the

power and the authority in society relative to the subordinates and determines how

that power and authority may be acceptably used" (p. 23 in Tatum, 1997, in Torres,

2011 p. 189). In the United States, senior leaders of businesses are often members of

the dominant group and can have "linear thinking processes, focus on single direct

talks, direct expression of thoughts and individualism" (Halverson, 2008, p.47), and

are often responsible for creating aspects of organizational culture. As such, the

burden falls on the foreign-born employees to assimilate in order to be successful.

It's also important to understand the environment where one is moving from,

and looking at the relationship between high and low context cultures can help

individuals acculturate to the societal norms of American work culture, which is

often considered to be low context. According to Locker, Kaczmarke, & Braun

(2007) "In high-context cultures, most of the information is inferred from the

context of a message; little is 'spelled out'. In low-context cultures, context is less

important; most information is explicitly spelled out." (p. 48). Knowing which

culture foreign-born employees are moving from helps to understand their

communication values. "Chinese, Japanese, Arabic and Latin American cultures

could be considered high context…. German, Scandinavian and the dominant North

American cultures could be considered low context" (Locker et al, 2007, p. 48). High

context cultures tend to value politeness, focusing on indirect communication, while

low-context are comfortable with confrontation and directness. "The High-Low

Context model of cultures is useful in that it awakens awareness" (Griffin, 2008, p.

182) to understand expectations and being able to build connections within multi-

cultural offices. For more information on communication differences between high

and low-context, see Appendix A and B (Locker et al, 2007, p. 58).

Awareness of where an individual fits on this continuum and within their

organization is valuable in providing a basis of understanding between their values

in terms of communication. This holds true for nonverbal communication, which,

according to Locker et. al (2007) "claims that 93 percent of all [people's]

communication is based in non-verbal symbols" (p. 92). The United States has its

own style in terms of non-verbal communication that may or may not be different

from the countries of origin of the foreign-born professionals. Body language, eye

contact, and gestures can be received differently depending on country of origin. For

example, eye contact is considered important in establishing connection in

American culture, but in certain Asian cultures, low-ranking individuals are not

supposed to establish eye contact with more senior officials. "These differences can

lead to miscommunication in the multicultural workplace. Supervisors may infer

from their eye contact that employees are being disrespectful, when, in fact, the

employee is behaving appropriately according to the norms of his or her culture"

(Locker et al, 2007, p. 53). Knowing that these differences exist will help foreign-

born individuals assimilate, and create understanding among their colleagues about

that person's communication style.

Understanding the differences in high and low-context cultures plays a direct

role in how business is run, especially when it comes to running meetings. "Low-

context, time oriented cultures view meetings as a time to exchange information and

/or to hammer out decisions. A meeting is considered successful, usually, if some

decisions have been made. High-context relationship-oriented cultures often view

meetings as a time to further relationships in order to accomplish a task"

(Halverson, 2008, p. 126). This knowledge is helpful to be able to adapt to the

different procedures of how meetings operate, depending on the country where

business is being conducted.

In regards to communication, language is one of the barriers that foreign-

born employees need to overcome in adjusting to the United States. It can be

challenging for foreigners to communicate with American co-workers even for

individuals who are fluent in English. While individuals might use the appropriate

words, intonation, "inflection and tone can make a big difference in how listeners

perceive their meaning" (Michalski, 2004). Even though language can be a challenge,

it may be one that individuals feel is easier to overcome than other obstacles such

as; working with supervisors who have different managing styles; or the loneliness

that comes with being away from a support network (Michalski, 2004).

There are also a number of differences for foreign-born employees moving

to the United States that revolve around inter-office dynamics and communication.

These include collaborative versus independent decision-making approach, direct

versus indirect feedback, as well as the importance Americans place on job titles

(Michalski, 2004). Addressing these concerns is important in helping foreign-born

individuals and families transition to the United States.

Where one's culture lies in terms of individualism and collectivism is

another important concept in understanding the struggles that foreign-employees

have in feeling empowered in the work place. According to Tirmizi (2008)

"collectivist cultures emphasize 'we' awareness, loyalty to groups and clans, security

and order from organizations, and group decisions." (p. 26). Individualist cultures

on the other-hand, value "personal autonomy, freedom, individual achievement, and

right to privacy" (Tirmizi, 2008, p. 26). Individualists are accustomed to the

competition that exists among social relationships and in the workplace, while

collectivists are more reliant on building networks for support and working as a

team to address difficult situations. This is challenging when in a foreign-country where it can be difficult to find peers from the city, country, and region where one is from. If foreign-born employees aren't adequately socialized to the offices in the United States and life outside of the workplace, they can feel as if they are not included in the decision making process, and may feel a decreased level of commitment to their job (Taylor & Finlay, 2009, p.684).

Confronting discrimination is also a challenge for foreign-born employees as they are not accustomed to the policies and procedures of their organization within the United States, the social norms outside of work, and are often seen as outsiders (Soylu, 2007, p. 14). Foreigners in the United States do not have the social networks they are accustomed to to seek out support and find solutions in helping them deal with the politics that exist in American businesses (Soylu, 2007, p. 12). As a result, these individuals may use avoidance strategies such as trying to avoid facing conflict, which can lead to lower self-esteem, and decreased job satisfaction (Soylu, 2007 p. 15).

In order to address these adverse effects, orientation and training programs can be implemented in order to facilitate foreign-born workers' acculturation and assimilation to the United States. According to Brown (2005), acculturation strategies should address the interplay between "maintaining the culture and identify of origin" along with "establishing contact with and participation in the larger society" (Torres, 2011, p. 192-193). In regards to adapting to the work environment, it is essential to understand the organizational culture, or the "values, norms, feelings, hopes and aspirations" of the members of that organization (Taylor

& Finlay, 2009, p. 684). Even though the organization might be the same in one's own country and in the United States, the members that make up the organization change. When moving to a new country, understanding this new organizational culture is essential for "employees to understand their workplace, the decisions that are made, and the way problems are handled" (Mwaura et al., 1998 in Taylor & Finley, 2009, p. 684).

It is vital that companies look at their policies and procedures to ensure they are addressing the needs of all of their employees. In order "to attract and retain talent around the globe, workforces need to be managed in a way that respects not only local laws, but also differences in how people are motivated, developed and paid, whilst staying aligned to any global strategy" (Baker and McKenzie, 2012, p. 11). If companies are going to bring on international employees to work in their offices in the United States, it is imperative to provide support not only for their transition, linguistically and culturally, but also to adjusting to company regulations and laws that are different from their home country.

Through orientations and trainings, companies can help facilitate the assimilation process (Taylor & Finlay, 2009, p. 684) and Human Resources offices play an important role. These departments are often responsible for recruiting and on boarding, working with foreign employees and should be responsible for developing both internal and external networks (Soylu, 2007, p. 98). Human Resources is responsible for "opening up lines of communication, educating the workforce, and attempting to interpret various laws that apply" to foreign-born employees (Soylu, 2007, p. 98). Some recommendations on how these Human

Resources departments should manage a multi-cultural work force include: "considering different styles of verbal and non-verbal communication; instill[ing] employees with diversity related values; and not us[ing] cultural background bias or ethnocentrism as a basis for making decisions" (Taylor & Finlay, 2009, p. 685).

Having an effective acculturation program that focuses on the challenges foreign-born employees face in regards to psychological and social adjustment can improve individuals' experiences and in turn, lead to increased productivity and efficiency. Addressing logistical matters such as finding a home, setting-up a bank account, along with developing community improving communication skills are just a few areas of focus that can accelerate the acculturation process. This program provides a framework for Human Resources offices to supplement their existing on-boarding programs for foreign-born employees who are transferred within their organizations to the United States.

Methodology

For this study, data was gathered from individuals who have been transferred to the United States, office staff that create the processes to help these individuals transition, and experts experienced in intercultural communication. All interviewees were identified through networking with personal and professional contacts, where the researcher contacted individuals via email and telephone. Interviews were conducted face to face, over Skype, and with the majority done over the phone. Interviews ranged from 35-55 minutes in length.

Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected. One of the interviewees is the researcher's girlfriend, who provided some of the inspiration for this study.

Since the close connection between these two individuals, the researcher recognizes the subjectivity with which data has been collected and analyzed.

Interviews were conducted with six foreign-born employees, three men and three women, working at multinational companies who have been transferred from their home countries to the United States. Two are from England, one from Germany, one from The Netherlands, one from Israel and one from Brazil. These individuals are between the ages of 22 and 45. Interviews were used to gather qualitative data addressing their lived experiences upon moving to the United States, and the support they received from their Human Resource offices. Participants were also asked to rank aspects of their experience on a scale of one to five to gather quantitative data, supplementing the qualitative information. See Appendix C for the general outline of interview questions.

