

# Thriving Abroad Podcast

## # GERTRAUD EREGGER – SUPPORTING FEMALE ASSIGNEES TO SUCCEED ABROAD

Gertraud is an international HR expert and expat transition coach. She is Austrian by birth, lived and worked as expat in Africa and currently in Jamaica. Gertraud is an expert in international recruitment, talent acquisition, executive search and transition coaching. As a coach, she is passionate to support female expatriates to overcome challenges when starting a new leadership role in a new country and culture, during the assignment or repatriation, so they feel focused, energized and have a positive mindset.



Here are the takeaways from our conversation:

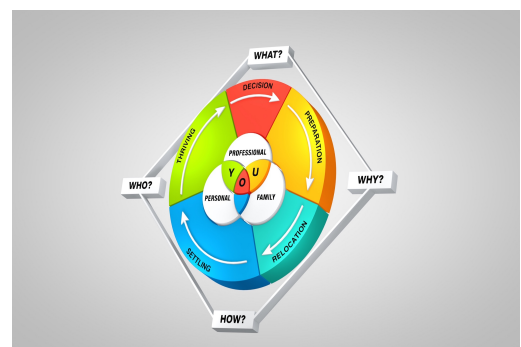
### Five key challenges that female assignees manage simultaneously (the first four would be same for both male and female assignees):

- In settling into the new role, take time to connect to the new team, understand the context of the new role and environment and start to deliver first results.
- Build strategic partnerships and identify key players.
- Settle into the new general environment, home and location.
- Develop a cultural awareness, understanding and a cultural agility that is appropriate to the demands and needs of the cultural environment.
- Support the family as they familiarise themselves, adjust and settle into the new environment.
- We also talked about the change in roles that may occur within the family unit and how that may impact on the power dynamics in the relationship.

### Gertraud shared two ways in which she believes women experience different challenges to their male counterparts:

- The cultural and country context could mean that women executives are treated differently or need to behave in a way that respects the cultural values of the host country, which may differ from their home culture.
- Depending on their family situation, the female executive may need to act as the family manager adding to their overall workload especially in the relocation and settling in phase.

In our book ***THRIVING ABROAD: The definitive guide to professional and personal relocation success*** we talk about relocation as a process that moves through a number of phases as shown in the Framework for Thriving Abroad. We talk about the different phases of the relocation process.



### What factors do companies take into account when selecting international assignees?

- Experience in the job
- Personality and Cultural intelligence
- The family setting and support for the move

### What can women do to secure international positions?

- Network and invest in strong relationships with senior management.
- Find a mentor or sponsor who supports their career development.
- Be aware of the assumptions that may exist about suitability and capability.

*“Articulate your interest, inform the decision maker and HR that you actively want to go abroad and proactively act for opportunities during performance cycles.”*

*Gertraud Eregger*

### How can expats be better prepared both personally and professionally?

- From a practical perspective Gertraud talked about learning about the culture/cultural differences and other issues such as schools.
- From an emotional perspective:

*“Less preparation is done around the emotional side of the move. Knowing the different stages of expatriation every expat goes through is so important to set realistic expectations for oneself.” Gertraud Eregger*

### Tips for female expats about settling in well to their new professional roles and lives abroad.

- Be patient and take it step by step
- Find your tribe
- Enjoy the honeymoon stage and use it to explore your new environment
- Don't take rushed decisions, if unhappy, give it time and put energies into adjusting your mindset.
- Build your local team – you cannot be a one women success story.

### How can companies better support the settling in phase?

- Provide ongoing support for the transition and the emotional transition.
- Help the creation of social networks through the provision of mentors
- The HR team can actively follow the move and make sure things are working out.
- Initiatives to help breakdown the expat and local staff silos are really valuable.

## What about onward career progression? What can employees do to manage this more effectively and what can companies do to better facilitate the process?

- Employees – stay in touch with your home country – nurture your relationships.
- Build your own mentoring network if the company does not provide one.
- Think about how each career move will fit into your long-term career plan.

*“Companies need to develop an expat culture that really embraces the opportunities and also realistic challenges of being an expat, what it takes for people to move with their families and how this step fits into a long-term vision for their career.” Gertraud Eregger*

- See the expat experience as an investment for both the employee and the company to develop future well rounded talents.

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You can connect with Gertraud through LinkedIn [HERE](#)

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- Email: Louise@thrivingabroad.com
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