



The Essential Guide To International Relocation

For global organizations, international relocations serve as an important tool to effectively leverage their human capital and strengthen their operations. Just as these companies seek to place the right employee in the right location, they must also look to partner with the right type of relocation provider with networks and expertise in international relocations. International employee relocation requires additional logistical, cultural, governmental, and planning knowhow. Through their portfolio of service offerings, advanced technological infrastructure, and expertise, professional relocation providers with global networks offer many advantages to their clients' relocating employees. For those tasked with relocating these employees, it is important they understand what tools and services are offered by global relocation providers with whom they may partner to ensure successful relocation experiences for their employees.

What Services Can Global Relocation Providers Offer My Company?

It is important to note that not all of the services listed below are unique to international. Some of these services are also offered for domestic employee relocations. However, when these services are utilized in an international context, they are carefully crafted for the given country, culture, and language of the given relocation.

Cultural Training

For international relocations, providers offer a variety of cultural training services that are sometimes performed in conjunction with a third-party, specialized firm commissioned by your relocation provider. These services are most often provided before the relocating employee leaves their home location to ensure they have the essential cultural knowledge and skills they need to be successful upon arrival in their new country.

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By taking advantage of these services, you are able to reduce the internal administrative effort required to provide your relocating employees with the attention and training they deserve. These programs are taught through various modalities, in either half-day or full-day segments, and cover an array of topics such as:

- A typical day in the host country
- Coping with the stresses of travel and culture shock
- Understanding the influence of culture on society, history, religion, and government
- How culture impacts daily life
- Applicable training in business practices and etiquette
- Social etiquette and cultural normatives
- Understanding the country's general attitudes and values
- Learning about local education, holidays, and traditions
- Experiential learning for dining and gesturing, etiquette, and gift-giving
- Overcoming language barriers
- Best practices for the “do’s and don’ts” of a host country
- Gender roles within key facets of business life

Language Training

As with most relocations performed by a professional provider, your employee will have a dedicated consultant who coordinates their training sessions for them. Depending on your relocation policy, consultants can arrange language training for the relocating employee, spouse/partner, and other family members. Language classes, like the cultural training sessions, are most commonly offered via third-party specialist firms with whom your relocation provider partners. While much of the lesson plans are standardized, language training specialists are able to add additional customization to their lessons to ensure the unique needs of relocating employees and their families are met. Initial and ongoing assessments are administered to ensure those learning a new language start off at the appropriate level and progress appropriately to meet their learning objectives. Language services can be delivered in the home country, the destination country, or virtually, in either location.

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Spousal Job Search and Acclimation Support

Major relocation providers often offer job search and acclimation support to the spouses or partners of relocating employees. As with cultural and language training services, support for spouses and partners in job searching and acclimation may be provided through certified global suppliers and partner companies. Typically, there are three main types of support offered to the spouses and partners of relocating employees:

1. Transition Counseling & Support

This includes ongoing counseling services that serve to address any issues or concerns of the spouse or partner that may come up throughout the relocation process. These counseling services are supported by community research that aims to find services, social & recreational activities, and helps connect the spouse or partner with charitable and volunteer opportunities.

2. Job Search Assistance

Provides the relocating employee's spouse or partner with the necessary tools to be successful in finding employment in their new country. Included in these is training to address adaptations that may be needed in his or her communication and working style, interview skills, setting of goals and objectives, expected salary ranges, and how to answer challenging interview questions. In addition to training, job search assistance for the spouse or partner may also include help in developing their curriculum vitae and cover letter with ongoing feedback available for job applications. Your relocation provider's partner organization may also include assistance for job finding through role-playing preparation, debriefing, post-interview review, and salary negotiations.

3. Career Assistance

This option includes all the basic offerings of the "Job Search Assistance" option along with additional help in assessing the background, goals, concerns, and timelines of the partner. The job search assistance is ongoing, and a dedicated consultant provides updates with relevant new information to the spouse or partner of the relocating employee. Additionally, the spouse or partner will gain support in identifying and building his or her professional network, contact base, referrals, and be connected to networking opportunities at key events. At the outset, introductory contacts are given to the partner to quickly spur their success.

