

Chapter 9

The Social Expat–Preneur: Examining a Growing International Career Model Supporting Global Social Entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT

Social entrepreneurship extends beyond home country borders as individuals seek to find meaning and share passion with the world. The globalization of corporations and individuals has resulted in a surge in expatriate social entrepreneurs. These individuals have broken down barriers to pursue a passion and increase social awareness around the globe. This chapter describes an international career model of five different forms of expatriate social entrepreneurs or “social expat-preneurs” within the broader international career construct of self-initiated expatriates—(1) pre-departure, (2) transitioned, (3) retired senior, (4) avocation-driven, and (5) social expat-intrapreneur—with vivid examples of each form. This chapter also outlines benefits to host countries and examines the importance of further research.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations of all sizes are recognizing and exploiting opportunities for expansion abroad, facilitated by our overall global general trend of increasing international collaborations, global mobility, advancements in telecommunications, and growing variety and attractiveness of government-promoted incentives that encourage foreign direct investment, (Collings, 2014). Parallel with this international expansion is an increasing recognition among organizations and their many stakeholders of the imperative of corporate governance at home and abroad that is in line with principles of sustainability, or the triple bottom line (Stenzel, 2010; Norman & MacDonald, 2004; Gupta & Vegelin, 2016).

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With their eye on their financial bottom line, international corporations in their foreign locations are increasingly developing their own social responsibility initiatives as well as partnering with both the private and nonprofit sectors to also address social and environmental needs (Gonzalez-Perez & Leonard, 2013). Within this global sustainability movement, social entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as a major driver in identifying opportunities to solve or mitigate pressing social and environmental needs, and in developing new social entrepreneurial ventures of many varieties to implement plans for addressing those needs (Stenn, 2017). And these social entrepreneurship efforts are being instigated by entrepreneurs found in nonprofit, public, and private sectors. According to Konda, Starc, and Rodica (2015),

It is not surprising that social entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly important. Social entrepreneurship is a process, a logic of action, which can take place in different organisational contexts: a charity, a commercial organisation, a government organisation, a community organisation, or through a new venture.

The above continued international business and attendant social entrepreneurship expansion provide an increasing array of attractive opportunities for individuals who wish to work in foreign environments and thereby develop valuable global competencies (Vance, 2005). Research suggests that despite their active international expansion abroad, organizations generally fall short in helping their employees develop these valuable competencies. With this realization, individuals increasingly are assuming greater responsibility for advancing their global competence development and international careers (Inkson & Arthur, 2001). This shift from a traditional company-directed effort to a more individualized focus in employee career and professional development has received growing attention in recent literature related to self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) who travel abroad on their own initiative (McNulty & Vance, 2017). Or while they are already working abroad, many individuals self-initiate into new working arrangements in their effort to support themselves as well as ultimately build global career capital (Doherty, Richardson, & Thorn, 2013; McNulty & Vance, 2017). Here we distinguish SIEs from migrants who depart from or even flee their home country primarily motivated by economic and/or socio-political necessity (Haug, 2008). We also here distinguish SIEs from those typically of a younger age who are motivated to travel abroad more by curiosity and the compelling attraction of adventure than by professional career advancement considerations (Inkson & Myers, 2003).

SIEs are rather entrepreneurial in nature and tend to be undaunted by occupational and organizational constraints, desiring to have maximum influence on their own international career progression and direction rather than to be dependent upon organizations, and vulnerable to capricious decision-making and politics (Andresen, Al Ariss & Walther, 2012). Although many SIEs secure employment with local organizations based in the host country or with local operations of multinational organizations, a growing number become involved in new venture operations or begin their own new ventures, whether profit or nonprofit (McNulty & Vance, 2017).

In this chapter, we first will examine SIEs who become expatriate entrepreneurs or “expat-preneurs” in their new host country environments. We then will identify a segment of expat-preneurs who have significant engagement in social entrepreneurial activities. Based on our review of the literature and our own professional experience, we then will begin to classify these “social expat-preneurs” into various distinct career categories. This social expat-preneur career conceptual framework development is an im-

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