

# **Mobility is a Work-Life Challenge**

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## ***Making the Business Case for Family-Friendly Relocation Policies***

By invitation of:



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# Themes for Today

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- ❑ What's changed to make your interest in family more urgent?
- ❑ Benefits of family-friendly initiatives are measurable.
- ❑ Corporate cultures need to build supportive environments.
- ❑ Practical policy considerations and ideas.

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In an effort to save money and stay effective, North American firms report re-evaluating virtually all elements of their international assignment policies, although survey results do not reveal major policy changes.

--*International Assignments Survey 2003 Mercer Human Resource Consulting*

# What has changed?

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- ❑ significant rise in the number of short term assignments
- ❑ security issues enhanced, including health issues such as SARS
- ❑ accompanying spouses are saying point blank 'no' to a relocation primarily due to dual career issues
- ❑ assignments no longer traditional 'expatriate' but 'transnational'
- ❑ no longer viewed as glamorous or a reward

# Working definitions of Work-Life Balance

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- Work/life balance from the employee standpoint: the challenge of managing work obligations and personal/family responsibilities;
- Work/life balance from the employer viewpoint: the challenge of creating a supportive company culture where employees can focus on their jobs while at work.

--Nancy Lockwood, *HR Magazine* 2003

# Work-Life Success Story

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- ❑ initiated by senior VP global human resources Cendant
- ❑ company turnover data analyzed from exit interviews
- ❑ data supported company would save 2 million dollars by reducing turnover rate by just 1%
- ❑ goal was set to reduce it by 15% in 2 years, saving the company 30 million.
- ❑ feedback solicited through employee focus groups
- ❑ pilot program launched offering flexible work arrangements to 423 employees.
- ❑ after 22 months, turnover for those participants was 8% compared to the rest of the company's 24%.

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The estimated cost of failing to retain a mid-level manager on a two year assignment in Europe, including replacement, lost experience, and retraining, can amount to almost 1.5 million dollars.

*-KMPG internet survey of expatriate practices*

ConocoPhillips spent \$1 million to provide pre-departure cross cultural training to 450 expats.

## **Qualitative measures of family-friendly relocation support include:**

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- long term sustainability in a country
- family values reflect well on the corporation
- can be seen as socially responsible corporate citizens.

# Cost saving impact of policy

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**Two major goals of having expatriate policy are:**

- to control assignment costs and minimize deal making
- reduce administration costs

# The Trailing Spouse Survey

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## Two key objectives

- investigate the issues as determined by the trailing spouse rather than relying on the suppositions and assumptions of professionals regarding what it *supposed* to be important
- provide a statistical basis upon which improvements to expatriate spousal programs and policies can be developed

*Source: [www.thetrailingspouse.com](http://www.thetrailingspouse.com)*

# The Trailing Spouse Survey

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## Who participated?

- ❑ 216 trailing spouse respondents in 48 countries from 26 home countries
- ❑ 57% speak two or more languages
- ❑ 69% have been married four years or more
- ❑ 55% have children:
  - ❑ 47% have some or all children with them on assignment
  - ❑ 28% did not relocate with their children

*Source: [www.thetrailingspouse.com](http://www.thetrailingspouse.com)*

# The Trailing Spouse Survey

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## Willingness to Relocate: Top 5 Factors for Success

- ❑ 66% said standard of education for children
- ❑ 59% said company-funded home country visits
- ❑ 57% said transferring spouse's attitude towards relocating
- ❑ 56% said ability to re-establish a support network
- ❑ 54% said perceived standard of living in host country
- ❑ Only 11% cited language barriers.

*Source: [www.thetrailingspouse.com](http://www.thetrailingspouse.com)*

# The Trailing Spouse Survey

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## Spousal Adjustment: Top 5 Factors for Success

- ❑ 99% said marital satisfaction (strong and healthy marriage)
- ❑ 96% said access to technology (e-mail/internet)
- ❑ 94% said organizational assistance
- ❑ 87% said degree of intimacy with other expats
- ❑ 76% said transferring spouse's overall satisfaction with job

*Source: [www.thetrailingspouse.com](http://www.thetrailingspouse.com)*

# The Trailing Spouse Survey

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## Organizational Support: Top 5 Factors for Success

- ❑ 94% said assistance to set-up internet and email
- ❑ 94% said housing assistance
- ❑ 85% said ongoing organizational support *after* relocation
- ❑ 82% said financial and time support for home-country visits
- ❑ 82% said provision of extended time to adjust
- ❑ 26% said pre-departure training for trailing spouse

*Source: [www.thetrailingspouse.com](http://www.thetrailingspouse.com)*

# Which points should be highlighted in a family-friendly policy?

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- Candidate selection to include spouse.
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) may be a source of funding (and useful too).
- Communications strategies are essential.
- Family support essential for short term assignment or business travel support.
- Spousal allowances, work permits and other support.