



HR Career Experts

INTERNATIONAL HR EXPERIENCE – IS IT WORTH IT?

Over the years, there have always been question marks on the value or otherwise of international experience for HR practitioners and their careers in Australia. In this month's Instep, we try and shed just a little bit more light on this important subject.

Firstly, how many people have international experience in HR in Australia?

How many professionals have international experience and where this experience was gained were just two of the questions asked in a national survey conducted by The Next Step of almost 2,000 HR professionals. Responses were taken from all levels of the profession, all areas of expertise (from generalist to specialist) and all industries that HR professionals work within, across Australia.

The survey response indicated that just over one in three HR professionals in Australia have experience overseas (35.29%)

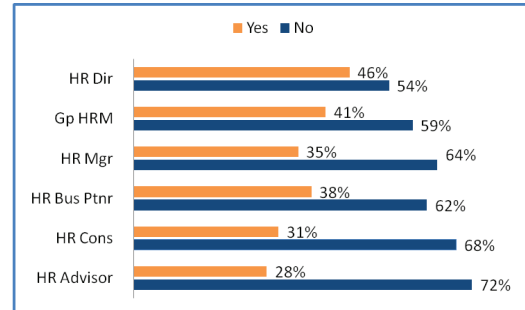
Next, where was this overseas HR experience gained?

Of the one in three HR professionals who indicated that they have worked overseas, a substantial percentage indicated that they had worked in Asia. This certainly ties in with anecdotal evidence and common sense that Asia is now 'our region' for HR. The total results were as follows:

Asia	38.2%
United Kingdom	22.2%
Europe	14.1%
North America	7.9%
New Zealand	6.3%
Middle East	3.9%
Africa	2.9%
India	2.7%
South America	1.5%

Which HR professionals in Australia have had overseas experience?

It's reasonable to expect that the more senior and experienced an individual HR professional is, the more likely they will have had the opportunity to take up an overseas posting. The following graph seems to confirm this is the case. The proportion of HR Directors that have had overseas experience is 46% compared with lower proportions for other levels of the HR profession.



But is overseas HR experience worth it?

'Is obtaining international HR experience good for my career?' The answer to this question will always be completely subjective.

There is no doubt that HR practitioners who have offshore exposure swear by the experience. They point to a whole range of benefits, from building personal confidence and general HR capability to developing cross cultural and global awareness and the ability to deal with higher levels of ambiguity.

But is it worth it to advance a career as the single reason to go overseas? Good question. Probably not is the answer.

While it adds to an individual's experience and capability, there are unfortunately many in the local market that do not put the same weighting on offshore experience as they do similar experience in the local market. Why this is the case is a very good question and one that many who have returned from overseas and tried to re-enter the local job market have had to ponder over the years.

A final word

Logic suggests that offshore experience is a great addition to any HR career. This is supported by the fact that more HRDs have overseas experience than their peers in the profession.

Not surprisingly, Asia is now the dominant location for this experience, but with only one in three HR professionals having offshore exposure, there is a way to go before Australia can claim to have a globally exposed profession.

The real question is why are local businesses and HR leaders reluctant to accept that offshore HR returnees' experience is as attractive as that of their peers with only local experience?

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