

The paradox of international talent: alternative forms of international assignments

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In the area of international human resource management, academic research has emphasized the need to focus on alternative types of international assignments outside expatriate assignments including short-term, frequent flyer, and commuter assignments (Collings, Scullion and Morley 2007, Mayrhofer, Hartmann, Michelitsch-Riedl and Kollinger 2004). This paper discusses international recruitment and selection practices, the role adjustments plays, and even gender and marital status, and illustrates how the dynamics have changed with the increasing prevalence of alternative international assignments. Although global talent management trends have evolved in practice, international human resource management theorizing has not kept pace (Brewster, Mayrhofer and Morley 2004). Given the need for research in the area of alternative assignments, we believe this paper will have important theoretical and practical implications for multinational enterprises.

Keywords: alternative assignments; expatriate; global HRM; IHRM; international assignments; international talent

Introduction

Globalization has increased the number of multinationals operating internationally. As part of this expansion and with an increased need for top quality staff and managers, international human resource management (IHRM) has adapted to address the challenges of managing a globally integrated, yet locally responsive staff. Although IHRM has traditionally focused on expatriate management (Adler and Bartholomew 1992), alternative assignees have become increasingly more important to mainstream IHRM (Collings et al. 2007). The introductory section discusses some of the multinational staffing strategies and challenges for both of these types of assignments in order to provide necessary background for a better understanding of recruitment and selection practices.

Indeed, the management of international human resources confronts a paradox: experienced talent will grow in value as globalization accelerates, and, at the same time, internationally mobile talent is more difficult to attract, motivate, and retain. Exacerbating this paradox are demographic trends that find experienced international personnel are both in scarce supply in Europe and the U.S. (Teagarden and Von Glinow 2008), and rapidly reaching retirement age, while the well-established, on-going pattern of dual-career families makes international replacements more difficult to arrange (Collings et al. 2007; Dowling, Welch and Schuler 1999). At the same time, increased use of globalization strategies and rapid economic growth among developing nations increases the demand for

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expatriates – often in hardship posts located in less advanced economies. At the other extreme, the ongoing integration of the highly industrialized countries of the European Union creates a growing demand for cross-border talent (Mayrhofer et al. 2004). Balancing the demand for qualified expatriates while contending with dual-career issues of trailing spouses, security in a post-9/11 world, and other impediments to supply have led to a growing use of alternative international assignments.

Increasingly, getting the right mix of human resource practices applied to international assignments will drive performance of global organizations. Likewise, the well being, or adjustment of international talent, and the success of human resource professionals depend on balancing tradeoffs for firm and family through effective use of alternative assignments and effective repatriation policies. Beyond the typical expatriate, whose assignment may be from 3 to 5 years, alternative international assignments carry with them new implications for recruitment and selection.

Academic research can contribute to the discussion of these tradeoffs and implications, even ameliorating the paradox of international talent by suggesting research-based insights and solutions. Indeed, models to aid practitioners' decision making in choosing the appropriate type of assignment to meet organizational and assignee requirements have been suggested (Collings et al. 2007, p. 209). Our intent is to extend the ongoing dialog concerning effective international assignments by proposing testable propositions that can form the foundation for recruitment and selection frameworks. Before turning to the theoretical issues, however, we begin with an examination of existing models for international talent, organizational objectives, and finally, assignee objectives and motivations.

International talent

Inkson, Arthur, Pringle and Barry (1997) make a distinction between two models whereby international experience can be obtained and used for an individual's career development and the company's internationalization. The two models, overseas experience (OE), and expatriate assignment (EA), are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Contrasting characteristics of expatriate assignments (EA) and overseas experience (OE).

	<i>Expatriate assignment (EA)</i>	<i>Overseas experience (OE)</i>
Initiation	Company	Individual
Goals	Company projects (specific)	Individual development (diffuse)
Funding	Company salary and expenses	Personal savings and casual earnings
Career type	Organizational career	Boundaryless career
Research literature	Large	Nil

Source: Adapted from Inkson et al. (1997).

According to the authors, these two models can be compared along four different dimensions: 1) who initiates; 2) who funds the assignment; 3) their primary goals; and 4) their career type. In the overseas experience (OE) model, the individual initiates and funds the international experience, mainly because he or she seeks to have a boundaryless career (Inkson et al. 1997; Stahl, Miller and Tung 2002). The OE is, by definition, a fundamentally personal project, initiated and supported by the individual. Examples of the

OE would include taking a sabbatical, working for INGOs such as the Peace Corps, or Medecins Sans Frontieres.