Three individuals at Human Resources offices from multinational corporations working with hiring, and executing processes to acculturate foreign-born employees who are transferred to the United States were also interviewed. There were two men and one-woman. These interviews were mostly qualitative, and included a few questions where interviewees were asked to rate questions on a scale of one to five to gather qualitative data. See Appendix D for the general outline of interview questions.

Finally, the researcher conducted interviews with two professional coaches who work with both American and international employees on ways to communicate more effectively. These interview were used to gain the perspective of experts who are trained in working in the field of intercultural communication.

Through these conversations, the researcher gained recommendations on best practices for building an on-boarding program for foreign-born employees. These interviews were with two women in there 30s, and gathered qualitative data. See Appendix E for the general outline of interview questions.

Needs Assessment

Estimated costs of workplace stress to employers are estimated at $200-300 billion, as related to reduced productivity, health care, decline in performance, and employee turnover (Soylu, 2007, p. 1). Yet, there is "limited literature on ways to facilitate acculturation and assimilation of foreign born workers in the United States" (Taylor & Finlay, 2009, p. 685). In regards to practical logistics, PR Newswire (2015) cites such things as payroll problems and housing issues as two of the biggest challenges in global relocation. The concept of residential uncertainty, foreign-born employees not knowing where they're going to live plays into the stresses of foreign-born employees (Soylu, 2007 p. 2). This is also true when it comes to support. According to managing director Dean Foster of Berlitz Cross-Cultural Division Worldwide, "one of the biggest complaints we hear from non-Americans working in the United States is that they feel abandoned – they feel they get no direction and are not trained properly" (Virtual advisor, 2000). However, "the vast majority of organizations will have neither the required expertise or resources to handle all of these aspects in-house" (Tindale, 1999, p. 32). By building a program that companies can use to help with both logistical tasks and social-emotional adjustment, companies can help reduce the costs that come when transferring international employees.

There are three main reasons why people move, according to Roy, who has 25 years experience working in Human Resources (personal communication, 03/2016). These are:

> someone has a unique talent or degree of experience in another country that you want to bring to the United States; there's a vacancy in a leadership position and in the succession plan you need someone with international experience; or there is a development plan for an individual to develop knowledge and skills which they can apply to their home-country after a certain period of time.

This is different from the education world, according to John, who has worked in both higher education and the corporate world. "In the corporate world, the reasons of moving are usually to forward the business. The priority is the business, not the person" (personal communication, 02/2016). John works as an Immigration Specialist, a role that has existed for seven years at his company of over 7,000 people. He is the sole person responsible for transfers to the United States, and just recently (early 2016) introduced the first policy official for working with intercompany transfers, allocating money for moving household goods and other relocation costs.

To better understand the experiences of foreign-born employees who have been transferred to the United States, six individuals were surveyed in this study to gather quantitative data regarding how companies helped them with their move and adjustment to the United States. All six participants were asked to mark the

appropriate number on a scale of one-to-five, with a one being absolutely no, five
being absolutely yes, in response to the following statements:

1. Facilitation process - There were clearly defined processes and procedures in place to facilitate my transfer

2. Acculturation - There was an acculturation process upon arriving in the United States

3. Prior information - I had enough information prior to my move to the United States

4. Expectations - My expectations aligned with the information I received

5. Logistics - I felt supported through the physical part of moving

6. Support person - There was someone at the company in the United States I felt I could go to talk about things that were on my mind

7. Community - There was/were information/activities my company provided me to orient to living in the United States

8. Overall rating - I felt my company did a great job in facilitating my transfer

Table 1 below summarizes the responses to these questions.

Table 1: Survey responses of foreign born employees

Note. For a full breakdown of this data, go to Appendix C

Areas to note are the scores below 3.0, which indicate where the foreign-born employees generally felt there were not processes at their companies to help them in the following areas: adjusting to the cultural differences of life in the United States (Acculturation – 2.33), providing a support person (Support person - 2.83), and creating community (Community - 2.58).

A similar survey was given to Human Resources employees to gather data from their perspective. Using the same scale of one-to-five, with a one being absolutely no, five being absolutely yes, three participants were asked to respond with the appropriate number to the following statements:

1. Facilitation process - There are clearly defined processes and procedures in place to facilitate a transfer for foreign-born employees to my office

2. Acculturation process - There is an acculturation process for foreign-born employees upon arriving in the United States

3. Information - Foreign-born employees receive enough information prior to moving to the United States

4. Office support - My office supports foreign-born employees who are transferred through the physical part of moving

5. Support person - There is someone at my company in the United States where transferred foreign-born employees can go to talk about things that are on their mind

6. Community - There is information/activities provided to help foreign-born employees who are transferred to orient them to living in the United States

7. Overall rating - Our office/company does a great job in facilitating the transfer of foreign-born employees to the United States

Table 2 below displays the results from the survey responses.

Table 2: Survey responses for Human Resources employees
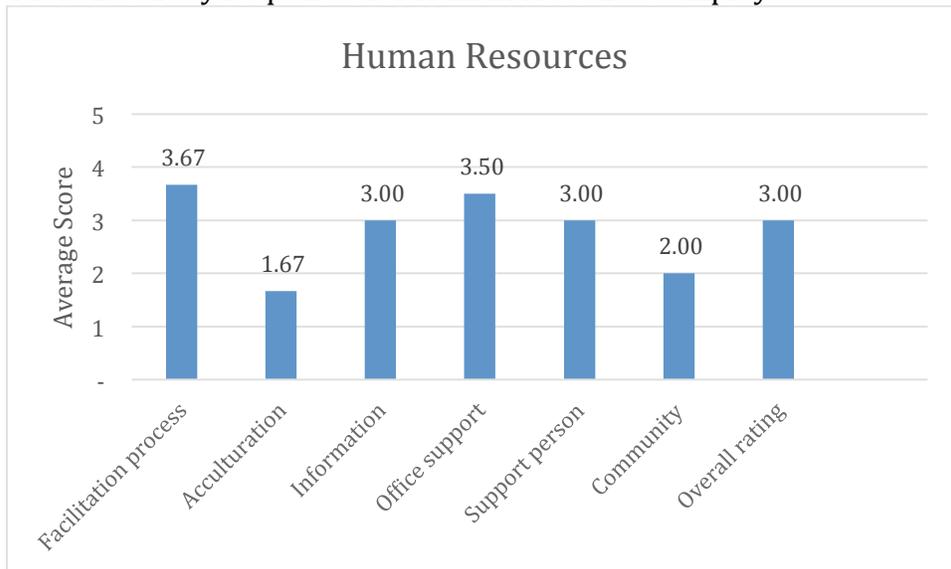
Note. For a full breakdown of this data, go to Appendix D

Human Resources professionals in this study also noted that their companies lacked processes for acculturation (1.67) and helping employees to build community (2.00). In addition, they gave their companies an overall lower rating (3.00) compared to foreign-born professionals (3.83). This quantitative data, and the qualitative data laid out below helps to identify the gaps that exist and where to prioritize resources in helping foreign-born professionals adjust to life in the United States so they can be more productive and happier employees.

Gaps in Relocation Programs

Social emotional. The most common reported issue among the interviewees in this study was the lack of social emotional support during the transfer process and upon arriving in the United States. While all of the study participants had access to colleagues, Human Resources or relocation specialists, having a designated person to go to for challenges around adjustment was a need that was not being met. When David from Israel was asked about his adjustment, he responded (personal communication, 02/2016):

> There were two things I was really concerned about; not about the job, visa, nothing. I was concerned about my dog, and about my partner because we were not married…. Nobody answered that. I call it the emotional part... Apart from throwing some links and articles or whatever, nobody really gave me an emotional solution. …It took awhile until this was sorted out because it took a lot of energy, frustration, and time to dig this up. No one recognized that. Nobody recognized to listen to what that guy says, and this was the only

thing that I cared....my company did not do too well in recognizing we have a

person here. Not a number, not an employee, we have David and David has

pain points and how can we support him in that.

David also believes that having access to a therapist who specializes in

relocation would have been helpful, or at the very least it would make a big

difference to be able to communicate with him/her about leaving behind friends and

family (personal communication, 02/2016).

Probably most of psychologists know this process or know what's going on

when someone leaves or someone moves, but someone needs to specialize in

these cases because there are so many things [to deal with], like [leaving] my

sister, my friends [in Israel].

Gisele from Brazil felt the same way: "At this office, we didn't have a

psychologist or any professional to help in this aspect but for sure that would be

really nice to have someone you could go and talk to" (personal communication,

02/2016].

Not all participants felt strongly about having a therapist. Five out of six

explicitly stated that they wanted to have an assigned buddy, in addition to a

relocation specialist in order improve their transfer process. Sarah from England

said, "I would definitely suggest that you have a buddy who's in the same office as

you who can help you with these things but also someone whose educated in the

processes [of what it's like to move from a foreign country]" (personal

communication, 02/2016).

