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Communicating Internationally

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In 2013, it is estimated that 50.5 million people worldwide worked outside of their home country. That number is expected to grow to nearly 57 million by 2017.¹ An expatriate assignment offers the opportunity to grow your business and professional knowledge, increase your network, and improve your ability to work with diverse groups of people.

However, there are significant challenges working outside your home country that can jeopardize the likelihood of success. One of the biggest challenges is communication, especially when the assignment is in a country with a different native language. Focusing on learning the art of clear communication will greatly improve your results and increase your ability to adapt effectively to your new surroundings. Understanding and utilizing some simple tips will help increase your probability of success:

- Communicate in a structured way when speaking and using email—Framing your thoughts in a bullet-point style will allow you to clarify your points prior to speaking or writing them. While valuable, a free-flowing discussion can be very difficult for non-native speakers to follow, which will limit their

ability to contribute valuable information to the discussion.

- Try to eliminate non-essential words—Using the minimum number of words necessary allows the listener to quickly identify and understand the important parts of the message.
- Avoid using jargon and arcane words (like arcane!)—Using words that are not familiar to your audience will hurt the effectiveness of your message and may cause people to give up on trying to understand your communication.
- Remember to proofread and correct misspelled or missing words—A native speaker will understand that you meant “read” when you typed “reed” because the words and context are very familiar. However, a non-native speaker may not be able to make that leap.
- Summarize conclusions of any discussion in writing so that everyone can review and correct any misunderstanding. Written language is typically easier to understand than spoken language since the reader can take the time necessary to read and review the communication. Summarizing the conclusions will ensure that everyone is on the same page moving forward.
- Speak slowly and clearly.

Remember to use your new-found communication skills when you return to your home assignment. The same techniques that are so essential internationally will make you that much more effective at home. ●

ENDNOTE

¹ http://www.finaccord.com/press-release_2014_global-expatriates_size-segmentation-and-forecast-for-the-worldwide-market.htm.