

## Expert Perspectives: Protecting the ROI of cross-border deployments

Global Employment Companies (GECs) enable the effective deployment of talent across the world. But what are some of the critical success factors to ensure assignment success and protect the ROI for the organization?

This issue of "ITX Insights" features an exclusive interview with Alain Verstandig and Sabine Renger, from NetExpat, who will share their knowledge and experience on this important topic.

Alain is the President of the NetExpat Group, consisting of over 500 highly skilled international professionals delivering intercultural training and spousal support to organizations worldwide. He is a recognized international speaker on International Mobility and Talent Management topics.

Sabine is an experienced executive intercultural trainer and business advisor, with global expertise in integration support.

### **Q1. What are the most common reasons international assignments fail, despite strong technical candidates?**

Most international assignments do not fail because employees lack technical expertise. They fail because the human side of mobility is underestimated.

Our 2026 [Relocating Family Support Survey](#) showed that **62%** of respondents identified **partner unhappiness** as one of the leading causes of failed assignments, ahead of employee performance itself. Cultural adjustment challenges, social isolation, family stress, and the difficulty of rebuilding a sense of belonging in a new country all directly affect the employee's ability to perform successfully.

**Alain Verstandig**

**Sabine Renger**

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What is particularly interesting is that this trend has remained remarkably consistent over time. Since the first survey in 2018, organizations have become increasingly aware that relocation success depends not only on the employee's professional capabilities, **but also on the family's ability to adapt socially, culturally, and emotionally.**

When spouses or partners struggle to integrate, employees often become distracted, disengaged, or reluctant to remain long term in the assignment. That is why many organizations are shifting away from a purely operational mobility model toward a more **holistic approach** focused on family well-being, integration, and long-term support.

The conversation today is no longer simply about moving talent internationally. It is about creating the conditions for sustainable global mobility success.

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### **Q2. How significant is the role of the accompanying spouse or partner in determining assignment success?**

The accompanying spouse or partner is often the deciding factor in whether an international assignment succeeds, fails, or is even accepted in the first place.

Our survey found that **69%** of respondents cited **partner resistance** as one of the primary reasons employees decline international opportunities.

What has changed significantly in recent years is the growing importance of dual-career dynamics. Today, **74%** of employees and partners describe dual-income support as “critical” or “significant” to assignment success, up from **69%** in 2018. Younger generations feel this even more strongly, with **84% of respondents aged 22–36** viewing dual-income support as essential.

The issue is no longer purely financial. For many accompanying partners, work is closely tied to identity, independence, confidence, and long-term career progression. When partners feel professionally or socially disconnected, the impact extends directly to employee engagement and retention.

This is why companies are increasingly investing in personalized support such as career coaching, intercultural training, networking opportunities, integration programmes, and peer support systems. Organizations are recognizing that **supporting the partner is not a peripheral mobility benefit** it is a strategic driver of assignment success and workforce sustainability.

### **Q3. Where do you see the biggest disconnect between Global Mobility programmes and the lived reality of assignees and their families?**

One of the biggest disconnects is that many mobility programmes are still designed around **operational** efficiency, while relocation is experienced **emotionally** and personally by employees and their families.

Organizations naturally focus on compliance, immigration, payroll, and logistics. Families, however, experience relocation through uncertainty, identity disruption, cultural adaptation, career interruption, and the challenge of rebuilding routines and social connections in a completely new environment.

Another important gap is communication. Although **95%** of companies now offer some form of partner or family support, only **50%** of survey respondents believe these services are effectively **communicated**.

The survey also highlights a disconnect around timing. Many organizations invest heavily in pre-departure support, yet only **55% currently extend support through repatriation**, despite the fact that integration and reintegration challenges continue throughout the entire mobility lifecycle.

The organizations achieving the strongest mobility outcomes are those moving beyond transactional relocation models and treating mobility as a continuous employee and family experience.

### **Q4. How is technology in general, and artificial intelligence in particular, reshaping cross-cultural training and family support?**

Technology and AI are transforming mobility support by making it more personalized, scalable, and accessible.

Employees and families increasingly expect real-time access to learning, guidance, and practical support throughout the relocation journey. AI can help deliver tailored

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intercultural learning experiences, personalized recommendations, self-assessments, and on-demand resources adapted to individual situations and stages of relocation.

At the same time, our survey revealed something very important: **nobody wants a fully digital relocation experience**. Across all respondent groups, there was strong consensus that the most effective mobility programmes combine technology with empathetic, human-led support.

Technology works particularly well for convenience, accessibility, and day-to-day support. However, **human interaction** remains essential during emotionally sensitive phases such as decision-making, cultural adaptation, family integration, and repatriation.

The future of mobility support is therefore not AI versus humans. It is about using technology to reinforce human expertise, cultural sensitivity, and personalized guidance.

### **Q5. How does supporting the spouse or partner translate into measurable ROI for the organization?**

Supporting the spouse or partner has become a strategic investment with measurable business impact.

Organizations that invest in family support generally see higher assignment acceptance rates, lower failure rates, stronger employee engagement, and improved retention. In fact, **85% of survey respondents said that initiatives such as dual-career assistance significantly influence an employee's willingness to accept an international assignment**.

There is also a strong employer branding dimension. Our survey found that **81%** of respondents believe supporting accompanying partners strengthens the employer brand and enhances the company's reputation in the talent market.

Another major shift revealed by the survey is how organizations are investing their mobility budgets. **Only 23%** of organizations still offer **cash allowances** for partner or family support down from **61%** in 2013. Instead, companies are increasingly investing in more personalized and outcome-driven services such as intercultural training, career coaching, integration support, and language training.

The reason is simple: organizations are recognizing that family support improves not only the employee experience, but also **business continuity, productivity, retention, succession planning**, and ultimately the overall **return on international mobility investments**.

*ITX and the readers of ITX Insights are truly grateful to Alain Verstandig and Sabine Renger for sharing their valuable insights and experience with us. You can [download a copy of the 2026 Relocating Family Support Survey here](#).*