Even for people coming from a Western culture where English is their first language, there needs to be support. Erica from England said (personal communication, 02/2016),

> You'd think it'd be pretty seamless because we both speak English and we're pretty similar, but ...even though it's an English speaking country it's still a big move. ... For the first three months I was staying close to our offices but it wasn't in the city so it was pretty isolating and I was kind of on my own. It was a big adjustment.

Practical logistics. In addition to the social emotional aspect, having practical matters like understanding the cost of living, and finding a place to live needs to be addressed. According to Roy "everything the person needs to do is difficult; opening a bank account, putting a deposit down on an apartment or signing a lease or getting utilities because you need a history get that. Everything the person does is difficult" (personal communication, 03/2016). Even if someone feels comfortable doing these things, they don't necessarily have all the information that they need to be aware of before arriving. That's what happened with Trevor (personal communication, 02/2016) from Germany who said

> Having a conversation about cost of living and how far my money would go would've been helpful...economic aspects were completely disregarded. I was baffled, and still am about the rent. That was something I would have liked to have known before I got here then I would have negotiated differently. I would've been better prepared economically.

Finding grocery stores or places to buy items that one is used to is something to be aware of in order to transition smoothly to a new environment. Fortunately, some interviewees were able to lean on their colleagues to do so. Erica from England said (personal communication, 02/2016),

The person who moved me here was originally from the UK and that was really helpful... to ask about things like, why do I have to go to four different stores for my groceries. That was a big one, where do I go to get little things because if I was in the UK I would know where to go to get things I needed. So it was helpful to have someone to go to but it wasn't company organized.

This was a common theme, that it was difficult for individuals to find basic things they were accustomed to, or it was challenging to do things like shop for food. This was the case for Gisele from Brazil who said (personal communication, 02/2016),

Doing groceries was not the easiest thing. First to find a grocery store close to where I was living that I like. Everything in the United States seems so big, even the grocery stores. You'd go and they're really big you don't know where to find the products and I'd get lost. I would spend like hours in there looking for items.

Other logistical challenges revolved knowing the tax system, obtaining a social security number, and getting a driver license. For Sarah from England, she found herself in deep debt because of the complexity of these systems in the United

States (personal communication, 02/2016).

> Our taxes are done automatically for you [in the UK] and there were
>
> definitely things that weren't explained to me that would've been helpful…I
>
> basically got confused with some of the language and it turns out I wasn't
>
> paying tax for like a year and I ended up owing the IRS about $20,000.
>
> Luckily I didn't spend that money but it was interesting there were large
>
> things they tell you about but sometimes those minute things they didn't tell
>
> you about are actually really important pieces of information

This can also be costly and time consuming from the businesses perspective.
Roy experienced this, as described below (personal communication, 03/2016).

> We had a guy come over to the US and didn't know what he was doing when
>
> he was filling out his taxes. It took us two years to figure out he was doing
>
> something wrong, and then the next four years to help readjust his taxes

Setting up a bank account for Sarah was also difficult. She said (personal
communication, 02/2016),

> I actually had a bit of a hard time when I moved here for the first month or so
>
> because when you came to the country as an alien you don't have a phone
>
> number, you don't have an address most likely, you don't have a Social
>
> Security Number… you don't have a bank account. Trying to obtain one of
>
> those things without the other is very difficult and eventually I ended up
>
> going around in circles.

Gisele faced a similar situation and it put her in a very difficult position, which she describes below (personal communication, 02/2016).

> Right after I arrived in the United States, Human Resources told me I would have to open a bank account to deposit my American salary into this bank account but the process on how to do it was not very clear…The whole process took more than a couple of weeks so my salary ended up being delayed which was a problem because I was changing from a temporary residence to a more permanent residence and I had to pay my first month rent and the security deposit and I basically didn't have my salary that month and the whole process was really confusing and kind of uncomfortable for me because I was really embarrassed to ask to delay rental payment because my salary was delayed.

Communication. A noticeable trend for Andrea, who has worked for eight years as a recruiting manager, is that her employees "are not as good at the communication side of the job". For example, "some of the employees don't always understand the subtleties of things, as some of our employees take things as very black and white. "Also, "foreign-nationals are much more sensitive to hierarchy and don't want to speak up" (personal communication, 02/2016). At Andrea's company, there are a number of people from Russia, Vietnam, China and India, which can be a more difficult adjustment than coming from a Western culture. Though five out of six interviewees acknowledged that they come from cultures similar to the United

States, ways of communicating were also difficult for them. David from Israel said
(personal communication, 02/2016),

> In Israel everyone sits together and everyone talks. Here, I went to a café and
> I joined [the people who work under me], and they set-up the space so I'd sit
> in the middle, let's give him the space and respect. This is a cultural thing.
> Rank in Israel is less important.

Meetings were also conducted a bit differently then in England, which Sarah
describes below (personal communication, 02/2016).

> I remember the first couple of months I was here and I was going to see a
> vendor because I was working closely with the media team and you do a lot
> of meetings with vendors and people were hugging and it was very strange. I
> just met you, I don't know why we're doing this... it was interesting. I guess
> we're much more direct in the way we communicate in the UK, as I felt
> people here would talk around the subject versus just getting to the point...
> Those were the kinds of things that stuck out to me when I got here.

Community. Another aspect that needs to be addressed is finding ways to
build community, as all of these interviewees left family and friends behind.
Facilitating ways to make connections can help foreign-born transferees feel more
at home. David from Israel said (personal communication, 02/2016),

> Mostly, our friends are Israelis who relocated here who we met on Facebook,
> [by word of mouth], or friends of friends. You're invited to lunch, and then

you just meet more and more people. We kind of don't have American friends, we have our neighbors where we drink beers and take our dog out. But we still haven't, in 8 months, found the American friends.

Creating organic opportunities to connect with people from the same country, or make friends with Americans can be challenging. This was the case for Erica from England (personal communication, 02/2016) who said,

[Building community] was something I struggled with. When I moved here I was looking at tennis clubs because I wanted to join one and live near one and create a community that way. When I moved here it became clear that that's not how it works… [At first] I really struggled…. You go to a housewarming party and everyone's like 'oh new person, who are you, what do you do' and they hear your story and then they retreat to their group friends, it was strange…. it was hard to try and get into a friendship group or do things.

Successes in Current Programs

While there are a lot of gaps that need to be addressed, there are also a number of areas where the interviewees felt supported. Looking at these situations can help provide information on how to build successful acculturation programs. Some best practices include "having a system set-up internally or externally where someone knows how to [help someone relocate] and supports the person coming over" (Roy, personal communication, 03/2016).

Relocation packages. Frank from the Netherlands, for example, who arrived in the United States just one month ago, has had a smooth transition. The company he works for "has a lot of experience with international moves. There's a highly set process…not really on any cultural stuff…more on practical aspects such as cost of living, rental prices, visa, flight, temporary housing, all that kind of stuff." (personal communication, 02/2016). He was very happy with the relocation package, described below.

> They give you a certain number of relocation points that you can spend on different aspects of relocation support. One-month temporary accommodation is 20 points, one day of relocation support is 10 points, moving all of your articles is 20 points. You can cherry pick all of the services you prefer to have within the 100 points that you have. My total package was three months of temporary accommodation, two months of rental car, ship container shipment of household goods, three days of relocation support, flights and tickets for me and my spouse and visa support. Very generous, extremely generous relocation package. It really helps, gets all of that hassle out of the way and makes it much less stressful.

> Frank was also provided an external relocation consultant by his company who "help[ed] me set-up a bank account, social security number. They're currently helping us out to find a more permanent accommodation. They helped set up an appointment with the DMV for a California ID and driver license" (personal communication, 02/2016).

David, who works for the same company as Frank, was also extremely happy with what he received (personal communication, 02/2016). "When the recruiter started naming the detailed package, I was going into tears, and came home in tears, because I felt like I won the jackpot, won the lottery." This company obviously has access to a lot of resources, and is very accustomed to transferring employees internationally as evidenced by the detailed processes and procedures. Same is true for Trevor from Germany, who was provided a third party consultant to help him get settled which he describes below (personal communication, 02/2016).

Human Resources organized formalities in terms of contracts, and they contacted the immigration agency and also a company which helped me adjust to the new environment... for three days in-a-row [this company] got someone who showed me around, showed me the area, possible areas where I could live and go apartment hunting, where the supermarkets are or where the malls are, helped me set-up a bank account, helped me set-up a mobile phone, and basically the essentials I needed.

Training programs. In regards to formal training, Trevor was the only one who received cultural training, which was held in Germany before coming to the United States (personal communication, 02/2016). He said,

It was a like a brief introduction to the history of the United States, history of [the town I moved to]. And generally short stories about American culture, of ways of interaction, differences between interactions, interpersonal interactions between America and Germany as well.... stereotypes and all

that. We also did role-plays as well, to illustrate how an American would act

or how I would act in that respect.

