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Global Nomads:
Assessing the "Ideal" Expats for Corporate Expatriation

Introduction

Global Nomads are the product of uniquely modern circumstances, left navigating the margins between cultures by frequent international mobility and cultural dissonance experienced during crucial developmental years. While this marginality is frequently conceptualized detrimental to adjustment in adult life, Global Nomads are also capable of a "constructive marginality" that allows them to function as cultural "insider-outsiders." This unique positioning leads to the development of cross-cultural skills and resilient personality characteristics that serve as valuable career capital in the globalized labor market. At the same time, multinational corporations (MNCs) have struggled to be competitive in foreign markets due to challenges with corporate expatriate staffing. Global Nomads are seen as a solution – yet recruitment is just one phase in addressing staffing challenges, and current cost-cutting thinking is reductive. If MNCs hope to maximize corporate returns on expatriation, they must consider the individual returns on Global Nomads' non-material assets in terms of recruitment, performance, and retention.

Positioning Global Nomads

This research paper will employ the term Global Nomad to refer to an individual who spent a significant part of their development residing outside of their parents' home culture due to a parent's career. While the term Adult Third Culture Kid (ATCKs) is prevalent in the cited sources, the term Global Nomad better highlights this population's international mobility and is less infantilizing of the mid-career adults at the center of this paper's discussion. Though their descriptions are innately linked, Global Nomads have already undergone the nuanced identity

formation and cultural adaptation processes that dominate discussion of their younger counterparts, Third Culture Kids (TCKs) (Kano Podolsky 2005). These processes must be understood to grasp the returns Global Nomads and MNCs might squeeze from the margins between cultures.

Defining Third Culture Kids

TCKs, and by extension Global Nomads, are not to be conflated with other categories of Cross-Culture Kids (CCK) that "lived in—or meaningfully interacted with—two or more cultural environments for a significant period of time during developmental years." (Van Reken and Bethel 2005) The distinctive characteristics of TCKs relate to parent careers and the child's associated international mobility. Useem first noted the eponymous *third culture* in the 1970s while observing the children of internationally mobile families in India (Van Reken 2010). These families were often in the host country due to a parent's career, *not* to immigrate permanently. Useem identified the home culture of the parents as the *first culture* and the culture of the family's host country as the *second culture*. Children of these internationally mobile families did not fully identify with their parents' home culture nor their host country's culture, instead creating a culture between home and host cultures that Useem identified as the *third culture*.

The definition of these "Third Culture Kids" offered by Useem described them as "children who accompanied their parents into another culture" (Van Reken 2010; Useem and Cottrell 1993). Other researchers elaborated on this definition to better reflect increasing economic globalization and normalized global mobility resulting in a growing population of internationally mobile children (Van Reken 2010; McNulty et al 2013). In keeping with Useem's inspirations in India, current research highlights international mobility *due to parent career(s)* as characteristic of TCKs and Global Nomads (Bonebright 2010; Selmer and Lauring 2014; Caselius and Suutari 2023;

Caselius and Mäkelä 2022) This characteristic emphasizes the more temporary nature of this population's residencies in host cultures as compared to immigrants. Additionally, it distinguishes the reasons for temporary residencies from those of displaced populations like refugees and insinuates the typically more privileged positions of TCK parents. According to Hervy (2009), TCKs tend to fall into one of four categories based on parent careers:

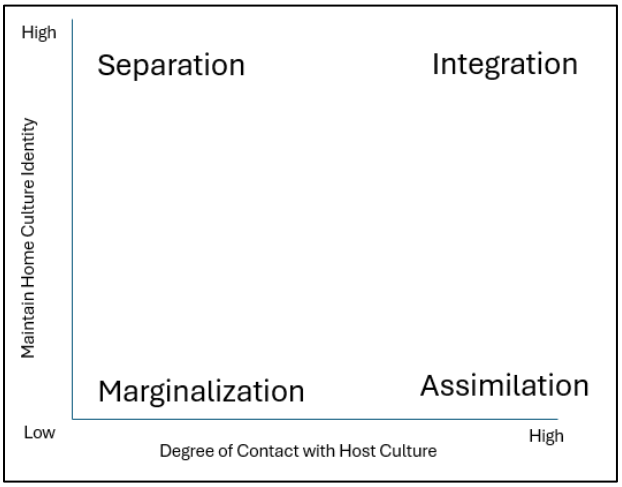
- children whose parents are in the military;
- children of diplomats;
- children whose parents are in missionary or nonprofit work; and
- children whose parents live abroad for business

These categories will guide discussion of parental influence on career choices among Global Nomads.

