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Chinese Executives in the US: Plan for Success

Just as that first business trip to China can be daunting – new food, different expectations for behavior, unclear communication even if there is a common language – the first trip to the US, for Chinese employees, is a big deal.

As with other nationals, there is little pressure to adapt for those travelling with a group or delegation. In that case, the environment is usually changed to accommodate the visitors (see our separate article: “Hosting Chinese Delegations”) However, in the case of individuals being sent to the US for longer periods of time, accommodations to help them adapt are often overlooked.

To get the maximum return on training assignments and longer-term employee transitions to the US, five building blocks need to be in place, whether it is the individual’s first time in the US or not.

1. Place the newcomer on an established team or project group. This will draw the new individual into the group without the trainee having to initiate self-introduction and will also provide an understanding of group dynamics in North America. They are very different than in China.

2. Introduce a local “go to” person. Ideally, this person can field questions about differences in business practice and culture. Adapting to a new work environment generates uncertainty and can be a lonely process. Having a designated friend to provide answers and bridge knowledge gaps will speed adaptation and increase productivity.

3. Provide language lessons. Unless Chinese colleagues have spent much time overseas using English and are highly fluent, offer language tutoring. This is another way to provide insight into local culture, raises confidence personally and professionally, and speeds transition and integration to the US workplace.

4. Plan after work activities. Do this early in the Chinese executive’s stay, to introduce local sights, food, and entertainment options. Participating in these activities fosters the informal relationship-building necessary to establish trust, and also helps newcomers get their bearings. (Be sure to highlight Asian food options including restaurants and grocery stores).

5. Provide international business training. Set up training to orient the Chinese colleague to North American business style, cultural practice and work/social protocol. If possible, use a bilingual trainer with experience working in both environments. Providing orientation early on builds the base for smoother transition and better levels of success in working with “the locals”.

To schedule or review options for international business training for Chinese executives and employees, contact us: info@BlueHeron8.com.

For more information on US-China business issues, refer to the free article on our website.
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