While Trevor found this helpful, he appreciated the support for practical

logistics more compared to the cultural training he received. Frank was also

thankful for help in this area, and was able to take a class over videoconference run

out of the Human Resources office (personal communication, 02/2016). He

describes the experience below.

There's a course called US 101. When you arrive the 2nd day or 2nd week,

there's bit of training on the basics: health insurance, finances, and you get an

accountant to assist with you. They have health insurance companies come in

and share differences, and this is run by an internal relocation team

organized by Human Resources.

These were the only formal training programs that were specific to foreign-

born employees out of the six participants interviewed. While Erica and Sarah were

required to go through new hire orientation again, as their job roles had changed

upon arriving in the United States, none of the training they received was specific to

being foreign-born.

Leveraging the experiences of these employees and Human Resources

professionals, there is significant information to pull the positive aspects and fill the

gaps to provide a framework for best practices in building an acculturation program

for foreign-born employees moving to the Unites States. Using this data, along with

information gathered from intercultural trainers, which will be presented later, the

researcher has created goals and objectives to guide the construction of a program to better prepare foreign-born employees and the offices that they work for their transition to the United States.

Goals and Objectives

The purpose of the program is to provide a framework for foreign-born professionals coming to the United States and their employees to better handle the challenges of integrating into personal and professional life in the United States. It establishes a methodology for fulfilling basic needs such as housing and shopping for food, as well as other practical matters like setting-up a bank account and obtaining a driver license. Once these are addressed, the next goal is to provide participants with the skills necessary to be able to communicate clearly and effectively in their professional environment. By setting these individuals up for success and helping their companies accomplish their business goals, these individuals will be able to flourish in their roles and build off of the confidence that they gain from being successful in their work environments. Finally, participants will have avenues to explore and develop a lifestyle out of the work place that brings personal fulfillment, personally and socially. By using this framework, Human Resources offices will be able to work closely with these individuals to achieve these goals.

Program Goals

- Provide a structure for implementing processes and procedures for companies to use when transferring foreign-born professionals to the United

States

- Provide foreign-born professionals practical exercises and resources to adequately prepare them and provide on-going support through their transition to the United States

Program Outcomes

- Companies are better prepared to bring foreign-born professionals to the United States
- Relocated staff will achieve better results for their companies
- Foreign-born professionals have positive experiences moving to and living in the United States

Goals for Program Participants

- Raise awareness of one's own culture in terms of communication style and values within a business context
- Build confidence and community by developing professional clout and personal relationships through thriving in a foreign culture
- Contribute to their company goals through operating as a high-performing professional
- Feel accepted as a positive, contributing member to their host community

Program Description

Potential participants

The participants for this program are any foreign-born employees who are transferred within their company from outside of the United States to an office within the United States. Other individuals who can engage in aspects of this program include Human Resources, potential buddies for the transferred foreign-born employees, and the teams in which these individuals are joining.

Program Scope

The proposed project focuses activities and resources in three stages: prior to departure, the first month, and months two through nine. Below is a timeline representing the scope of this program.

Table 3: Pre-departure, Month One Curriculum Timeline

When	Week	Activity	Responsible staff members (+ foreign-born employee)	Location
Pre-departure	To be completed 1 week prior to departure	•CCI •De-stressors •Insights •Introduce support team •Logistics •Self awareness •Values	Only foreign born employee Only foreign born employee Team in the United States Human Resources Human Resources Only foreign born employee Only foreign born employee	Home country office Home country office Home country office Home country office Home country office Home country office Home country office
Upon arriving in USA	1	•Check-ins •Discuss insights •Formal introduction •Office orientation •Tour around town •US 101 •Visit permanent accommodation	Buddy Manager and/or buddy Manager Buddy Destination services Human Resources Destination services	USA office USA Office USA office USA office Town of relocation USA office Town of relocation
	2	•Answering questions •Check-ins •High-context/low context	Cross-cultural awareness coach Buddy Cross-cultural awareness coach	Designated safe space USA office Designated safe space
	3	•Check-ins •Logistics (SSN, bank account, DMV) •Offering therapy	Buddy Destination Services Therapist	USA office Off-site Office of the therapist
	4	•Answering questions •Check-ins •Communication skills •Community	Cross-cultural awareness coach Buddy Cross-cultural awareness coach Human resources	Designated safe space USA office USA office Video-Conference

Table 4: Curriculum Timeline Months Two – Nine

Months	Regularity	Activity	Responsible staff members (+ foreign-born employee)
2 to 4	Bi-weekly meetings Weekly meetings Weekly meetings Bi-weekly meetings Biweekly	•Answering questions •Check-in •Check-in •Practice western communication •Therapy	Cross-cultural awareness coach Buddy check-ins HR check-in Cross-cultural awareness coach Therapist
4 to 6	Biweekly Biweekly Biweekly Biweekly Biweekly	•Answering questions •Check-in •Check-in •Practice western communication •Therapy	Cross-cultural awareness coach Buddy check-ins HR check-in Cross-cultural awareness coach Therapist
6 to 9	As needed Biweekly Biweekly Biweekly As needed	•Answering questions •Check-in •Check-in •Therapy •Practice western communication	Cross-cultural awareness coach Buddy check-ins HR check-in Therapist Cross-cultural awareness coach

Curriculum

Human Resources professionals take on a number of roles in facilitating the transfers of foreign-born individuals to the United States. In addition to helping with the logistics, Human Resources specialists should also "understand their role as intercultural guide and recognize patterns of cultural adjustment" that might take place, as well as helping to "establish positive relationships and recognize potential patterns…ensuring that [participants] understand support systems (Spencer &

Tuma, 2007, p. 141). While some companies rely on recruiters or managers to execute these roles, according to all three Human Resources professionals interviewed in this study, it is the purview of their offices to create and implement these policies. Thus, it is these employees who are recommended to be responsible for implementing the plan proposed below. It is advised that they are based out of the company's headquarters in the United States. By being close to the center of major business activities, the Human Resources employees can have access to the resources they need to successfully acculturate foreign-born employees.

Pre-departure Coursework and Orientation

This takes place in the home country of the employee prior to departure, where the participant takes part in personal reflection and solidifies logistical details in anticipation of arriving in the United States.

Self-awareness Activities. The following self-awareness activities are aimed to help participants understand themselves and how they will interact in their new environment. First, they will complete the Cultural Context Inventory (CCI), a tool used to understand how one will respond in cross-cultural situations (see Appendix F and G). According to Spencer and Tuma (2007) "A good, honest understanding of one's own responses in the face of intercultural interactions can help one prepare for dealing with cultural situations" (p. 169). This will help foreign-born employees understand where they might struggle or feel more comfortable before they depart.

Depending on a number of different factors, including one's country of origin, and upbringing, an employee's value system might be much different from the

United States. Having an explicit understanding of the things they care about, what they enjoy and what might challenge them in their new environment can help prepare them. Alice, who has worked as a coach for the past 10 years with both international and foreign employees on how to improve their lifestyle, recommends that transferred employees do the following (personal communication, 02/2016):

> write a list of what their top values are. I ask them to write a list about the 10 things they value about their work, and then I ask them to star the top 3. If you had to only live with 3 out of these 10 what would they be. Getting clear on what someone really values is so helpful for understanding who they are and how they function.

Finally, establishing routine in a new environment can take some time, and with such a big adjustment moving to a foreign country, it is important to remember what one does to feel good about themselves. According to Alice (personal communication, 02/2016), "confidence goes down in a new environment" so identifying ways in which one "can feel strong, and confident independent of work [is helpful]. For instance; talking about ways to de-stress." To address this, all transferees will be asked to make a list (Appendix H) of the activities that they enjoy, make them feel good and help them de-stress. Having a list which they can refer to can provide structure for building a routine in their new environment.

It is not only the responsibility of the foreign-born employees to raise their self-awareness, the team on which these employees will be joining can take steps to ensure a smooth transition and efficient working environment. Doing a few simple

exercises prior to the transferees' arrival can reduce the challenges that can come with the addition of a foreign-born employee to a team.

According to Alice, (personal communication, 02/2016) "it's really easily to stop conflict before it starts, which is why I really encourage companies to go through some kind of training together on self-awareness or emotional intelligence, using something like Insights." Insights is a tool that is aimed to helps people understand their working styles, and provides a "gateway to success for [company's] people, leaders, teams and [the] entire organization" (Insights, 2015). By having individuals spend 20 minute filling out this questionnaire, they get feedback regarding things such as what they do/do not do well, what they do/do not enjoy, all related to their work life. With this knowledge, teams can debrief as a group or hire an outside facilitator to help them better understand how they will work with both their current colleagues, and new members of their team.