Pollock refined the definition of TCKs to individuals having spent ''a significant part of their developmental years outside the parents' passport culture(s).'' (Van Reken 2010; Pollock 1989) This definition firmly plants TCKs under the umbrella of CCKs and discounts individuals who only acquire international experience in adulthood. Pollock's definition instead emphasizes the "developmental tasks of childhood," like identity formation and building cultural competencies (Van Reken 2010). These tasks are linked with the characteristic strengths of TCKs (and therefore Global Nomads) and the challenges they continue to face with "belonging" even in their adult careers.

Acculturation

Figure 1. Berry's Acculturation Model



Evidence suggests identity challenges faced by Global Nomads are not necessarily performance deficits (Selmer et al 2022; Caselius and Suutari 2023), but the cultural positioning of Global Nomads and their third culture requires further framing to understand their career capital on the global market. Global Nomads are unique, as they do not fit neatly into accepted categories of acculturation – the process by which newcomers learn and adapt to a culture. There are four types of acculturation strategies entailing different combinations of contact with a host culture and maintenance of home culture identity (Berry 1997). See Figure 1. The assumption of singular "home" and "host" cultures complicates any discussion of Global Nomads given their internationally mobile upbringings (Abe 2018).

Integration and marginalization approximate a range of adaptation outcomes experienced by Global Nomads. Integration, whereby an individual has high contact with a host culture while maintaining their home culture identity, is associated with development of hybrid identities. In examining the dimensions of Global Nomads' multicultural experiences, Abe (2018) cited "the extent to which the person feels at home and also capable of functioning as an insider in more than one culture" as a more reliable indicator of biculturalism than cultural exposure to or professed identification with two cultures. Abe's findings supported a link between duration of stay abroad and higher levels of biculturalism among Global Nomads. By contrast, marginalization is linked to alienation from home and host cultures. Global Nomads commonly report feeling "out of sync"

and "uprooted," which is supported by Abe's findings of a positive correlation between lacking a sense of belonging and the number of countries lived in before high school. These demonstrate the ability of Global Nomads to exist simultaneously inside and outside cultures, operating at the margins.

Marginality

Global Nomads are described as having "relationships with all of cultures, while not having ownership of any" (Hervy 2009; Pollock and Van Reken 2001). While not strictly marginalized, Global Nomads nonetheless deal in marginality, which entails occupying the periphery between cultures and not being embedded in any culture; this describes third cultures created by Global Nomads quite closely (Fitzsimmons et al 2013). Marginal individuals often function as "insider-outsiders," "[experiencing] ambiguous belonging at the periphery of one or more groups" while also being able to observe and question what embedded insiders might take for granted (Fitzsimmons et al 2013).

This tension between cultures – between the marginal individual and cultures – is linked to the development of cognitive complexity. Considering identity's role in mediating information processing, affect regulation, social perceptions, and interaction strategies, a marginal identity precipitates the development of coping skills necessary to process "contradictory and diverse norms and values" received from multiples cultures (Fitzsimmons et al 2013). Marginality's worst outcomes, including stress and social isolation, lead to poor social and professional performance (Fitzsimmons et al 2013; Bonebright 2010). "Constructive marginality," on the other hand, enables Global Nomads to "integrate various cultural frames of reference into a whole and productive sense of self" (Bonebright 2010; Fail et al 2004).