The expatriate assignment (EA) model, on the other hand, is initiated by the company, which invites the person for an assignment outside the parent country, which usually has an open position in a foreign-acquired company, or an international business opportunity elsewhere. Even when the person has a strong motivation for an international career, it is the company that initiates and funds the process. Additionally, the person expects to gain career advantage, ranging from a return to the previous job with added responsibilities, or a promotion within the same company.

Although the distinction between EA and OE highlight the perspectives of initiation, goals, and funding; gaining international experience goes beyond expatriate assignments or personal development. The richness of international experience includes other sources of expatriate assignment or personal experience. Rather, we envision each international work experience as part of a continuum, ranging from international travel (the typical business trip), to the international transfer (definitive relocation to the foreign country). Figure 1 illustrates this based on the duration and goals of the assignment.

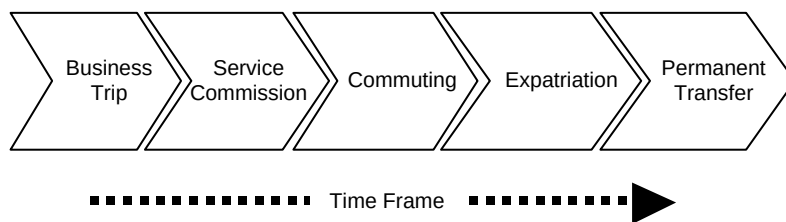


Figure 1. International work: A continuous framework.

Traditional expatriate assignments involving long-term relocation and shorter, 'temporary' assignments reflect two underlying issues: planning; and turbulence. The planning camp, as Cappelli (2008) labels it, often derives from bureaucratic, forecasting, and succession systems, which are legacies of a more stable, predictable era of the 1950s. More common, he argues, is a failure to anticipate staffing needs and subsequent use of a reactive approach – whether for temporary or longer-term assignments. Here, the realization is that long-term succession plans may not deliver the right talent mix when needed because turbulence undermines the ability to forecast the talent/needs match. Further, merely developing talent is not an end-goal. The ultimate aim is to support organizational objectives – suggesting a balance between 'making,' 'buying' and 'borrowing' talent.

Besides the traditional expatriate assignment, generally lasting from 3 to 5 years, growing turbulence has led the list of most prevalent alternative international assignments to now include short-term, frequent flyer, and commuter assignments (Dowling and Welch 2004; Collings et al. 2007). It could be argued, however, that virtual assignments, or 'armchair travelers' equally qualify for the list.

Frequent flyer or business traveler assignments

In these international assignments (IA), the employee travels frequently, communicates regularly with the home office, and the family stays at home. As Mayrhofer et al. (2004) points out with regard to the German textile industry, frequent travel serves as a means

to coordinate quality and timeliness across borders, necessitating frequent trips among multiple production locations and the home office. Often a result of frequent last minute travel, family issues (Welch, Welch and Worm 2007), jetlag/burnout/brownout resulting from increased workload and work backlog at the home office (Scullion and Collings 2006); and health issues, including alcoholism and decline of physical fitness (Collings et al. 2007), are of concern. Tax management, immigration laws, and cost control are also important (CReME 2000; Cartus 2007). Examples of this type of IA include most of the travel from the US to onshore or nearshore clients, for a relatively short duration of a few days to a week.

Short-term assignments

These assignments are generally between 1 month and 1 year (CReME 2000; Cartus 2007), and often involve IAs of a highly technical nature, such as trouble-shooting, problem solving and other engineering-related/technical problems, best handled by someone on a bubble assignment, or short-term assignment. Although families do not generally move during these assignments, long project hours and social-family separation make work-life balance issues common. Here, examples include retirees or other contingent workers that are sent on a short-term, consulting assignment of a fixed duration.

Commuter assignments

These are assignments where an employee travels from his home base to another country or vice-versa on a bi-weekly, or weekly basis (Cartus 2007; Pricewaterhouse-Coopers 2005b). Although families generally do not relocate, burnout from travel fatigue, work-life balance, and tax management are all important issues. Examples here might include travel from San Diego to Ensenada, Mexico to participate in the company's Maquiladora project, only to return through long lines at the US-Mexico border at the end of the week.