Logistics. The logistics will be covered through two one-hour videoconference sessions conducted by the Human Resources professional prior to departure. Knowing where someone is going to be residing upon arriving in the United States and whether that accommodation will have linens, is furnished, and has cooking utensils can help reduce uncertainty. With a clear understanding of options for shopping for food, where grocery stores are and take-out food/restaurants as well as other necessities one might need, such as a pharmacy, can help reduce the stress of moving. Using video-conferencing software like Google Hangouts or Skype, the Human Resources professional can share their screen and walk the transferees through the logistics such as where they will be living, how they will be getting to

work, as well as ensure they have the resources they need and all their questions answered prior to departing. Additional aspects to address include how much money to have on-hand; since transferees will not be able to set-up a bank account without a social security number, which can only take place after 10 days of being in the United States. Identifying a local hospital in case there is an emergency should also be addressed.

This videoconference time is also when the Human Resources professional will educate the transferee about the rest of their support team. This includes destination services, a communication coach, cultural awareness consultant, and psychologist. Human Resources will also match the transferee up with a buddy, who will work with the transferee for the first nine months upon their arrival.

After arriving in the United States

First month. The first stage of acculturation is contact, and by scheduling an orientation on their first day of work (Appendix J), this can help foreign-born employees get settled in. This will involve shadowing their buddy for the entire day, as well as focusing on getting a physical layout of the new office where they will be working. Tasks such as finding the desk they will be working at, being introduced to members of their team, the IT department, where the break room and office supplies are (if applicable). Sharing office norms regarding what time to arrive at the office and what time to depart, how to fill out timesheets (if applicable), lunchtime etiquette will all be addressed.

A formal introduction to the entire team should take place within the first three days of arrival. Depending on the company's culture in terms of when they

hold team meetings, have team-lunches, happy hours, etc. will determine the best context in which to welcome this individual. It can simply be an announcement from the employee's manager or colleague, or can be a 'get to know this person' over lunch or happy hour. Either way, making a point to introduce and announce this person's arrival can help them feel like a member of the team.

As Frank had during his transfer, it is recommended that Human Resources offer a US 101 course over videoconference with the foreign born professional. During this time, any paperwork that has not been filled out will be addressed. In addition, Human Resources will walk through the various benefits that the foreign born employee has such as health insurance, holiday, vacation, sick days, 401 k, health, dental, vision insurance options, as well as any other aspects that need to be addressed that might be new.

Time should be built in that first week of work for the employee to spend outside of the office getting settled (Appendix K). Assuming that the first day of work is on a Monday, allotting time on Wednesday and/or Friday in the afternoons to work with a destination services consultant to show them around the area, explore places to live, purchase products that may have been forgotten at home, learn about the transportation options, and satisfying any other basic needs can facilitate a quicker adaptation period. Amount of time allotted to this will be dependent on the employee, but building time in their first week schedule to anticipate fulfilling these needs is a recommended practice.

In week two, while it is still very early in the acculturation period, it is expected that transferees will have experienced aspects of the second stage of

acculturation, conflict, specifically in the work environment. They will probably be noticing different communication styles, and this is a good time to introduce the differences between high context and low context cultures, and identifying where on the spectrum this employee lies. Lindsey, who has a background in intercultural service and teaches Western communication skills in a business context, believes it is a best practice to explicitly acknowledge differences in communication to help foreign-born individuals thrive in their business environment (personal communication, 02/2016).

> Americans communicate this way and I draw a straight arrow. A lot of Asian cultures communicate this way and I draw a spiral with more of a beating-around-the-bush type of communication. And then romance languages communicate this way and then I show the arrow being zigzagged. I'm not saying anything is more valuable, however, it's important that for them to know this information to be successful from a US perspective.

Using the chart in Appendix A as a reference, an hour during the second week will be dedicated to talking about how the United States is a low-context culture, and using their completed CCI they can compare where they are on the spectrum to the United States. Facilitated in person or over the phone by the cultural awareness facilitator (described below), this can help individuals understand if "they are more concerned with what people say or how people say it, what their relationship is to space, to time, to non-verbal cues" (Lindsey, personal communication, 02/2016) to bring understanding to their current work environment. Raising awareness to how

the employee experiences these differences and providing this framework may help cope with the conflict stage in the acculturation process.

As the foreign-born employees continue to experience new things, "finding a space for international employees to ask whatever questions they want to ask about American culture is a really important" (Lindsay, personal communication, 02/2016). Alice agrees, saying that "knowing people can go to a physical space to talk about things" (personal communication, 02/2016) is important. Depending on the size of the office and the number of international employees, this can be done as a group activity or on an individual basis. In order to make the space feel safe, someone outside of the company who is professionally trained in cross-cultural awareness should facilitate this activity (for example, a 'cross-cultural awareness coach'). The first meeting should take place for one hour after work, and then continue on a bi-weekly basis for the first six months, in a designated space within the office building or at an off-site location which is determined by the Human Resources professional and cross-cultural awareness coach.

While not all employees will want the services of a psychologist to talk about issues regarding acculturation, offering this as an option is recommended. The third week is an opportune time for Human Resources to introduce this service, and set-up a time for an individual to meet one-on-one, and/or for spouses and families who have moved along with the foreign-born employee. It is recommended to offer biweekly meetings to members of foreign-born employees and their families for the first nine months upon arriving in the United States.

It is also during the third week when the transferee will be able to obtain their social security card, which in turn will allow them to set-up a bank account, and get a driver license. Setting aside two half days during this week for destination services to help solidify these logistics will allow the transferee to deposit pay checks into their account and eventually can lead to them getting a credit score (which is often required for renting long-term accommodation), getting credit cards, and purchasing a car, to name a few. This is also a good time to revisit how the housing search is going. Now that the foreign-born person has had some time to learn about the area, it is recommended to provide time to allow them to search for a place to live, if necessary.

The theme of week four is community and communication. It can be difficult to build community when moving to a foreign country. The Human Resources professional, the foreign born employee and their buddy, can work together to put together an action plan regarding ways to get engaged in the community, using the document that the transferee completed before moving to the United States (Appendix H). Recommended activities include: attending a cultural event such as a concert, play, or going to the movies: trying to find a sports team/league to join or a running club; partaking in music or art lessons; and/or identifying places within the community where there are other individuals who speak the same language or who are from the same country.

Week four will also be a time to start the communication-training portion of the program, which will focus on practical Western communication techniques. Working with the cross-cultural awareness coach, foreign-born employees will learn

about the business norms that come with being in a Western context. "In our culture [the United States] you need confidence to be listened to, it is very highly valued. Standing up tall, having open body language, having direct eye-contact is what comes across as competent and valued" (Lindsay, personal communication 02/2016). Understanding how to communicate within hierarchy is also an area that foreign-nationals have difficulty with, according to Andrea, who has worked for the last eight years as a recruiting manager for her Human Resources office. Another area to address is having direct asks, and how to ask questions. Communication style is dependent on each culture and company where one works, but there are general norms that are valued in Western culture and these can be introduced during week four of the training program.

Second month. The second month after arrival involves a lot less formal instruction for the foreign-born employees, and when the regular rhythm of support becomes solidified. This includes having one formal and one informal check-in with their buddies each week. Informal times include going on walks or having a cup of coffee, and formal times include scheduling a meeting, perhaps over lunch, to provide a forum to have conversations about the accessible resources employees have. It is recommended to have one formal meeting per week for the four months, and then one meeting every two weeks through nine months.

Other on-going support includes the bi-weekly cross-cultural awareness meetings. As employees continue to process similarities and differences between the United States and their home-country, it is advised to continually offer an opportunity for them to ask questions regarding what they are experiencing. in a

safe space ideally with individuals within their own company or perhaps other

companies, who get together to meet and discuss what they are seeing and feeling.

The difference between having a cross-cultural awareness coach and a therapist is

the cross-cultural awareness coach is there to answer questions regarding things

that foreign-born employees see in regards to cultural differences and similarities,

and the therapist provides an opportunity to talk about personal and familial

challenges that one potentially faces during what can often be a difficult transition.

It is recommended to offer optional bi-weekly therapy sessions for employees and

their families for the first nine months of their transition period.

Communication coaching is also another on-going support that should be

offered on a bi-weekly basis. During these sessions, employees can practice role-

playing. For example, Lindsey recommends "Ask[ing] them about what the typical

conversation is like that you have a client, or what's a difficult topic you have with a

boss. Video tape them, and show it to them" (Lindsey, 02/2016). By providing them

the opportunity to practice real-life situations and review video-tape with them, the

cross-cultural awareness coach can point out the positive and negative

communication characteristics of the foreign-born employees within a Western

context, and work with them on how to continue to improve their communication

and presentations skills. These meetings can be completed after the sixth month of

the foreign-born employee's arrival, and be offered as needed after that.

Throughout the second and third months, through weekly meetings with the

Human Resources professional, the foreign-born employee can have an opportunity

to address overall aspects of their transition. The Human Resources professional

can keep an eye on making sure that the practical aspects of the transition (finding a place to live, setting-up a bank account and receiving paychecks, etc.) are taken care of. The main job of the Human Resources professional during this stage is to ensure that employees are continuing to find opportunities to de-stress (Appendix I), develop community, and are being productive employees. The more that the foreign-born employee is able to develop a routine and lifestyle that is enjoyable and appropriate for their values and interests, the easier the employee will be able to move through the stages of acculturation to adaptation.