Corporate Expatriate Staffing Challenges

MNCs are concerned about their own margins – profit margins, that is. MNCs are increasingly pressured to be competitive in international markets while managing costs. Staffing positions in overseas subsidiaries, particularly leadership positions, is a major hurdle as expatriate assignments are estimated to cost MNCs substantial amounts in time and money each year (Lauring et al 2019; Nash 2020; McNulty et al 2013). These costs demand a high return on investment (ROI) by way of expatriate performance while on assignment, but ROI on expatriation is difficult to measure (Westropp et al 2016; McNulty et al 2013).

MNCs also frequently lack the necessary international human resources management capabilities to appropriately evaluate expatriate suitability and performance or to support the development of expatriate talent (Westropp et al 2016). These challenges can be better understood by examining the two types of expatriates fulfilling corporate assignments.

Assigned Expatriates

Assigned expatriates (AEs) (as in, assigned by MNCs to foreign subsidiaries) are typically "mission critical" for the operations of parent companies. Therefore, AEs tend to be selected from the higher management levels of the company. These assignments tend to be quite costly, in terms of both time and money required for training and preparing AEs. Additional resources must also be allocated to the AE's accompanying family. (Selmer et al 2022)

Pre-expatriation training and ongoing support resources for expatriate employees and their families are linked to assignment success, so the resources are not necessarily wasted (Bonebright 2010). It is still understandable that MNCs would seek lower costs where possible to maintain competitive market advantages. Notably, if AEs have a positive experience with their assignment, they may take the initiative to seek similar career opportunities (Selmer et al 2022). Thus, an AE could become a Self-Initiated Expatriate (SIE) during their career.

Self-Initiated Expatriates

In addition to initiating their own expatriation by deliberating seeking out job positions in foreign countries, Self-Initiated Expatriates differ from AEs in several ways that enable MNCs to potentially reduce costs on training and resource support. For a start, SIEs are more likely to have prior international experience than AEs. By extension, they are often more proficient in the host country language than AEs, though this may be due to SIEs having the opportunity to select expatriate positions in countries where they already hold a linguistic advantage. Theoretically, MNCs may be able to save on cross-cultural skills and language training by hiring SIEs with prior international experience and relevant language skills. (Selmer et al 2022)

SIEs are often motivated to seek expatriate positions due to a personal interest in international mobility, though the reputation of host countries has been found to be important to their decision-making. They are likely to seek additional opportunities to work internationally and remain mobile. Consequently, SIEs, eager for international opportunities, are more common across all organization levels and tend to bear most costs of expatriation themselves – yet another boon to potential MNC employers. (Selmer et al 2022)

Yet SIEs are also sometimes motivated to seek expatriate positions by poor employment situations in their passport country or negative past employment experiences (Selmer et al 2022; McNulty et al 2013). SIEs are noted to have "more stable" career orientations, with their career progression being sustained over the long term, as compared to AEs (Selmer et al 2022). These patterns implicate the behavior of SIEs when dissatisfied with management decisions by parent companies; they are willing and equipped to leave positions and companies that fail to meet their expectations. Overall, SIEs exercise more career ownership than AEs, who are more reliant on

parent companies for resources and support on assignments, thus experiencing more corporate ownership over their careers (Selmer et al 2022; McNulty et al 2013).

These contrasts between AEs and SIEs lend insight into the challenges of corporate expatriation staffing. MNCs may reduce costs on training and support by hiring SIEs, who frequently come pre-equipped with international experience and language skills. However, because SIEs are not as reliant on parent companies and are so self-motivated, MNCs may struggle to retain these skilled expatriate employees in the long-term. But how does an MNC target skilled expatriate talent for recruitment in the first place?

Global Nomads as Corporate Expatriates

Global Nomads have been idealized as the potential answer to international staffing challenges faced by MNCs (Selmer and Lam 2004; Bonebright 2010). Their international experience has equipped them with cross-cultural skills and resilient personality profiles that inspire hope among MNCs that training and support costs may be reduced by recruiting Global Nomads for expatriate assignments (Lauring et al 2019; Abe 2018). The value of Global Nomads to MNCs can be understood by framing their strengths and challenges as cultural insider-outsiders as career capital (CC).

