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Do global firms measure expatriate return on investment? An empirical examination of measures, barriers and variables influencing global staffing practices

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goal for managers in global firms, given the evidence which suggests that for some

firms having expatriates is often a cost of doing business for which a formal measure may be unnecessary. An alternative view suggests that if international assignments are considered a necessary cost of doing business for global firms, how expatriates are managed in terms of the HR practices that support their activities and how the outcomes of those activities impact broader firm performance may be far more important concerns. Based on evidence that the nature of expatriation is rapidly changing, we conclude that expatriate ROI remains a challenging and complex process that managers in global firms are currently not well-equipped to address. The findings have important implications for the planning and management of international assignments.

Keywords: expatriates HRM strategies and practices qualitative research methods return on investment

Notes

1. Only a small number of managers in the study ($n = 6$; 12%) indicated that initiatives are currently underway to implement new expatriate ROI projects (see for example McNulty 2008). These projects are intended to develop new or revised HR (and non-HR) systems for each firm. The uniqueness of each firm's HR system is the basis of their decision to invest in them to improve expatriate ROI.
2. Managers are expected to invest in them to improve expatriate ROI.



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