Staffing Plan

The Human Resources professional is the main point of contact for the transferee. They are responsible for building the support team, which will include a destination services professional, a cross-cultural awareness coach, an office buddy, and a therapist. With such an extensive team, paying for all of these services is an area of note. A point structuring system (see page 46) which is dependent on the employee's level within the company will determine the amount of resources available to the transferee. The Human Resources professional will work with the transferee to put together a support plan based on the allotted points.

The ground destination services professional will accompany the transferee to help them explore the area they are living, be a resource for finding a place to live, as well as make appointments at the DMV for a driver license, obtain a social security card, and set-up a bank account.

The cross-cultural awareness coach is someone who will work with the employee on a one-on-one basis to practice their communication skills to succeed in

a Western business environment. It is the assumption that transferees have

sufficient English language skills, thus English as a Second Language support is not

offered in this program. This coach can also serve to answer any questions that the

transferee has in a safe environment.

In addition, a peer level buddy will be assigned to the transferee. Ideally, this

buddy will also have moved from a foreign-country to the United States and

understands this experience. Finally, having a professional therapist trained

specifically in working with issues of acculturation and assimilation, for individuals

and families is a positive resource that can address the personal challenges foreign

born employees might face. For a full staffing plan, seeing Appendix L.

Program Marketing, Participant Recruitment and Admissions

Marketing for possible transfers to the United States can take place both via

word of mouth, and through more formal channels, such as postings on internal job

boards. All of the foreign-born interviewees in this study volunteered to move to the

United States, thus there is no recruitment or admissions process as part of this

program.

Logistics

The specifics of the foreign born employee's departure from their home

country, arrival in the United States and first day of work will be coordinated by the

Human Resources professional assigned to each case. The information regarding

how to get to and from the airport, short-term accommodation, transportation to

and from work will all be covered in the video-conference meeting prior to the

employee leaving their home-country. Finding longer term accommodation will be

coordinated with the destination services team, along with other logistics such as

finding grocery stores for shopping, obtaining a social security number and

subsequent items such as setting up a bank account and a driver license. (See

'Curriculum' section for more in-depth methodology regarding handling logistics).

Health and Safety Plan

Finding health care options can be challenging for foreign-born employees

not accustomed to the American health care system. As part of US 101 training upon

arriving in the United States, the Human Resources professional will walk through

the health care options for the foreign-born employee. This will include the costs of

regular check-ups when it comes to general health care, dental, vision along with

situations that are specific to the individual regarding any on-going illnesses they

might have. In addition, the regular check-ins between Human Resources and the

foreign-born employee will provide an opportunity for employees to ask questions

regarding resources they might need for anything health related for them or their

family.

Crisis Management Plan

The main areas of crisis management will address natural disasters, terrorist

activities, and medical emergencies that are consistent with company policies. This

includes: having up to date emergency contact information both in the United States

and outside of the United States; an emergency phone numbers list; resources

available to know how to handle such things as earthquakes, fires, terrorist attacks

and a step-by-step plan in regards to methods of communication, access to hospitals and/or temporary safety zones, as well as how to prepare emergency kits for the home and office. This information will be included as part of the on-going weekly communication between Human Resources professionals and the foreign-born employees.

Budget and Budget Notes

Each business will have different priorities in terms of how much of their operating budget to allot to foreign-born employee transfers. This will also depend on the level of the individual who is transferring, if they are bringing their family, and the city to which they are moving from and to. With limited access to funding, companies will have to make their own decisions for how to prioritize funding, from the logistics of the move to on-the-ground support upon arrival. In addition, not all employees will need the same support, as some are more likely to want help in finding a place to live, others will want ideas regarding finding community, and others will prioritize having cross-cultural communication skills and/or therapy sessions. Giving employees options for how to prioritize resources can help minimize budget constraints. In addition, by collecting longitudinal data focusing on where foreign-born employees tend to require the most support, companies can get a clearer picture on where to devote their finances.

To address this, it is recommended to use a point-structuring system similar to where Frank and David work. Each employee will receive a certain number of relocation points depending on the level of their transfer. Then they will have the option on where to apply their points, depending on the support they require.

Having a written policy with this point system can allow individuals to access

various services based on their individual needs. Below is an example.

Jane Doe – 20 Total points allotted

Table 5: Sample Point Allotment System

Task	Points
Destination Services	1 point per hour used
Psychologist	1 point per meeting
Communication workshops	1 point per meeting
Cross-cultural awareness meetings	1 point per meeting

*Costs of each task will differ based on the location of the move

**Flights and relocation costs are covered by the company separate of this point
system

Evaluation Plan

Soylu (2007) has shown that improving the acculturation process of foreign-

born employees leads to decreased stress and improved productivity. Operating

under this conclusion, addressing how employees are affected by their move can

help evaluators understand how to prioritize resources. Surveys will be distributed

to the foreign-born employees, their managers, and Human Resources professionals

(see Appendices M, N, O). Distributing this survey on a regular basis can provide a

longitudinal perspective about employees' experience, their ability to work

efficiently and effectively in the work place (from the manager's perspective), and

the areas that need attention in regards to where resources tend to be allocated

(from the Human Resources perspective). At the end of the year, data from the

surveys will be collected by the appropriate Human Resources staff member, and

used to address gaps that are presented through this evaluation. While ideally the

data collected will be done anonymously to obtain the most honest answers, this

most likely will not be possible. As demonstrated in this study, transfers often take place on an individual basis and thus there will not enough surveys submitted at one time to allow for anonymity.

Conclusions/Implications

The proposed framework provides a structure that companies can implement and foreign-born employees can use to prepare them as they embark on their move to the United States. Everyone has different experiences based on the culture they have grown up in, their family, education, and a number of other factors so providing a program that can be tailored to the individual is ideal for the various distinct challenges one will face. With clearly written policies, companies will be more adept at easing the transition of foreign-born employees, resulting in a more productive and efficient workforce. Through raising self-awareness of one's own culture and working style, expectations will be tempered allowing these transferees to build confidence in their working environment. And through providing on-going support, it will allow these employees to thrive, and become contributing and accepted members in the United States.

Companies can use different services depending on the size and expertise of their workforce to execute on-boarding programs. For larger companies that are accustomed to these types of transfers, like Frank's, David's and Trevor's, they have clearly defined processes that include the support they will provide. Through working with recruiters within Human Resources, along with procedures on how to use external consultants like destination services, companies can leverage their knowledge and proficiency. For John and Andrea, who are both the sole individuals

responsible for recruiting and on-boarding foreign-born employees in the United

States at their companies, they are the ones with the burden and responsibility of

building and executing these programs. While this study does not address the

budgetary constraints small companies like these are facing, this program clearly

lays out options that can be used, and thus can serve as a template from which

services and offerings can be added and removed to fit each company's priorities.

By front-loading information and providing on-going support, this program

aims to reduce the stresses of foreign-born employees when they move to the

United States, helping them to maintain their own sense of identity while

assimilating to the work culture within their American offices. As they are the one's

adjusting to American work norms, they are still operating within the 'one-down'

construct, but they will have the tools to be able to communicate and operate within

these new norms. Through understanding high-context and low-context cultures

and the differences of communication style, they can begin to adapt and practice

what tends to help Americans be successful in their roles, relying on the importance

of confidence portrayed through eye-contact and other social customs. In addition,

making resources accessible for these individuals to find community, partake in

activities in which they find joy and meet other people, can help increase self-

esteem and job satisfaction.

Future iterations of this study should involve a more thorough analysis of the

correlation between job performance and the acculturation process. While this is

addressed as part of the evaluation plan through surveys with managers, if

researchers are able to show that there is a connection between profitability and

investing in foreign-born employees' transfers, this can persuade stakeholders to invest more in these services. In addition, the evaluation plan should provide more data on where to prioritize in terms of improving the acculturation process for companies and transfers.

Other areas of focus for this proposed program include trying to find a larger and more diverse sample size. This can be in regards to providing more global representation, including individuals from African and Asian countries, from other Latin American cultures as well as gathering data about the experiences of the spouses and families of the foreign born transfers. Even though two of the six transfers brought their spouses and the researcher addressed issues around their transition, limited data was collected to better understand their challenges from their own perspective. There is an opportunity to conduct further inquiry into this subject matter. Having a wider breadth of experiences of what it is like to move to the United States can provide more information into building an appropriate, personalized acculturation program.

Finally, with the advent of technological advances, it is worth exploring how to leverage different software to replicate the type of support provided by the various stakeholders in this study. Using programs like Insights, to understand one's own work style, is one example that is proposed. Other examples include seeing if there is an application where employees can practice cross-cultural communication, or a forum to which they can get their questions answered in real-time. While this researcher would argue that there is no substitution for in-person conversation and

connection, finding appropriate computer programs that can replace costly services,

especially for the companies that lack the resources is an area worth pursuing.