Career Capital

Career Capital Theory (CCT) is based on three "ways of knowing": *knowing-why*, *knowing-how*, and *knowing-whom* (Caselieus and Suutari 2023). These "ways of knowing" serve as assets impacting an individual's long-term career success.

Knowing-Why

Knowing-why is linked with an individual's beliefs, values, and motivations (Caselieus and Suutari 2023). For example, an employee with a high degree of self-confidence rates high in

knowing-why. Research finds that Global Nomads see themselves as "exceptionally capable, expat talent" (Westropp et al 2016). Global Nomads tend to highlight their international experience and social skills in job applications due to the high value they place on their "unique international capabilities" (Caselius and Mäkelä 2022; Caselius and Suutari 2023).

Knowing-why also correlates with high levels of stress tolerance (Caselieus and Suutari 2023). Studies indicate that Global Nomads are especially adept at managing their own non-work transitions thanks to frequent international mobility during their developmental years (Westropp et al 2016; McNulty et al 2013); change is an "ironic constant" for TCKs (Bonebright 2010). This characteristic is valuable among corporate expatriates since stress stemming from non-work transitions can negatively impact work performance in the initial weeks of assignments (McNulty et al 2013).

These characteristics among Global Nomads stem from the coping skills they developed as insider-outsiders to deal with uncertainty (Fitzsimmons et al 2013). Due to their international mobility, Global Nomads became accustomed to being in situations where "response mechanisms" they previously relied upon are "non-functional in a foreign setting"; they must learn to cope with this uncertainty and quickly adapt new mechanisms (Lauring et al 2019). As this process repeats, Global Nomads become more adept at it and begin to integrate the various cultural frameworks they encounter into a complex worldview that enables them to navigate situations confidently. Research also indicates that Global Nomads show greater maturity and adjustment capabilities as they age, and their resilience may "offset" age-related declines in cognitive flexibility (Abe 2018).

Knowing -How

Knowing-how is linked with possession of "flexible" skillsets and experience. This may include languages, social skills, coping skills, technical skills (Caselius and Suutari 2023).

Knowing-how represents the cross-cultural skills and knowledge of international markets thought to make Global Nomads such valuable expatriate talent.

Global Nomads are certainly associated with multilingualism, with fluency in up to four or five languages not being uncommon (Caselius and Suutari 2023). Provided they possess the appropriate language proficiency, Global Nomads are also quite capable when socializing with host county locals and continue to benefit from such interactions, which allow them to "put into practice" the cross-cultural skills developed in their youth (Selmer and Lauring 2019; Lauring et al 2019). Language and cross-cultural skills are highly valuable among corporate expatriates, as discussed with SIEs.

Other professional skill sets, especially in comparison with non-Global Nomad SIEs, furnish more mixed outcomes. Research suggests that there is no significant difference between Global Nomads and Non-Global Nomad SIEs in their abilities to adjust to performance expectations, supervisor responsibilities and specific job responsibilities. Rather, the difference was seen in prior experience, as "there was no association between neither time in host location nor previous time as expatriate and [interaction and job adjustment]" for Global Nomads. (Selmer and Lauring 2014)

Global Nomad do hold a definitive edge over non-Global Nomad SIEs in their ability to integrate into daily activities in a host country (Selmer and Lauring 2014). This edge supports the thinking that Global Nomads do not require the same resources as non-Global Nomad expatriates to support their non-work transition. Global Nomads might still benefit from more specific technical training or country-specific training, such as on local history (Westropp et al 2016). This may be especially applicable in industries that are not as standardized across international markets (Lauring and Selmer 2014). As with their resilience, research indicates that TCKs' cross-cultural

skills are "long lasting, if not permanent," meaning they are not at significant risk of losing their cross-cultural abilities as they age (Selmer and Lauring 2014).

