

How to Leverage the Potential of Foreign Employees for the Success of a Business

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We live in a world of migration and the number of migrants crossing the borders increases daily. For a business, hiring foreign nationals can be a great asset, as they bring their unique skills, expertise, knowledge, ethics and culture. And even more, they can help a business in the global market; in fact, as the world becomes smaller and smaller a business will inevitably find itself dealing with foreign customers, clients or suppliers, whether here or abroad, and foreign employees can help it deal successfully with foreign cultures. Furthermore, foreign employees can be a source of personal and professional growth, and such growth will automatically bring about financial growth.

But it is very important to understand that moving or living in another country can be very demanding and has a lot of implications which need to be considered if the relocation is to be a success. Moving and living in a foreign country is not simply learning the new language and learning about all the practicalities: the new house, school, university, health system etc. It is the new culture.

And culture is not simply the external differences, it is all that is stored in the subconscious mind; it is the beliefs, habits and values that make us give a certain meaning to things or behaviours, that make us consider things or behaviours as 'normal' or acceptable, and this can differ widely from what is 'normal' or acceptable in another country, even a neighbouring country.

Sometimes we are not aware of how cross-cultural mechanisms work and we are not aware of how our own culture has moulded our subconscious and how the meanings we give to behaviours or things derive from that, until we move to another country; the way we see reality, the way we behave, the meaning we give to behaviours, words, habits, etc. can be very different in another culture and this is valid in business and in day-to-day life.

The same can be said for the foreign employees, as they might not be aware of their cultural subconscious programming.

And not being aware of how cross-cultural differences work can be cause of stress and conflicts, misunderstandings, problems with colleagues and with clients. It might lower the foreign employees' self-esteem and their self-confidence. It might cause them to feel anxious and become depressed. And this will lower their wellbeing, and so their performance and their productivity. They might take days off sick or have problems with colleagues and customers, all of which could impact the business greatly and cause a loss of money for the business.

But another important point is that although the foreign employees are indeed from another culture, they do not represent their home country, they represent themselves as individuals. There are a lot of issues to be considered in relocating foreign employees or managing international teams, and it is very important to support the

foreign employees with cross-cultural training, to enable them to create success strategies for their relocation.

There are different approaches in how to work with different cultures; there are approaches that start from a point of view of trying not to offend people from another culture, but these seem to be approaches based on fear, and fear does not work.

A better approach is to help everyone learn about how cross-cultural mechanisms work and to provide support for the foreign employees in a successful relocation; and this will enable us to communicate successfully with awareness, respect and curiosity and let go of all stereotyping and assumptions knowing that, after all, we are all indeed part of the human family. This is the approach based on love, care and compassion: don't we all want to bring back heart and soul to corporations? Well, hiring and supporting foreign employees will help with that!

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