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Appendix A: Views of Communication in High-Context and Low-Context Cultures

	High Context	Low Context
Reliance on words to communicate	Low	High
Reliance on non-verbal signs to communicate	High	Low
Importance of written word	Low	High
Agreements made in writing	Not binding	Binding
Agreements made orally	Binding	Not binding
Attention to detail	Low	High

Locker, K. Kaczmarke, S., et Braun, K. (2007). Business Communication 3rd Edition. Communicating across cultures – Module 3. p. 48

Appendix B: Cultural Contrasts in Business Introductions

	North America	Japan	Arab Countries
Purpose of introduction	Establish status and job identity: network	Establish position group, build harmony	Establish personal rapport
Imagine of individual	Independent	Member of group	Part of rich culture
Information	Related to business	Related to company	Personal
Use of language	Informal, friendly; use first name	Little talking	Formal; expression of admiration
Values	Openness, directness, action	Harmony, respect, listening	Religious harmony, hospitality, emotional support

Locker, K. Kaczmarke, S., et Braun, K. (2007). Business Communication 3rd Edition. Communicating across cultures – Module 3. p. 56

Appendix C: Interview Guide – Foreign-born employees

Name:
Gender identity:
Job title:
Job description:
Company:
Number of years with the company:
Country of residence prior to transfer:

1. How did you learn about the opportunity to transfer to the United States?

2. When did you start receiving information about the transfer?
    a. How did the information you received help?

3. Did your family move with you? If so, what training available for them?

4. Who was your main point of contact for facilitating this transfer?
    a. In your home country
    b. In the United States
    c. n/a

5. Who outside of your company helped facilitate the transfer?
    a. i.e. An organization sponsored by the United States government
    b. Other organizations that helped with relocation
    c. n/a

6. What processes were in place at your organization for onboarding/acculturation upon transferring to the United States?
    a. What was the training program?

7. Who was the specific person or group of people with whom you were assigned to go to for support?
    a. What support did you receive?

8. What was helpful in easing your transition to the United States?
    a. What trainings did you receive?

9. In which areas do you wish you received more support?
    a. What didn't work well?

10. What specific suggestions do they have for both future trainings and for other employees of the same company who will have this experience in the future?

11. What advice would you give to foreign-born employees who are transferred within their organizations to the United States?

12. What are the differences in policies and procedures?
    a. Who communicated this to you and how?

13. On a scale of 1-5, with a 1 being absolutely not, 5 being absolutely yes, please mark the appropriate number for the following questions:

    a. There were clearly defined processes and procedures in place to facilitate my transfer
    b. There was an acculturation process upon arriving in the United States
    c. I had enough information prior to my move to the United States
    d. My expectations aligned with the information I received
    e. I felt supported through the physical part of moving
    f. There was someone at the company in the United States I felt I could go to talk about things that were on my mind
    g. There was/were information/activities my company provided me to orient to living in the United States
    h. I felt my company did a great job in facilitating my transfer

Results

Question	Trevor	Gisele	Sarah	Frank	David	Lindsey	Average Score
a	4	2	3	5	4	5	3.83
b	5	1	2	1	3	2	2.33
c	3	3	3	5	4	3	3.5
d	4	2	2	4	4	4	3.33
e	5	1	4	5	5	5	4.17
f	4	2	4	3	3	1	2.83
g	4	1	2.5	2	5	1	2.58
h	4	3	3	5	4	4	3.83
Average score	4.13	1.88	2.94	3.75	4	3.13	

Appendix D: Interview Guide – Human resource professionals

Name:
Gender identity:
Job title:
Job description
Company:
Location of your office (city, state):
Number of years in this role:

1. What is your role in facilitating the transfer for foreign-born employees to your United States office?
   a. What is your office's role?

2. What are the processes and procedures in place for transferring foreign-born employees to the United States within your organization?

3. What are the processes and procedures for acculturating foreign-born employees to the United States within your organization?

4. What kind of support do you provide foreign-born employees who transfer to the United in the following areas:
   a. Housing
   b. Obtaining driver license
   c. Obtaining social security number
   d. Setting up a bank account
   e. Food culture (i.e. shopping at grocery stores, eating out vs. eating at home, meal times/sizes, etc.)
   f. Establishing social networks
   g. For family members
   h. Where else do you provide support?

5. Who do the foreign-born employees go to when they have questions regarding:
   a. Compensation
   b. Benefits (i.e. health insurance, retirement)
   c. Relocation (i.e. finding housing)
   d. Social-emotional issues

6. What do you feel your company does really well in easing the transition of foreign-born employees to your office in the United States?

7. What areas do you feel your company/office can do better in supporting this transition?

8. On a scale of 1-5, with a 1 being absolutely not, 5 being absolutely yes, please mark the appropriate number for the following questions:

    a. There are clearly defined processes and procedures in place to facilitate a transfer for foreign-born employees to my office
    b. There is an acculturation process for foreign-born employees upon arriving in the United States
    c. Foreign-born employees receive enough information prior to moving to the United States
    d. My office supports foreign-born employees who are transferred through the physical part of moving
    e. There is someone at my company in the United States where transferred foreign-born employees can go to talk about things that are on their mind
    f. There is information/activities provided to help foreign-born employees who are transferred to orient to living in the United States
    g. Our office/company does a great job in facilitating the transfer of foreign-born employees to the United States

Results

Question	John	Roy (pre-acquisition)*	Roy (post – acquisition)**	Total Average
a	3	3	5	3.67
b	1	2	2	1.67
c	2	3.5	3.5	3
d	4	2	4.5	3.5
e	3	2	4	3
f	1	2	3	2
g	2	2	5	3
Total average	2.26	2.36	3.86	

* This is before Roy's company was acquired, pre-2012
** This was after Roy's company was acquired, post-2012

Note – The third research participant in this category was involved with onboarding foreign-born employees already in the United States and thus was not asked these questions as part of this study.

Appendix E: Interview Guide – Intercultural trainers

Name:
Gender identity:
Job title:
Job description:
Company:
Number of years in this role:

1. How did you come to be an intercultural trainer?
   a. Personal and professional background

2. What is your philosophy as an intercultural trainer?

3. Tell us about the work you do with corporations?

4. What are the areas of support that are essential for individuals (and their families) moving into a new environment, personally and professionally?

5. Who should be responsible for onboarding/orienting foreign-born professionals to their lives in the United States?
   a. What kind of training should they have?

6. What are some best practices for orienting/onboarding an individual to a new cultural environment?

7. What suggestions do you have for creating an onboarding program for foreign-born employees who are transferred to the United States?

8. In your opinion, what are some common mistakes that corporations make in not building an inclusive and supportive working environment?

Appendix F: Cultural-Context Inventory

Instructions: For each of the following twenty items, circle 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 to indicate your tendencies and preferences *in a work situation.*

	Hardly ever		Sometimes		Almost always
1. When communicating, I tend to use a lot of facial expressions, hand gestures, and body movements rather than rely mostly on words.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I pay more attention to the context of a conversation—who said what and under what circumstances—than I do to the words.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When communicating, I tend to spell things out quickly and directly rather than talk around and add to the point.	1	2	3	4	5
4. In an interpersonal disagreement, I tend to be more emotional than logical and rational.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I tend to have a small, close circle of friends rather than a large, but less close circle of friends.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When working with others, I prefer to get the job done first and socialize afterward rather than socialize first and then tackle the job.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I would rather work in a group than by myself.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I believe rewards should be given for individual accomplishments rather than for group accomplishments	1	2	3	4	5
9. I describe myself in terms of my accomplishments rather than in terms of my family and relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I prefer sharing space with others to having my own private space.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I would rather work for someone who maintains authority and functions for the good of the group than work for someone who allows a lot of autonomy and individual decision-making.	1	2	3	4	5

12. I believe it is more important to t be on time
than to let other concerns take priority.   1   2   3   4   5

13. I prefer working on one thing at a time to
working on a variety of things at once.   1   2   3   4   5

14. I generally set a time schedule and keep to it
rather than leave things unscheduled and go with
the flow.   1   2   3   4   5

15. I find it easier to work with someone who is
fast and wants to see immediate results than to
work with someone who is slow and wants to   1   2   3   4   5
consider all the facts.

16. In order to learn about something, I tend to
consult many sources of information rather than
go to the one best authority.   1   2   3   4   5

17. In figuring out problems, I prefer focusing on
the whole situation to focusing on specific parts or
taking one step at a time.   1   2   3   4   5

18. When tackling a new task, I would rather
figure it out on my own by experimentation than
follow someone else's example or demonstrations.   1   2   3   4   5

19. When making decisions, I consider my likes
and dislikes, not just the facts.   1   2   3   4   5

20. I prefer having tasks and procedures explicitly
defined to having a general idea of what has to be
done.   1   2   3   4   5

Halverson, C.B. (2008). Social identity group and individual behavior. In C.B.
        Halverson & S.A Tirmizi. (Eds.), *Effective multicultural teams: Theory and
        practice* (p. 39-41). New York, NY: Springer.