Knowing-Whom

Knowing-whom is linked with an individual's reputation and networks. Reputation and networks are not restricted to work environments, as relationships within local communities and from past schooling also contribute to career capital (Caselieus and Suutari 2023). This form of CC is not at the forefront of MNC considerations for expatriate staffing or Global Nomads as a labor pool. Global Nomad are usually "self-centered" (as opposed to organization oriented), but research indicates that Global Nomads can and do develop a sense of belonging – with people (Westropp et al 2016).

Global Nomads frequently relate a common experience of losing friends growing up (Hartman 2022); this has not hampered their social skills, as Global Nomads are adept at building extensive and highly valued social networks around the world (Caselius and Mäkelä 2022). Building networks with locals allows Global Nomads to "bridge their socio-cultural adjustments as they perceive necessary" (Westropp et al 2016). This serves as another example of how Global Nomads' ability to navigate the liminal space between cultures translates into real job skills. Global Nomads themselves see their international networks as a strength that may be leveraged in job seeking (Caselius and Mäkelä 2022). These networking skills could prove advantageous to MNCs in contexts where interaction with host country locals is crucial to assignment success.

Retention remains a major concern for MNCs and represents one of the most significant reservations MNCs hold in targeting Global Nomads for recruitment. In this way, their collective reputation on the global market is not stellar. Despite their "chameleon"-like adjustment capabilities, Global Nomads have been described as "rootless and restless" due to their lack of

belonging to or ownership over any cultures (Westropp et al 2016; Pollock and Van Reken 2001). Global Nomads might favor self-initiated expatriation because it offers greater ownership over their careers than assigned expatriation. Given their perceived lack of ownership over any one culture, managing their international career trajectory could satisfy a need for agency among Global Nomads. If MNCs accommodate this need for agency, they may be able to entice and take full advantage of interested Global Nomads.

Interest in Corporate Expatriation

Research indicates that Global Nomads not only view themselves as excellent job candidates given their cross-cultural skills, but they are also actively interested in careers that enable them to exercise these skills and be international mobile (Nash 2020; Caselius and Mäkelä 2022). Global Nomads appreciate careers that allow them to exercise leadership, expertise, and independence (Bonebright 2010). This interest is strong enough to influence choice of majors in higher education, as Global Nomads frequently select majors likely to lead to international careers (Cottrell 2002; Eakin 1998). In short, Global Nomads are primed for self-initiated expatriation.

Evidence suggests that corporate expatriation assignments with MNCs still may not be attractive to Global Nomads. Their upbringings remain hugely influential, for better and for worse where the interests of MNCs are concerned. Global Nomads raised by parents in human service careers tend to favor similar career paths rather than corporate positions (Bonebright 2010; Hartman 2022); and children of corporate expatriates only constitute a small subpopulation of Global Nomads (Hervy 2009). Conversely, Global Nomads who witnessed expatriate parent stress associated with their international careers report hesitation in choosing an international career at all (Caselius and Mäkelä 2022).

Furthermore, Global Nomads seeking careers that allow them to exercise independence may also be seeking less "collectivist" organization cultures (Bonebright 2010). This aligns with Global Nomads being less organization oriented (Westropp et al 2016). This may immediately prohibit certain corporate positions. Nonetheless, MNCs could benefit from Global Nomad's orientation toward host country locals through selective assignments, among other organizational considerations.

Maximizing Corporate ROI

Research confirms that Global Nomads represent a highly valuable labor pool for MNCs based on their characteristics and career capital (Westropp et al 2016; Caselius and Mäkelä 2022), but MNCs have so far struggled to develop strategies that maximize their ROI on corporate expatriates. Expatriate ROI acts as an indicator to MNCs of the value to be gained from long-term international assignments. McNulty describes this value as being compiled from both financial and non-financial costs and benefits of international assignments to the firm, "as appropriate to the assignment's purpose." (McNulty et al 2013)

