



FOUND IN TRANSLATION

How to build the network you need to succeed in your new international job

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Taking on an international assignment as an HR leader offers valuable experience with on-the-ground exposure to different divisions and projects. But these opportunities come with significant risk, not least the huge costs when expat assignments fail. Drawing on professional networks for guidance can help, but perhaps not the network you have now, who may not understand the new challenges that come with overseas roles.

It is still important to ***harness the power of existing connections*** and a good place to start is asking your existing network for contacts in your new country. An effective way to do this is to write a public post on LinkedIn, sharing news of your assignment and being specific about who you would like to be introduced to - for example, HR Directors in Hong Kong. Prioritise connectors that enjoy bringing others together and have big networks and ask how you can help them too, to ensure the relationship is reciprocal.

This can help to ***increase the diversity of your network***, because in a new and unfamiliar environment, it can be tempting to keep company with people from the same background and head straight for the familiar circles. One senior leader advises breaking out of the expat bubble: "It's easy to stick with people who are familiar and who speak your language, but it's a shallow, transient network. Consciously connect with local nationals in your company and invest in these relationships, they will help you tap into their broader networks, which are there for the long term with deep-rooted ties". A good tip is to go to the international Chambers of Commerce, which is a great way to meet local and global individuals outside your own organisation.

Network with cultural intelligence: Being able to adapt to a different culture can prevent you from being one of the 12.1 percent of expats whose assignments fail due to [cultural friction](#). Emily Draycott-Jones, international CPO in Singapore, says, "understanding how

you really get things done - commercially, culturally and sensitively - takes conversations and support from industry and geographic peers.” Build your cultural intelligence by learning about your new country’s norms, through a [framework](#), focus particularly on how communicating, leading, trusting and scheduling are viewed in your host country and adapt your style to build stronger relationships.

Find ways to network that play to your strengths:

It can feel overwhelming to build a network from scratch in a new location. Reflect on how you prefer to meet people in your home country. Do you favour one-to-one or group interactions, structured formal events or informal social gatherings? If you avoid large drinks events in the UK, you are unlikely to be a convert in Canada, so use approaches that energise you. Network beyond business settings, by aligning relationship building with your personal interests. Alumni associations and social media groups can serve as a bridge between business and social networking.

Balance strategic and serendipitous networking:

A strategic approach is sensible when you are time-poor and have specific goals, such as meeting fellow HR Directors in your new city. Identify HR groups through the CIPD and SHRM and schedule time to network, by protecting [one hour a week](#) in your diary, to proactively connect with relevant contacts. The cumulative effort can quickly power a significant shift.

Also, stay open to serendipitous networking – connecting with individuals outside your professional sphere – with no expectation of immediate return. It can lead to opportunities you could never predict or plan for. Keep an open mind to individuals who may not seem immediately 'useful'. Success depends on your ability to build a strong local network through the steps outlined above to navigate new challenges and thrive in your international role, avoiding an early return home.

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