

Case Study 3.3 Andreas Weber's Repatriation

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#### **Executive Summary**

Andreas Weber faces a difficult decision in this case study. He could decide to stay in New York at a job that is proving difficult to maintain because of the toll it is taking on his family and loved ones. Alternatively, he could choose to return to his home country of Germany to a lesser-paid position in a remote area, losing out on all the experience he gained while rising through the ranks of the company during his time in New York (Stall & Mendenhall 2017). This analysis will address the root causes of this toll exacted by the company and how, in the future, they could prevent issues associated with international assignments.

#### **Problem Statement**

From the moment he accepted a promotion that would allow him to work internationally to the moment he was offered a lesser job on his return to Germany, the bank's human resources practices were insufficient to support Andreas in his career changes effectively. His initial entry from Germany to the United States marked an inadequacy on the part of human resources. He was promised a job as a manager but was given a job as a credit analyst instead. Having moved from Germany to take on a management position, this was a blow. Despite this, Andreas made the best of the situation and rose through the ranks to one of five managing posts in the bank over the next eight years (Stall & Mendenhall 2017).

The main and primary issues present in this case are that the company failed to provide adequate training, communication, and spousal support to Andreas and his family. They

repeatedly let him down and did not consider the ramifications of his returning to Germany. He was offered less than his worth and was lied to by the company several times throughout the process.

### **Alternatives**

To better prepare and maintain expatriates, the company must take into consideration several issues that Andreas faced. The bank should implement changes in company policy, so future expatriate employees have the proper training and support to succeed in international assignments.

The first issue addressed is that of communication. A breakdown of communication in the company is two-fold. It is unlikely that Herr Gorner thought he was lying when he told Andreas that the company-wide international leadership program would advance Andreas' career. He most likely felt that human resources would provide all the appropriate training and support for the talented pool of global managers. When Andreas was offered a management position in New York, likely, the person offering him the open position did not have enough information on the job being offered to explain it adequately. There was also a lack of information between the German HR Department and the New York HR department to facilitate Andreas' transfer to the New York bank effectively.

To combat this issue, the company needs to provide proper procedures and policies for communication between departments and managers. Company initiatives should be addressed company-wide and effectively implemented at the department level. For instance, if a policy was in place that required written documentation of the potential job offer and its expectations, Andreas could have reviewed that document and been more informed of his eventual placement. Should that placement not be what was described in the offer document, he would have recourse

and documentation to take to his superiors. However, because Andreas was relying on information passed on by word of mouth, he was not adequately informed before being able to make his initial decision to take the job in New York.

The second issue that should be addressed is the lack of support to the expatriate employee once in the position offered. Andreas faced a multitude of difficulties when entering the US. He struggled to find a home to live in for his family. His wife was not able to secure a work permit, and his children were increasingly becoming more American than German. When he initially took the assignment, Andreas was under the impression his appointment would be a temporary one that would lead to a better position in the corporate structure at home in Germany. It was not his intent to keep his family overseas for an extended period. However, because of the above-mentioned lack of communication, and the lack of support provided by the company, he was forced to make the best of a bad situation.

In the future, the company should implement programs that will assist newly expatriated employees via training and spousal support. Had the company been better prepared for Andreas' arrival, they would have been able to help him in securing housing for himself and his family. They could have implemented programs for expatriate spouses to obtain work visas or appropriate activities. These kinds of programs are vital to job satisfaction for an expatriate employee.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Andreas faces a difficult decision that could have been prevented by changes in communication policies between departments, effective use of documentation, and extended support for the expatriate and their families. His anger and frustration at how he was

treated is justified but could be prevented in future international assignments by implementing effective HR policies. Choosing the right employee to enter into international transfers is also essential. While Andreas likely survived in his initial entry into New York-based solely on his and his wife's adaptability, without support, even the most adaptable employee will suffer.

References

Stall, G.K. & Mendenhall, M.E. (2017) Andreas Weber's Reward for Success in an International Assignment: A Return to an Uncertain Future. *Readings and Cases in International Human Resource Management*. Sixth Edition. Pages 339 -345.