ROI can differ between the perspectives of MNCs and the expatriate employee. While expatriate ROI to the company may be defined as corporate ROI, there is also individual ROI to consider. Individual ROI is compiled from the same cost-benefit analysis of long-term international assignments, from the employee's perspective. It is linked with individual motivations for accepting international assignments and it drives commitment to assignments, including individual behaviors. (McNulty et al 2013)

Expectations

It is important that MNCs understand the importance of individual expectations as a factor of individual ROI. Expatriate employees often develop a subjective understanding of the terms of

an expatriation assignment between them and their employer. These terms play into expectations that expatriate employees hold for their assignments, which MNCs may meet or leave unmet (McNulty et al 2013). Essentially, motivations lead to expatriate employees developing certain expectations for returns they will receive from their assignment and how the parent company should facilitate such returns. Unmet expectations are linked with (McNulty et al 2013):

- Goal conflict between expatriate employees and employers;
- Outcome uncertainty around international assignments; and
- Diminished employment relationships (often arising from geographic distance and cultural difference)

Unmet expectations are linked with decreases in individual ROI on expatriation. Expatriate employee motivation, engagement, and retention all tend to decrease with unmet expectations. Each of these outcomes is linked with decreases in corporate ROI, as they lead to high corporate turnover and unsuccessful assignment outcomes, costing MNCs additional time and resources with each failure (McNulty et 2013).

Research indicates that compensation, HR management, career management support, and performance management can contribute positively to individual ROI by meeting certain expectations (McNulty et al 2013):

- *Compensation:* Compensation is thought to help attract and retain expatriate talent. However, clarity and consistency in compensation packages may be more important than monetary amounts. Changes in compensation packages (namely, reductions and those occurring during active assignments) are perceived negatively by expatriate employees.
- *HR Management Support:* Relocation and ongoing assignment support from parent company HR is a major concern for expatriate employees. For expatriate employees struggling with their personal, non-work transitions, HR support is seen as especially needed and relevant as their personal struggles impact their professional performance. A

lack of transparency in HR processes is also seen as a major source of frustration for expatriate employees.

- *Career Management Support:* Expatriate employees are frequently concerned about the sustainability of their career progression while on international assignments. There are frequent concerns around their lack of "Plan B." Parent companies failing to "honor promises" regarding future assignments and promotions can make corporate expatriates reactive in their career management and susceptible to competing job offers while on assignment. Expatriate employees report that lack of career management support leads to demotivation to perform, disengagement from assignments, and an unwillingness to "go the extra mile" without a reward.
- *Performance Management:* The major concern for performance management among corporate expatriates is that the complexity of their assignments is not being fully integrated into their performance evaluations. While cross-cultural and language skills are in high demand with MNCs, there is concern that parent companies are undervaluing the difficulty of assignments in terms of hard work and skills that expat employees put in when the time comes to evaluate them.

Yet, above financial motives, career advancement, project results, and desire to be a "good corporate citizen," corporate expatriates commonly cite personal development as a motive for accepting an expatriate assignment, making it a key expectation for MNCs to fulfill. In a work context, personal development is defined as a "purposeful, specifiable and structured activity, which seeks to develop discrete skills or qualities whose effects can be either 'positive', 'negative', or 'transitory'." Personal development may be better understood by employees as "improved awareness and identity" or "development of talent and potential that enhances the quality of life

and contributes to realization of dreams and aspirations." Managers in particular value personal development opportunities available through expatriation, even in circumstances where an assignment may not advance their position within their organization. (Lauring et al 2019)

In the context of Global Nomads, personal development can be tied into the desire for international mobility and opportunities to exercise their cross-cultural and leadership skills. It even highlights the active role that SIEs take in their own career management. SIEs are less reliant on parent companies than AEs, but the drive to enhance their own talents and quality of life helps explain the willingness of SIEs to leave dissatisfactory positions and companies. They are maximizing their individual ROI on their career capital at the expense of corporate ROI.