Immigration

One of the major challenges that sets International relocations apart from domestic relocations is dealing with the complexities of immigration, including expatriation and repatriation. Expatriation is defined as the temporary or permanent withdrawal from one's native country, whereas, repatriation is the process needed for one to return to and resettle in one's native country after having lived in a foreign country. Relocation

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providers with expertise in global relocation provide end-to-end management of visa and immigration programs. Providers typically leverage an in-house immigration specialist in-tandem with other preferred providers to deliver a wealth of support to their client's relocating employees, including:

- Case management and authorization
- Needs assessments and counseling
- Relevant document collection
- Coordinating documentation services including translation, notary, and apostilles
- Visa preparation, applications for work permits or residence permits (including renewals) for the employee and their family
- Status tracking for all permit and visa applications
- Managing of home and host country processes and post-arrival procedures, such as consular processing, residence authorizations, social security, tax registrations, and police or town hall registrations
- Performing all needed work for the termination or deregistration of residence permits
- Keeping the client company's business managers apprised of all relevant issues
- Expiration date tracking for all visas, permits, and residence documents

International Settling-In

Whether excited, nervous, or a bit of both, your relocating employees and their families will appreciate the benefit of having the "international settling-in" services that are offered by your relocation provider. Destination service specialists are either employed directly by the provider company or via a trusted international partner. These specialists will provide your relocating employee with a guided tour of all the neighborhoods, communities, amenities, and attractions over a 1-3 day period depending on what is needed and what is stipulated by your relocation policy. In addition, destination service specialists provide the relocating family with important information on customs, social norms, expatriate associations, and other things to assist them in getting situated. Locations visited on the area tour vary depending on each employee's needs assessment, however they often include:

- **Medical and Emergency:** Tour of the hospital with an overview of the available emergency procedures and medical centers, and pharmacies or drugstores.

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- **Shopping:** A visit to the supermarkets/wet-markets where they can learn about common brands, substitutes, local produce, and specialty foods while also learning about bargaining, pricing, clothes, shoes, sizing, dress codes, furniture, and appliances.
- **Place of Worship:** Appointments can be arranged if needed.
- **Parks and recreation:** Visits to clubs, parks, and recreational areas.
- **Cultural:** Discussion of cultural traditions and the societal “do’s and don’ts”.
- **Transportation:** Public transit and personal transportation.
- **General:** Identify the locations and routes to the post office, police, embassy, work, and schools while getting recommendations and directions to hair dressers, dress makers, tailors, appliance stores, vets, and other important places.

Beyond area tours and assistance in the host country, the consultant usually provides the employee with access to a web-based information resource that covers all the important aspects of life for them in their new location. Employees are also given a “welcome package” that will help address key concerns of the family such as sports, organizations, youth clubs, and school options.

Repatriation Assistance: Assistance Returning & Resettling in Origin Country

While there are various scopes of repatriation assistance offered by relocation companies, by working in concert with their trusted, global partners, they are able to meet companies’ various needs related to the repatriation of their talent. A helpful offering that is made available through some relocation providers includes a one or two-day program to address potential changes to the employee’s perspective from their experience by helping reorient them to their home country. Here, any cultural changes that an employee’s home country may have undergone while they were away are discussed, as well as other important aspects of the repatriating employee’s time abroad. The repatriation program centers on the value, attitudinal, and behavioral differences between the two countries of a given repatriation and provides an action plan for the smoothest reassimilation as possible. This program can also provide an assessment of the employee’s time abroad and how it has added value to their career and subsequently, to your company.

Utilizing repatriation assistance programs like these ensures that your company is realizing a reward for the cost of the employee’s assignment by recognizing and then leveraging the employee’s newly acquired skills and knowledge. It is a common occurrence for expatriated employees to leave their companies in a year or two after they’ve repatriated. Given this, employers should be placing a greater emphasis on careful repatriations in order to see a return on their investment. Using the experts found through professional relocation providers, companies can get useful assistance in both evaluating their assignment data and creating a repatriation program that can guard against talent loss.

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Home Sale Programs

Selling a home while planning an international move can be a burden for your relocating talent and one that can divert even more of their focus away from their job duties. Coordinating with a realtor, making improvements, and the anxiety over the home selling within a certain timeframe may be enough to make top talent turn down international assignments. Home sale programs are extremely attractive additions to your relocation policy that put the selling of an employee's home in the hands of the relocation provider and can remove barriers for home-owning employees who would have otherwise felt unable to commit to an assignment abroad.

