

Responding to Reluctant Participants



“I can't take time away from work”

Explain to them:

- The program is designed to be time saving (or increase productivity) by reducing the amount of time they spend... (repairing connections after making a cultural mistake, chasing after people to make deadlines or give you an answer, making decisions or finding the right people to involve, etc)
- This is an official training, part of their work, and the company is very strongly supporting it

Other ideas:

- Show flexibility (non-consecutive days, evenings, weekends)
- Working or shortened lunch
- Let them know you'll build in email or Blackberry breaks
- Spouse and/or children only (last option but can sometimes wow them into getting the employee in later)
- Get commitment to 1st day with 2nd day as an option (but be sure to not give away the most valued parts on that first day!)

“I don't want to take the kids out of school”

Explain to them:

- Schools often give excused absences for Intercultural training, especially international schools
- Program speeds the transition for the children (give examples)
- Helps to build excitement as a family by... (learning together, creating a shared experience, etc.)

Other ideas:

- Find out the reasoning behind this- Is it a concern about school or the kids or the transferee?
- How are the kids doing now?
- Show flexibility (non-consecutive days, evenings, weekends)
- Speak about your own experiences with Third Culture Kids if appropriate
- Reference specific interests of the children as a 'hook' (What are some of the great activities in the area? If you know the child has specific interests, use that)

“I've already been overseas”

Find out:

- Have they had a CCT program before?
- In what capacity did they travel overseas before?
- How long was their stay? Where did they go? How long ago was that?
- How was that last experience? Did they enjoy it?

Explain to them:

- Program is designed for experienced expatriates



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- Each assignment is unique (location, life stage, family dynamics, job responsibilities, etc.)
- Specific topics can be covered that are sure to be different on this assignment might include:
 - Global leadership skills, virtual communication with team, multi-cultural team interactions, children's transition, life stages, key role of spouse, daily life
- Living in and traveling to a place are very different

Other ideas:

- Use specific interests as 'hook'
- Use their experience as leverage to sell the program

“I want to save the company money”

Explain to them:

- Company recognizes value of program and has decided to keep it in the package of benefits despite budget cuts
- Global companies need employees with global skills so this shows their interest in investing in the transferee's future
- Family adjustment is a key factor in success of assignments and their company know this program has been proven to reduce the amount of money lost due to failed assignments
- Expense of training versus ROI for employee, their family and company
- Able to leverage learning in future situations so it's a long-term investment
- Company is supporting you to settle down as smoothly as possible

“We have been doing just fine”

Find out:

- How do they define “fine”? We want them to be doing “excellent”!
- Do they feel that their experience has been enriching?
- How are they experiencing the culture?

Explain to them:

- We want to help understand the “unseen”
- Months on assignment may not be indicative of overall success
- Adjustment cycle is constant
- Can cover anything they'd like including a review of recent encounters to troubleshoot or enhance experiences
- Correct/repair damaged relationships
- Reiterate overall benefits

“The two countries are so similar” / “They speak the same language”

Explain to them:

- Share statistics: “25% of assignments between the U.K. and U.S. end early.”
- Sharing a language doesn't mean they share a culture

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- Language is only the tip of the cultural iceberg (give examples of what they may not be aware of)
- Human Resources values employees who have done the international program to become more global
- People who minimize the differences of same language cultures tend to have a very difficult time (give an example of why)

Other ideas:

- Find out what they think is similar and point out what is different
- What would empower their experience?

Unresponsive

- CALL- This is the absolutely best tactic if you have a phone number
- Add URGENT to the email subject heading (but not the 1st one!)
- Contact spouse if you have their contact information
- Ask HR, 3rd party contact, etc., to help
- Call the main line of the office they might be at to have a receptionist direct you to them (may also put you in contact with coworkers or manager, but be careful with this!)

“We had a cultural program on our last assignment”

See “We’ve already been overseas” for more ideas

Find out:

- When was that assignment?
- Where did they go? For how long?
- What type of training was it? Was it helpful?
- What would they do differently on this assignment?

Explain to them:

- This is an excellent start to this latest program
- Different assignments and locations have different needs
- The program could be shortened since they’ve already learned the basics of cultural concepts, etc.
- Training is customized to destination and current, specific needs

“I can Google it” / “I can talk to Mike who was there last year”

- That would take a long time to filter through and get what is really needed
- Internet information may not be reliable
- It’s great for information but provides no opportunity for one-on-one coaching
- This is not just information; this provides greater understanding of values, norms, behaviors, etc.
- The training is customized to exactly what they need assistance with, and some things they may not even know they need help with. Google can’t offer that.
- Having the information and knowing how to use it are different things
- Google is banned in... [China]