Given this link between individual ROI and corporate ROI, MNCs must develop strategies to meet expatriate employees' expectations for compensation, HR management, career support management, performance management, and personal development (McNulty et al 2013; Lauring et al 2019; Nash 2020). It is not sufficient to entice Global Nomads at the recruitment phase with promises of international mobility, opportunities to exercise their skills, and a competitive compensation package. Expectations and fulfillment strategies must be considered in the appropriate contexts of expatriate recruitment, performance, and retention. MNCs must be aware that Global Nomads may still require specialized support and resources to maximize returns on assignments, and even then, Global Nomads may not be the most appropriate selection for every expatriate assignment. Even so, all expatriate employees might be able to maximize their individual ROI, and therefore corporate ROI, under the correct conditions.

Recruitment

MNCs might find success reaching Global Nomads as a labor pool by developing recruitment initiatives targeting individuals with international experience and an interest in

personal development. Building relationships with international organizations focused on Global Nomads, like Global Nomads International (GNWA), will enable direct outreach. Partnerships with international schools and higher education institutions will allow MNCs to work with admissions counselors, advisors, and faculty to understand and identify Global Nomads who may become or currently are interested in careers as corporate expatriates (Bonebright 2010). An emphasis should be placed on the opportunity to exercise existing cross-cultural skills and resilient personality traits to appeal to desires for personal development.

While the recruitment of Global Nomads is seen as a potential cost-cutting measure, Global Nomads, and by extension MNCs, would still benefit from tailored training and HR management support in their work transitions. While non-Global Nomad expatriates require broad cross-cultural skills training, research suggests that Global Nomads would benefit from tailored training dealing in technical skills. Technical training becomes more relevant depending on the standardization of industry practices across international borders and cultures. (Lauring et al 2019)

Performance

Context and purpose are important considerations for MNCs when selecting employees for assignment, as even Global Nomads may be better suited to certain types of expatriation assignments over others. Global Nomads might be best suited for assignments where close contact with locals is necessary to meet assignment goals (Lauring et al 2019). Conversely, with appropriate training and HR management involvement in their non-work transition, Non-Global Nomad expatriates may perform job functions just as effectively on assignments involving less frequent interaction with locals as a Global Nomad would have on the same assignment.

In contexts requiring frequent contact with locals, MNCs should incorporate Global Nomads' networking skills into their operational strategies. Expectations for the utilization of

networks should be clearly communicated to Global Nomad expatriates. Furthermore, this unique contribution should be appropriately integrated into performance management to account for the complexity of job functions channeling their role as an insider-outsider (Selmer et al 2022; McNulty et al 2013).

Retention

MNCs can support retention of Global Nomads through the implementation of supportive peer networks within organizations (Bonebright 2010). Global Nomads think highly of their own social skills and teamwork capabilities (Caselius and Suutari 2023); this should be tested with appropriate HR management support. Global Nomads are already adept at building networks. This behavior should be fostered within the company with fellow expatriates and with managers who can help champion Global Nomads' career progression.

MNCs may also take advantage of the "restless and rootless" nature of Global Nomads. Routine expatriate re-assignments and changes in work tasks may hold Global Nomads interest in a company longer and actually increase motivation (Caselieus and Suutari 2023). This would require proactive communication and career management support for Global Nomads, to ensure that employees do not feel blindsided by parent company decisions and can maintain a degree of ownership over their careers and international mobility (McNulty et al 2013). Sustaining stable career progression among expatriate employees across the board, whether assigned or self-initiated, would benefit MNCs in the long-term.

Finally, MNCs should maintain clear and consistent communication regarding compensation with expatriate employees. Compensation itself should remain consistent for the duration of assignments, if possible, in order to conform with expatriate employee expectations (McNulty et al 2013). This will reduce turnover due to dissatisfaction.

Conclusion

Global Nomads have developed career capital relevant to corporate expatriation through their insider-outsider experiences. Interest and motivation are the primary hurdles to MNCs taking full advantage of this valuable labor pool. Measures can be taken to more accurately target this population and appeal to their interest in personal development via international mobility and exercising their skills. However, maximizing returns on performance and ensuring long-term retention will require MNCs to account for employee expectations in their cost-benefit analyses of expatriate assignments.

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