Other types of alternative assignments

These include permanent transfers, localizations, intra-regional, developmental, as well as virtual assignments and are beyond the scope of this paper since they involve accommodations not generally thought to be associated with alternative international assignments. While repatriation issues are obviously not as critical with short-term or temporary international assignments, repatriation policies and practices can have a significant impact on individual motivations and willingness of talent to accept international postings. Both the motivation to undertake such assignments and the attention to repatriation policies are likely to be higher if talent management becomes a strategic priority (Guthridge, Komn and Lawson 2008). Both practice and IHRM literature suggest the need for international talent to be a strategic priority, focused on attaining the end goal of organizational objectives – not just talent development (Cappelli 2008).

Organizational objectives

The need for talent management to be a strategic priority is found in the trends toward globalization. Ideally, international human resources management (IHRM) should focus on selecting the suitable expatriate or alternative assignee, according to the organizational objective or assignment driver (Scullion and Collings 2006). IHRM must ensure the

control and coordination of foreign subsidiaries (Brewster 1991), and deal with policy convergence and divergence in different countries (Brewster et al. 2004; Sparrow and Hiltrop 1997; Von Glinow, Drost and Teagarden 2002; Sparrow, Brewster and Harris 2004). Expatriates are generally used as position fillers, to develop both global managers and the organization (Edström and Galbraith 1977); to transfer technical and managerial skills (Morley, Heraty and Collings 2006); and to ensure parent, or headquarters control and coordination (Bartlett and Ghoshal 1992). Alternative assignees are often used for skill transfer, project-based work, problem solving, control purposes, and management development (Hauser 2004; Tahvanainen, Welch and Worm 2005).

In the Cartus (2007) global mobility report, companies cited project-based assignment (31%) and technical skill transfer (29%) as leading business drivers for short-term assignments, while management development was most important for long-term assignments (46%). The Cartus survey did not use control as one of the assignment drivers. As can be seen below in the CReME 2000 survey in Table 2, however, control was most important when expatriates pursued long-term assignments or were 'frequent flyers' – two extremes of the IA continuum.

Table 2. Assignment drivers.

<i>CReME</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Family reasons (%)</i>	<i>Skill transfer (%)</i>	<i>Control (%)</i>	<i>Management development (%)</i>	<i>Costs (%)</i>	<i>Intl. Cadre (%)</i>
Long-term	2000	6	74	62	60	5	34
Short-term	2000	8	69	12	39	9	11
Commuter	2000	32	32	25	11	17	14
Frequent flyer	2000	11	26	40	6	14	20

Source: Emerging trends in global mobility (CReME 2000).

Assignee objectives/motivations

Extensive literature on family and dual career issues suggests that the willingness to relocate or accept an international assignment is heavily influenced by family, spouse, and work-life balance issues (Stahl et al. 2002; Sparrow et al. 2004). Some authors (c.f., Selmer 2000; Stahl et al. 2002) have also suggested that individuals' willingness to relocate can be also influenced by organizational practices. Family considerations include disruption of children's educations; caring for aging or invalid parents, children, or spouses; single parent custody problems; and animal care to name but a few. Organizational practices include the way the selection process is carried out (who invites and what are the relevant criteria) and the perceived career implications of rejecting an international offer. In addition, balance and quality of work and personal life have become general concerns in the workforce (Papalexandris 2000). Nevertheless, even though practice has demonstrated that family considerations and work-life balance are important in linking recruiting and selection to performance and retention (Collings et al. 2007), the applications of these theories do not generally consider family-related issues. Criteria such as cross-cultural skills and family characteristics are often not considered, even though research shows that the main factors expatriates perceive as contributing to the success of the international assignment are mostly family-related (Arthur and Bennett 1995).

Theoretical applications

Harvey, Speier and Novecevic (2001) applied agency theory to determine candidate preferences for international assignments that would monitor the agency relationship between the subsidiary and the MNE. They used the constructs ‘goal congruence’ and ‘asymmetry in knowledge’ to look at this agency relationship. In the model, goal congruence refers to the extent to which the goals of the MNE match that of the subsidiary (Roth and Ricks 1994), and information asymmetry refers to the degree of available and needed information between a subsidiary and parent (Harvey et al. 2001). We build on their application of agency theory to global international assignment selection, to determine if the objectives of the organization correspond with the staffing choices (Collings et al. 2007). Without goal congruence, success is unlikely (Eisenhardt 1989).