Appendix G: Cultural-Context Inventory Scoring Sheet

Instructions: Transfer the circled numbers to the appropriate blanks provided below. Then add the numbers in each column to obtain your totals for High Context and Low Context.

High Context (HC)	Low Context (LC)
1. _____	3. _____
2. _____	6. _____
4. _____	8. _____
5. _____	9. _____
7. _____	12._____
10._____	13._____
11._____	14._____
16._____	15._____
17._____	18._____
19._____	20._____
Total_____	Total_____

Subtract your smaller total from your larger total using one of the equations below. This will give you either a high context score of a low context score. If your two totals are equal, your score is zero

_____ High Context Score   _____ Low Context Score

- _____ Low Context Score   - _____ High Context Score

_____

_____ High Context Score   _____ Low Context High Con

Halverson, C.B. (2008). Social identity group and individual behavior. In C.B. Halverson & S.A Tirmizi. (Eds.), *Effective multicultural teams: Theory and practice* (p. 39-41). New York, NY: Springer.

Appendix H: Career Values

From the list below, circle the top 10 professional values that you hold

Advancement	Friendships	Practicality
Adventure	Fun and humor	Precision work
Aesthetics	Group and team	Profit gain
Affiliation	Help others	Public contact
Artistic creativity	Help society	Recognition
Challenging problems	Higher earnings anticipated	Security
Change and variety	Honesty and integrity	Spirituality
Community	Independence	Stability
Competition	Influence people	Status
Creative expression	Intellectual status	Steep learning curve
Creativity	Job tranquility	Structure and predictability
Diversity	Knowledge	Supervision
Environment	Location	Tradition
Exercise competence	Make decisions	Work alone
Excitement	Moral fulfillment	Work life balance
Family	Personnel safety	Work on frontier of knowledge
Fast pace	Physical challenge	Work with others
Freedom (time)	Power and authority	

*Adopted from Knowdell Career Values Worksheet

From these circled 10 values, list the top five in order.
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Appendix I: De-stressors

Make a list of the top activities that you enjoy doing to de-stress.
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Below are a few examples:

Art (Painting/drawing)	Going out to dinner	Reading
Bicycling	Going to the movies	Running
Cooking	Hiking	Spending time with family
Dancing	Playing an instrument	Swimming
Drinks with friends	Playing team sports	Walking

Appendix J: Things to cover on Day 1

Office orientation – Buddy	US 101 – Human Resources
Cover arrival/departure norms	Discuss holiday/vacation time
Learn how to contact IT department	Emergency contacts
Cover lunch time etiquette	Finalize paper-work
Tour of office (bathrooms, break room, office supplies, etc.)	Insurance
Transportation options to and from work	Taxes

Appendix K: Destination Services Timeline

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4 and on
• Tour of neighborhood • Identify grocery stores to shop		• Set up social security number • Bank account • Make appointment for driver license • Help with accommodation as needed	Help with accommodation as needed

Appendix L: Staffing

Buddy	Cross-cultural awareness coach	Destination services	HR	Therapist
Tour of the office	High context versus low-context	Housing	Main point of contact	Adjustment to the United States
Office work style/	Safe space to talk	Social security number	Logistics of the move	Family therapy (if necessary)
	Answer questions	Bank account	Community	
	Teaching Western communication skills	Driver license		

Appendix M: Survey for foreign born employees

To be administered prior to foreign born transfer arriving in the United States

1. On a scale of 1-5, with a 1 being not at all, 5 being absolutely yes, please mark the appropriate number for the following questions:
   a. How useful were the following activities in preparing you for your move? (Please comment where appropriate)
      i. Self reflection activities (overall)
         1. CCI
         2. Values list
         3. De-stressors
         4. Insights
   b. Human resources (overall)
      i. Discussing logistics
      ii. Introducing support team

To be administered 1 month after arrival of the foreign born employee

1. On a scale of 1-5, with a 1 being terrible, 5 being excellent, please mark the appropriate number for the following questions:
   a. How was the support you received/are receiving the following areas?
      i. Logistics (finding housing, setting up bank account, getting a driver license, etc.)
      ii. Adjusting to the neighborhood (knowing where to shop, get food, do laundry, etc.)
      iii. Establishing social networks
      iv. Social emotional support
      v. Communication
   b. Overall, how would you rate the support you've received during your transfer?

2. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being not valuable at all, 5 being extremely valuable, how would you rate the following in terms of helping you adapt to working and living in the United States?
   a. Office orientation
   b. US 101
   c. Insights activities
   d. Support from Destination services
   e. Cross cultural awareness coach
   f. Work with buddy
   g. Human resources check-ins
   h. Please comment

3. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being never and 5 being all the time, how often do you reference the following items?

      a. CCI
      b. Values list
      c. De-stressors
      d. Insights
      e. Please comment

4. What areas do you feel you need more support?

To be administered 3 months after arrival of the foreign born employee

1. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all and 5 being extremely, please rate the following in terms of helpfulness:
      a. Buddy
      b. Cross-cultural awareness coach
      c. Human Resources
      d. Communication coach
      e. Therapist
      f. Please comment

2. Please list on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being never and 5 being all the time, how often do you reference the following items:
      a. CCI
      b. Values list
      c. De-stressors
      d. Insights
      e. Please comment

3. What areas do you wish you had more support?

To be administered 6 months after arrival of the foreign born employee

1. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all and 5 being extremely, please rate the following in terms of helpfulness:
      a. Buddy
      b. Cross-cultural awareness coach
      c. Human Resources
      d. Communication Coach
      e. Therapist
      f. Please comment

2. Which of the above do you feel you don't need anymore (if any)?

3. Please list on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being never and 5 being all the time, how often do you reference the following items:
      a. CCI
      b. Values list

       c. De-stressors
       d. Insights
       e. Please comment
4. What areas do you wish you had more support?

To be administered 12 months after arrival of the foreign born employee

1. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all and 5 being extremely, please rate the following in terms of helpfulness
       a. Buddy
       b. Cross-cultural awareness coach
       c. Human Resources
       d. Communication Coach
       e. Therapist

2. Which of the above do you feel you don't need anymore (if any)?

3. Please list on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being never and 5 being all the time, how often do you reference the following items:
       a. CCI
       b. Values list
       c. De-stressors
       d. Insights
       e. Please comment

4. What areas do you wish you had more support?

Appendix N: Survey for Human Resources

To be administered prior to foreign born transfer arriving in the United States

1. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all, 5 being extremely, how productive did you find your conversations with the foreign born transfer prior to their departure?
   a. Why?

2. What are some of the questions they asked?

3. What other information did you need to better answer their questions?

To be administered 1 month after arrival of the foreign born employee

1. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all, 5 being extremely, how useful are your conversations with the foreign born transfer?
   a. Why?

2. What are some of the questions they ask?

3. What other information do you need to better answer their questions?

To be administered 3 months after arrival of the foreign born employee

1. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all, 5 being extremely, how useful are your conversations with the foreign born transfer?
   a. Why?

2. What are some of the questions they've been asking?

3. What other information did/do you need to better answer their questions?

To be administered 6 months after arrival of the foreign born employee

1. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all, 5 being extremely, how useful are your conversations with the foreign born transfer?
   a. Why?

2. What are some of the questions they ask?

3. What other information do you need to better answer their questions?

To be administered 12 months after arrival of the foreign born employee

1. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all, 5 being extremely, how useful are your conversations with the foreign born transfer?
   a. Why?

2. What are some of the questions they've been asking?

3. What other information did/do you need to better answer their questions?

Appendix O: Survey for Managers

To be administered 1 month after arrival of the foreign born employee

On a scale of 1-5, with a 1 being not at all, 5 being absolutely yes, please mark the appropriate number for the following questions:
1. The transferee has been a productive member of our team
   a. Why or why not?

2. There are areas in which the foreign born employee needs extra support.
   a. What are they?

3. What information do you feel the transfer could've had prior to arrival that would help them be a more productive member of your team?

To be administered 3 months after arrival of the foreign born employee

1. On a scale of 1-5, with a 1 being none, 5 being absolutely yes, please mark if the transferee has adjusted fully to working on my team
   a. Why or why not

2. The transferee still struggles in the following areas:

To be administered 6 months after arrival of the foreign born employee

1. On a scale of 1-5, with a 1 being none, 5 being absolutely yes, please mark if the transferee has adjusted fully to working on my team
   a. Why or why not

2. The transferee still struggles in the following areas:

To be administered 12 months after arrival of the foreign born employee

1. Please comment on the areas of growth you've seen in the foreign born transfer, and the areas in which he/she still struggles.