

Expatriate Management at AstraZeneca Plc

Over the years, AstraZeneca Plc (AstraZeneca) has developed a strong reputation for its expatriate management practices. Expatriate management at AstraZeneca went beyond tackling issues such as compensation, housing, issues related to the spouse's career abroad, and so on. It also took care to ensure that employees on international assignment were able to adapt well to the new environment and achieve a work-life balance. With the global economic situation continuing to be grim, AstraZeneca also began placing emphasis on a "more thoughtful planning and selection process" of candidates for international assignments.¹



Source: Deloitte Services LP

AstraZeneca is the world's fifth-largest pharmaceutical company by global sales.² It is headquartered in London, UK, and Södertälje, Sweden. For the year 2013, AstraZeneca's revenues were US\$25.7 billion, and it employed around 51,500 employees. As of 2013, AstraZeneca had around 350 employees working on international assignments in 140 countries worldwide. These were employees who were on short-term, long-term, or commuter assignments.³ According to Ashley Daly (Daly), senior manager of international assignments for AstraZeneca in the United States, the company's employees were mainly concentrated in Belgium, the United States, and the United Kingdom, but they "also have a significant presence in the Asia-Pacific and Latin America regions."⁴ AstraZeneca's policy stipulates that for any international assignment, there had to be a business rationale. The company saw to it that the costs involved were acceptable and that the career management of the employee during the assignment was consistent with personal development goals as well as business needs. The contractual arrangements for the assignment were also centrally managed.⁵ "From the outset, if there is not a clear sense of how the international assignment experience can be applied at the end of the assignment term—at least in broad terms—the business should strongly consider whether an international assignment should even move forward,"⁶ said Daly.

Once an assignment offer was made to a potential expat, AstraZeneca paired the employee up with an international assignment manager (IA manager), who briefed him or her on company policy and opportunities for cultural and language training. Before leaving for the international assignment, the employee was trained in a workshop that focused on relevant issues (such as leaving the destination location and returning to the home country). The expat was given information about the culture of the destination country—particularly differences with the home country—as well as social considerations and do's and don'ts. If necessary, the employee and his or her spouse were given training in the local language. Tessi Romell (Romell),