In addition, we build on Tarique, Schuler and Gong’s (2006) application of person-environment fit theory that considers MNE levels of uncertainty avoidance, power distance, and cultural similarity of the subsidiary and parent for staffing composition selection. Given the demonstrated practical importance of family considerations and work-life balance in international assignee selection and recruitment (CReME 2000; PricewaterhouseCoopers 2006; Cartus 2007), we utilize work-life balance as a construct for assignee objectives or motivations. Work-life balance refers to the degree to which an international assignee places importance on having a work-life balance when choosing an assignment. Since family considerations are an important part of work-life balance, we consider this as part of the work-life balance construct. Since the literature and practice have demonstrated that *no* form of international assignments provides an optimal or high level of work-life balance, we have chosen the low and medium work life balance as appropriate options in the model.

One of the newest major research findings is that expatriates, particularly those on alternative IAs, tend to be generally well adjusted (and therefore there is an *implicit* assumption that they have found a reasonably high work-life balance) (Pinto 2008). Further, many other researchers have found high adjustment levels, even if the extant literature emphasizes low adjustment as the main reason for high expatriate failure rates. Sadly, however, empirical findings are limited. Besides, almost all studies reveal adjustment levels are far above the mid-point of the respective scales and failure rates are lower than cited.

The model shown in Figure 2 and the corresponding propositions offer different types of international assignment selection options according to the goal congruence and work-life balance considerations of an MNE and a potential international assignee respectively. From this framework, we suggest several propositions.

		Work-life balance	
		Low	Medium
Goal congruence	Low	Short-term	Expatriate
	High	Frequent flyer	Commuter

Figure 2. Recommended type of international assignment based on goal congruence and work-life balance.

Proposition 1: Low goal congruence between parent and subsidiary

Given that MNEs are concerned with maintaining control between the headquarters and the host country subsidiary to be effective, they must ensure that these goals are met (Kobrin 1988). The two primary options to ensure control are expatriate and short-term assignments as an employee with high allegiance to the MNE is based at the subsidiary (Brewster 1991). Both of these assignments are ideal when there is low goal congruence between the parent MNE and the host country assignee. However, neither of these two assignments will ensure a high quality of work-life balance for the assignee (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2006; Cartus 2007). Nevertheless, we argue that the expatriate assignment has a higher level of work-life balance than the short-term assignment, since the family has relocated with the employee. When the international human resources management staff becomes aware of the accompanying work-life balance conditions of an assignment, they can adopt policies to effectively address the challenges related to this condition to ensure retention and effectiveness.

The literature has illustrated that one of the primary benefits of an expatriate assignment to an MNE is the high level of control that an expatriate is able to exert in a subsidiary (Brewster 1991). If the goal congruence between an MNE and subsidiary are low, then the MNE and subsidiary have different visions and goals. Thus, an expatriate can help maintain a level of control, so that the goals of the MNE are met. In an expatriate assignment, the assignee generally brings his or her family along on the assignment. Although this means the expatriate will normally see the family on a daily basis, the literature has demonstrated that there are still many family considerations that lead to expatriate failure, such as difficulties in spousal or child adjustment to the country in question (PricewaterhouseCoopers 2006; Cartus 2007). Thus, the work-life balance is at a medium level since the expatriates in this context will probably see their families more frequently than if they were living at home, but traveling all the time in an alternative assignment. Taking into account these MNE and employee goals, we offer the following proposition:

Proposition 1a: If the subsidiary has low goal congruence with the parent company, and the assignee has medium work-life balance considerations, then an expatriate assignee is the best option.

If an MNE has low goal congruence with a subsidiary, it will need an international assignee with allegiance to the MNE located at the subsidiary. Since the short-term assignee will be based in the home country, he or she will be able to work with local staff and ensure control and goal alignment. However, since short-term assignees must fulfill a number of goals during a limited time frame, ranging from 6 months to 1 year, they often work long hours (GMAC 2006; Cartus 2007). In addition, since their families generally remain in the parent country, they must travel regularly to visit them. These two conditions lead to high burnout and a low level of work-life balance. Thus, when selecting a short-term assignee, HR must make certain that the realities regarding work-life balance are clear to the assignee to ensure effectiveness and retention. Thus we propose:

Proposition 1b: If the subsidiary has low goal congruence with the parent company, and the assignee has low work-life balance considerations, then the short-term assignee is the best option.

