



Maintaining Employee Productivity During a Corporate Relocation

The loss of workplace productivity during an employee's corporate relocation, although difficult to measure, is both real and significant. The relocation process by definition creates substantial distraction, reducing the employee's focus and engagement, and ultimately, productivity. There are, however, several things that can be done from the company's perspective that can assist in lessening the effects on productivity when implementing an employee relocation.

Allow Sufficient Time for Employee Relocation

It can be difficult for employers when there is an urgent need to fill a key role. Once that role has been filled, if the individual has to relocate, more time will go by before the employee is settled and back to full productivity. Keeping in mind that companies have a business to run, it is still imperative that

enough time is allotted to consider the needs of ALL family members when planning a domestic or international relocation. Insufficient time to accept/decline the relocation and then make the physical move can increase stress levels for the employee and in turn, reduce productivity during work time hours.

Communicate with the Spouse/Partner & Family

When the employee will be moving with his/her family, it is essential to include, at a minimum, the spouse/partner in the decision-making process. With some exceptions, families will be moving as a unit. Providing important information to only one family member and expecting this individual to transfer all applicable details to other family members adds unnecessary stress. It is up to the in-house corporate mobility contact as well as the relocation management company (RMC) to determine the best way to communicate with and disseminate information to all applicable family members. Allowing the family to hear the employee relocation information first-hand and ask any questions will help reduce excess workday calls and emails, diminish the need to repeat information and ultimately keep the employee's productivity on track during a corporate relocation.

Use Calendars and Timelines

When an employee accepts a relocation, it should be with a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved – especially his/her own responsibilities. Technological advances have provided us with the ability to access electronic calendars from even remote locations. RMC providers and in-house HR advisors can assist in managing stress by continually updating the employee's calendar and sending reminder notices that require an accept/decline response. This keeps important details at the top of everyone's mind and minimizes lost productivity.

Start Pre-Decision Support Services as Soon as Possible

If destination services are part of the employee relocation package, it is worthwhile to begin them as soon as possible. Doing so can increase excitement about the move, reduce family anxiety and set the relocation on an efficient path. Lost productivity that occurs during the home finding trip can be reduced by splitting the traditional five-to-seven day home finding trip into two trips of three days/two nights each. This allows for weekend travel and less time spent out of the office during the week.

Offer Flexible Working Arrangements

By allowing the relocating employee to work remotely when necessary during the move, productivity is often maintained or even gained due to the potential of working both during and outside of normal business hours. There are often move-related activities that must be attended to at home both on the origin and destination ends of a relocation. By allowing flexible working arrangements, the anxiety of falling behind in workload can be dramatically reduced.



Consider Additional Support Services

Spouse/Partner Job Assistance – In light of the possibility that the spouse/partner may have to give up his or her job in order to relocate, companies can acknowledge this significant source of stress by providing job finding assistance, career counseling, or support with involvement in local charitable or volunteer organizations.

Cross Cultural and Language Training – When global assignments fail, the reasons can often be traced back to unhappiness and failure to adapt on the part of the assignee's family. If there are continuous breakdowns in communication and understanding, it can lead to alienation, depression, and a desire to return to the "familiar." By providing cross cultural and language training (if applicable) to the entire family, there is a greater chance that both the employee and family will adapt to the new environment, and that the employee will be engaged and productive in his/her new role.