There are several types of home sale programs that offer different mixtures of risk and pricing modalities. The majority of these are traditional, cost-plus home sale programs. More recently, however, certain major relocation providers have begun offering fixed-fee home sale programs which may be more attractive to your company depending on your relocation needs. Companies that opt for fixed-fee home sale pay one fee, one time to the relocation company per home sale, streamlining the budgeting and accounting processes. Fixed-fee programs also shift the burden of owning unsold inventory from the client company to the relocation provider, reducing the client company's tax liability.

To learn more about all of the available home sale programs and how they work, including fixed-fee, download, [The Ultimate Guide to Home Sale Programs 2020](#).

Households Goods Moving in International Relocation

Global relocation companies often have household goods moving within their portfolio of business and are able to connect their clients with professional, well-established household goods movers who keep costs low and ensure smooth shipments across the globe. These moving companies have the expertise, technology, and infrastructure client companies look for in order to provide their employees with a reliable, transparent, and predictable moving experience. Below are some of the attributes and advantages offered by major household goods moving companies with proven global capabilities.

Cost Control

A major benefit of working with global household goods moving companies is their ability to keep costs low without compromising on quality or service. One way they do this is by leveraging their size and ample networks to ensure their clients are given preferential service and pricing. These companies are also able to offer your relocating employees advice in terms of what shipping containers to choose, the best means of conveyance for their items, and which items may be more costly to ship than they are worth.

Looking for a way to transparently compare pricing for a given move? You should learn more about ***Blueprint*** from northAmerican® Van Lines. This tool allows you to compare prices from multiple moving providers for the same move side-by-side.

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Professional Packing

Your employee can rest easy knowing that their possessions have been packed, handled, and moved with the utmost care. Professional movers always use new packing materials, individually wrap fragile items, and accurately label shipping containers for your employee. The shipment is then double wrapped and crated to mitigate damage to their items. This reduces stress for your relocating employee and also helps to prevent headaches for them upon arrival.

Industry-leading Tracking Capability

When shipping internationally, tracking becomes even more important. Your relocating employee and their family will be able to track their shipment throughout the major stages of the move. When great distances are involved, it is essential that they have the information they need to best plan for the arrival of their shipment.

Containerized Shipping and Transport Options

As mentioned in the cost control section, there are options for both the type of containers used for the shipment and for the type of transport available to get it to its destination. Relocating employees will be able to rely on the expertise of their dedicated relocation consultant to help them select the best mix of containers and transport options to meet their needs and stay in budget. Wooden or corrugated containers are used for air shipments and for ocean shipments, both smaller-sized waterproof wooden liftvans and larger-sized steel steamship containers are available.

Protection Plans & Full Valuation

While professional movers do their utmost to ensure your employee's items get to them without incident, sometimes the unexpected can occur. Full valuation and assorted protection plans are offered by reputable, global moving companies to rectify these situations. Full valuation gives your relocating employee comprehensive coverage for their valuables in the event of loss or irreparable damage. Using the information provided in their valued inventory form, relocating employees work with the moving provider to select the right level of coverage for their shipment. The full replacement cost for the item that has been lost, stolen, or damaged is then reimbursed to the employee. Storage protection plans are unique to international moves and provide additional coverage for the shipment while it is being held in customs. In the event that your relocating employee will also be moving their motor vehicle, transit protection plans are also offered through moving providers to compensate the employee for any unforeseen losses or damages to their vehicle.

Customs Expertise

When searching for the best moving provider for your company's international relocations, be sure to ask if the moving company you are considering is a C-TPAP member. The U.S. Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAP) ensures its member companies adhere to strict safety and security standards which are enforced via audits, on-site visits, and examinations. Membership in C-TPAP means your employees' shipments clear through customs faster, saving time and money on customs storage fees.

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Relocating abroad is a major life event for your employees and a strategic decision made by your company. Using a trusted relocation partner and their vast networks of immigration specialists, household goods moving providers, cultural experts, language instructors, and others, empowers your company to get the right talent in the right places without burdening your relocating talent or your company's internal resources. Perhaps even more importantly, global relocation policies and what you choose to offer to your relocating employees can serve as a competitive advantage in today's increasingly tight talent market. By selecting a trusted relocation partner with global expertise to move your employees and their families, you are laying the groundwork for smoother relocations, happier, more focused employees, an enhanced acclimation experience, and a higher return on your investment.



Do you need assistance with a global or domestic relocation that you are currently planning? Please contact Bobbi Maniglia, VP of Corporate Sales and Moving Services for northAmerican® Van Lines at Bobbi.Maniglia@northamerican.com.

For more information visit: northamerican.com