Proposition 2: High goal congruence between parent and subsidiary

When the level of goal congruence or alignment between the MNE and the subsidiary is high, alternative assignees that are not stationed in the host country are more appropriate. Since there is a high level of goal congruence, an employee with high allegiance to the parent company does not need to be responsible for maintaining control. As a result, when the subsidiary requires staff for short-term projects, to train local staff, or to meet local requirements, an alternative assignment is a viable alternative. Understanding the work-life balance conditions is important as IHRM can adopt appropriate policies to most effectively deal with challenges and ensure retention and effectiveness before and after selection. Two of the most common types of alternative assignments used in high goal congruence situations are commuter and frequent flyer assignments. In general, neither of these types of assignments ensures a high level of work-life balance due to the associated heavy travel schedules and workloads.

A commuter is generally based either in the host or parent country and commutes to the other location regularly (Cartus 2007). This type of option is best when there is high goal congruence or alignment between the MNE and the host company. Since the commuter assignee is not permanently at the host company, they cannot continually monitor the host country employees to ensure control. In terms of alternative assignments, a commuter assignment allows for a greater degree of work-life balance than a frequent flyer assignment as a commuter does not travel as frequently, yet burnout is still high (CReME 2000; GMAC 2006; Cartus 2007). Thus, we propose that alternative assignee candidates that have higher work-life balance considerations should be chosen for commuter, rather than frequent flyer assignments.

Proposition 2a: If the subsidiary has high goal congruence with the parent company and the assignee has medium work-life balance considerations, then the commuter assignee is the best option.

When a subsidiary has high goal congruence with the parent company, an assignee that maintains control and ensures goals are met is not as necessary. In the case where an assignee has low work-life balance considerations, a frequent-flyer assignee is ideal. Frequent-flyer assignments require a heavy travel schedule, where assignees are often away from their families during the week. In addition, while on assignment, frequent flyers are generally working long hours to ensure all tasks are completed during the short time they are traveling. As a result IHRM should adopt appropriate policies to meet the needs of these frequent-flyer assignees to ensure retention and effectiveness. These policies include telephone allowances to speak with family, and enabling assignees to fly from their home country during the middle of the week instead of weekends. In addition, R&R policies should probably be revisited for frequent-flyer assignees.

Proposition 2b: If the subsidiary has high goal congruence with the parent company and the assignee has low work-life balance considerations, then the frequent-flyer assignment is the best option.

Proposition 3: Moderator variables of gender and marital status

The percentage of expatriates in the international workforce, who are female, is usually placed at 14% to 23% (GMAC 2006), and this rate has been increasing, despite the fact that female expatriates tend to face increased adjustment difficulties. For example, Linehan (2002) found, with semi-structured interviews of 50 senior female international

managers, that four specific difficulties affected women expatriates: (a) the gender biases associated with international appointments; (b) the negative influence of gender over an international career; (c) the difficulties in finding career alternatives for a male spouse; and (d) the difficulties balancing an international career with family demands. Overall, this research indicated women expatriates often felt excluded from an international career and from further career progression because of gender discrimination. Related, Selmer and Leung (2003) found, comparing Western business expatriates in Hong Kong, that female expatriates are: younger; less likely to be married; and occupy lower hierarchical positions at destination than their male colleagues. Given the before-mentioned findings (Linehan 2002) and the added difficulties married female expatriates face, the low incidence of married female expatriates may be indicative of the selection strategies firms are pursuing. Thus, we can expect that the relative number of women taking part in alternative assignments (such as frequent flyer, short-term assignments and commuter) would be higher than the usual rate for traditional expatriation.

Proposition 3a: The selection for an alternative international assignment is less gender-biased than is the selection for an expatriation assignment.

Based on previous literature, it is unclear who adjusts better: single or married expatriates. Anecdotal evidence supports both conventions, but varies depending upon country of origin. For example, Germany tends to use more single expatriates than other countries and have popularized the 'shadow system'. Singles do not have the burden of family adjustment difficulties, but also do not benefit from family support. However, if family considerations are driving firm decisions regarding the assignment type and whom they select, one may consider that these alternative forms are being used especially to address family needs when all things are considered. Therefore, we believe that more married individuals will be selected for alternative assignments than single/divorced individuals.

Proposition 3b: More married individuals are selected for alternative assignments than single/divorced individuals.

Barriers to best practices

The growing value of international talent to global firms and the increasing complexities of deploying expatriates create a paradox made more difficult by a lack of agreement over expatriate best practices. Worse, even assuming that research leads to evidence-based management practices, there remains a lingering barrier of knowledge transfer from research to practice.

