

The Expatriate's Handbook

Getting the Best out of Overseas Employment

"The field of overseas employment is a complicated one, with many traps and pitfalls." Bill Twinn and Patrick Burns, two personnel practitioners, have put together their experience in The Expatriate's Handbook to assist potential and existing expatriates, as well as companies with little experience in this area.

This guide will be most useful to the first-time expatriate considering a new assignment. You can start with evaluating whether you qualify as a good expatriate candidate, move on to the pre-assignment to do checklist, identify the main elements of the contract, learn about remuneration methods, benefits, and possible perks, get an overview of family-related issues which may surface, and get a glimpse of what it may be like to return home after the assignment is completed. Yes, for the potential expatriate, this book will help you make a more informed decision regarding that new assignment opportunity.

It should be noted that the authors have used the term expatriate as applied to the employee from the northern hemisphere or Australasia - probably a professional - working away from his home base where the contract will have a defined or implied time schedule, after which the expatriate is expected to move on or return to the home country.

The book combines an interesting mix of subjects such as specific areas an expatriate contract should address, emotional stages of expatriate life, even a chapter on kids and pets. However, the majority of chapters cover aspects related to remuneration and benefits, and here many sample calculations and examples are provided to help the reader through a bit of number crunching. In addition to the handbook style informative text, short "real-life" anecdotes supplement many chapters in order to highlight various points raised.

Touching upon practically all the issues related to an expatriate assignment, from the initial consideration of an assignment in a foreign country to finally returning back to the home country, the issues are presented in a short, concise manner. The authors do not attempt to go into any great detail with regard to them and state

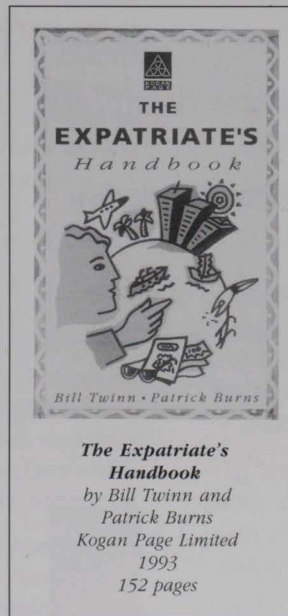
upfront: "If one of our sections triggers off some detailed questions, there are plenty of information sources that may be pursued." They do, however, provide a number of useful detailed checklists such as the pre-assignment checklist, arrival checklist, environmental factors to consider when comparing a foreign location, key questions on housing, and key questions on insurance.

According to the authors, "expatriate assignments come in various shapes and sizes" with the vast majority of arrangements falling into one of the following five classifications. The authors classify

them as the Out and Back, The Global Railroad, The Mercenary, The Rotator, and The Permanent, and outline the typical circumstances which create the need for each of the categories of assignment. In addition to prospects of career development and interesting foreign travel, motivation to work abroad is most likely that it is financially attractive to do so. But the authors caution: "...never forget that a market exists for expatriates as with every other commodity, so don't price yourself out of it."

As the business world heads towards global markets, and international experience becomes a much sought after commodity, it appears that a growing number of Canadians are taking their own initiative in looking for work overseas, and the expatriate type packages are only to be admired from a distance. But should the opportunity arise for an expatriate assignment, this book provides a valuable insight into all the aspects to consider before embarking on such an arrangement.

For companies considering the need for introducing expatriate staff, this book provides a good beginning to understanding the elements to consider in structuring the expatriate package and the potential costs involved. ♦



Review by Lena Feng