

Opening an International Office: 3 Key Considerations When Relocating Employees Overseas

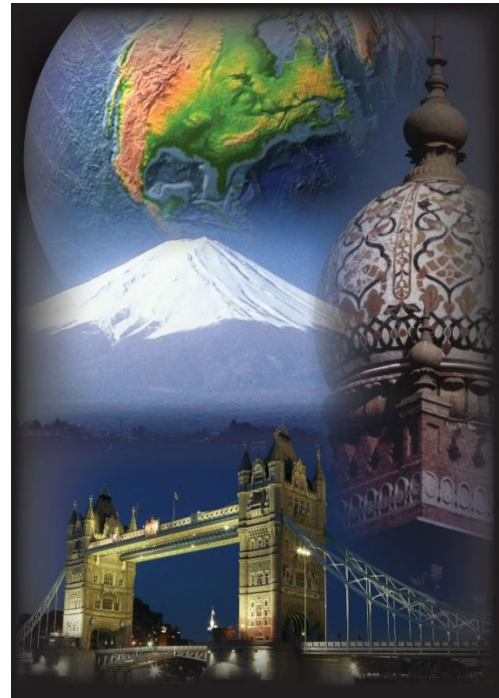
Today more people than ever before live and work outside their home country.

We've aimed our tips at those companies (and their owners and executives) with plans to open their *first* international office. After all, if your company has previously navigated these waters you've already gained a wealth of knowledge on the subject of international relocation. Then again, maybe your first experience didn't go as smoothly as you would have liked. With these thoughts in mind here are...

...3 Key Considerations When Relocating Employees Overseas.

1. **Carefully evaluate the employee's suitability for international relocation** – A failed international assignment carries a hefty price tag. The generally accepted estimate is up to three times the annual salary of the relocating employee. Plus, you have the added cost of the time it takes to restart the entire process. Commonly, the biggest reasons for failed international assignments are family issues and a lack of family support. There are other reasons of course, but those related to family predominate.

If your company is new to international expansion, consider engaging the services of a consulting firm that specializes in identifying the best candidates for international assignments. Over the years the Stevens International staff has become familiar with a number of these firms. And we make it a point to





keep tabs on the quality of their work and to see to it that our information is always up-to-date. So if you'd like a carefully screened referral or two please contact Stevens at 800-316-1065 or service@stevensworldwide.com.

- 2. Make sure you have policies and procedures in place for overseas relocations** – In addition to other stipulations, these guidelines should dictate the weight or volume of goods – or better, a combination of both – that an employee is entitled to in an overseas assignment. For instance, say you're relocating two people and they both have 5,000 pounds of household goods. For the sake of illustration, let's say one person has primarily oak furniture while the other has all Rattan. Obviously, the shipping charges are going to be very different because oak furniture can be packed and shipped in much smaller volume than Rattan. And international shipping charges are based on weight *and* volume.

The key points here are that good policies and procedures will eliminate inequities and enable you to better control costs. Plus, you'll avoid the drain on productivity and the added stress caused by the inevitable questions about what *is* and *isn't* an "authorized expense." So spell it out. Everyone involved with the move will be happier and more productive.

NOTE: As part of our contract corporate relocation services, Stevens International provides relocation policy consulting and policy development and implementation. Give us a call if you'd like more information on these services. If you want to research the subject on your own, a good place to start is the website for [Worldwide ERC®](#), the workforce mobility association.

- 3. Use a reputable mover with substantial experience and expertise in international relocation** – Any move – even if it's just across town – can be stressful. Given the added expense, risk, and major upheaval involved in an international move, that stress is compounded. Even so, with proper planning and a reputable, experienced mover, the international transport of household goods can be carried out without a hitch. To increase your odds

for a “hitch-free” move there are accreditations, certifications, and memberships that you should expect your mover to have. Probably the most important of these is –

Membership in FIDI and certification through FAIM/ISO (www.fidi.com) – FIDI is a global organization based in Brussels, Belgium that certifies and accredits international movers. FAIM – *FIDI Accredited International Mover* – is

recognized throughout the world as the standard of excellence for international moving services and FAIM/ISO is the very pinnacle of these quality standards. As part of the FAIM certification process, independent

consultants conduct a detailed evaluation of every aspect (over 200 defined quality requirements) of the moving company’s operations, including –



- financial status
- environmental policy
- staff training and
- management processes.

Currently only 500 international moving companies in the world have achieved FIDI accreditation. Stevens International is one of these companies. SIF team members are FIDI Certified Gold Graduates – meaning they have the highest understanding of international moving training and knowledge.

Other worthwhile memberships to look for on an international mover’s “resume” include the *International Association of Movers* and the *Latin American & Caribbean Movers Association*. It’s also a positive sign if your mover is licensed by the *Federal Maritime Commission* and the *International Air Transport Association*. One final note for this section. Multi-lingual



capabilities are obviously a big plus in this line of work and our Stevens International relocation coordinators are fluent in numerous languages.

Those are your three key considerations when relocating employees overseas. Make sure you pick the right person for the job, put equitable, easily understood policies and procedures in place and use an experienced and knowledgeable international mover.

International relocation step by step. Finally, we thought it might be helpful to you to outline how the international relocation process is typically carried out here at Stevens:

1. The customer contacts Stevens International
2. A Stevens International moving coordinator:
 - Helps to determine the customer's needs
 - Explains all international moving and relocation services available, such as packing, moving, forwarding, shipping, storage and insurance
 - Outlines the Stevens International duties and the customer's responsibilities for before, during and after a relocation
 - Provides an accurate estimate
 - Plans all logistics of the move
 - Negotiates the best rates
 - Supervises the carriers and agents utilized and monitors each phase of the relocation
 - Makes sure all documentation is completed and submitted accurately and on time
 - Remains responsible for servicing the shipment according to the instructions of the shipping consultant or the overseas agent
 - Dispatches the appropriate material, labor and equipment.
3. Expert international movers:
 - Wrap and pack goods that are to be shipped

Last year Stevens International handled over 2,000 (non-military) relocations. More important though than the number of moves we made is the fact that our customer satisfaction scores – at nearly 99% – were the highest in the entire Stevens



organization. Of course, we'd love to demonstrate that level of service for you firsthand. So whether you're planning your first international relocation, looking to improve on your initial effort or are an experienced hand who's exploring alternatives to your current mover please let us know how the Stevens International staff can be of service to you.