Rynes (2007) asserts in a recent issue of the *Academy of Management Journal* that even *key research findings* in human resource management get limited coverage in the prestigious, but general management publications. Her research supports the thesis of a research-practice gap and argues for evidence-based management. Casio (2007) gives insight into the causes of this gap by drawing on Johns (1993):

Academics, consultants, and journalists . . . live in different 'thought worlds.' Practices that academics regard as technically meritorious are sometimes not adopted for at least three reasons: 1) managers frame HR practices as matters of administrative style rather than as technical innovations; as a result, administrative innovation tends to lag technical innovation; 2) research often justifies HR practices from a technical perspective only, ignoring important social and contextual influences that affect the adoption of innovations; and 3) crises, organizational politics, competing sources of innovation, government regulations, and institutional factors often overshadow technical merit.

Conclusion: Toward solving the international talent paradox

While international talent grows in value, it is increasingly difficult to obtain, deploy and retain. Globalization and demographics all but ensure the paradox will grow in complexity – carrying on-going implications for MNEs, IHRM, and expatriates. In addition, global realities of offshoring, outsourcing, or otherwise globally-distributing work impact a global talent race to be sure. Although IHRM has traditionally focused on expatriate management (Adler and Bartholomew 1992), alternative assignments have increasingly become more important to mainstream IHRM (Collings et al. 2007). In addition, even though global talent management trends have evolved in practice, IHRM theorizing has not kept pace (Brewster, Sparrow and Harris 2005).

The paradox of international talent forces IHRM professionals into a bind. On the one hand, the demand for talent and the ability of that talent to deliver on MNE goals grows in importance along with the growth of globalization. Whether a centralized home-country-centric organizational culture or a highly decentralized MNE, IHRM practitioners must deliver the right people to the right place at the right time, and then retain them. Cost, family, security, cultural, and other considerations defy a single, unitary approach. Even within a highly centralized or decentralized MNE, the ‘invisible barriers’ of cultural expectations for expats vary across the firm from R&D to sales (Teagarden and Von Glinow 2008).

On the other hand, because of inter- and even intra-firm variations, solutions to international talent needs cannot be uniform; such talent demands have led to a variety of alternative forms. Particularly varied approaches are found in shorter-duration assignments – leading to commuting arrangements (which can prove less disruptive to family life, especially in the case of school-aged children) for talent-building temporary assignments. The commonality of approaches stems more from the convergence of IHRM challenges faced by MNEs than from a commonality of organizational cultures, objectives, or designs. That is, convergence of approaches to IHRM talent utilization is likely to be driven more by the external challenges of globalization and the need for rapid response than any growing similarity among internal organizational characteristics. At the same time, competitive, resource, and economic turbulence argues for shorter-term horizons; reactive placement failures argue for greater talent development and career planning, along with broader family involvement when longer-term assignments are needed. And, until talent management gains greater prominence as a strategic imperative, repatriation policies and procedures are likely to be a source of ongoing concern and a potential detriment to how prospects view international assignments (Guthridge et al. 2008). Paradoxically, it may be the success of management and IHRM professionals in meeting often sudden, and urgent international staffing needs that prevents talent development, deployment, and repatriation from being more visible strategic priorities.

Theory development faces its own tradeoffs. A broad, unifying theory-base that aids highly centralized and decentralized MNEs in moving talent to and fro, may be so broad as to have little prescriptive value. Conversely, theory backed by research is likely to be situationally-specific with little broad application. Even so, the value of this paper is to signal propositions that once validated or rejected, move both theory and practice forward.

Thus, given the need for research in the area of alternative assignments, we argue for a strategic approach to alternative assignments that are congruent with both the firm’s objectives and the lifestyle needs of the assignees. Though an easy solution to posit, in practice any solution faces situational complexities, tradeoffs, and limited research to sort through the alternative approaches to international assignments. And, even if research could deliver answers, however tentative and incomplete, there remains the issue

of transforming research findings to workable policies and then transferring them into practice. Much of this knowledge transfer means overcoming 'invisible barriers' deeply embedded in culture (Teagarden and Von Glinow 2008).

We believe that this manuscript is a first step in tackling some of those paradoxical elements in today's global talent search. The propositions offered are gleaned from both the research literature and the practical realities of MNEs deeply engaged in international assignments, and their struggles to find the right mix of attracting, deploying and retaining individual talent, while meeting MNE goals. Such is the paradox of globalization's demands for increasingly scarce internationally-mobile talent, and the world's need for such talent as globalization accelerates.

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