

The Repatriation Readiness Checklist

9 risk points that quietly drive returning employees out — and what to put in place for each.

You spent years and six figures developing someone abroad. Then they come home — and the support stops at the airport. Reverse culture shock, a lost expat identity, and no clear role waiting are why a large share of repatriates leave within a year or two of returning, taking the very experience the assignment was meant to build. The return is the assignment's blind spot. Use this to close it — before you lose the person.

6–12 MONTHS BEFORE THE RETURN

01 There's no real role waiting — just an ambiguous “we’ll find something.”

Put in place — Start career-reintegration planning 6–12 months out and name a concrete role or path. A missing next role is the single biggest driver of repat attrition.

02 The skills, perspective, and networks built abroad go uncaptured.

Put in place — Debrief what they gained and map where it applies at home — so the assignment's value returns with them, not just the person.

03 Everyone pictures “home” the way they left it — including the employee.

Put in place — Prepare the employee and family that home has changed, and so have they. The reunion rarely matches the memory.

THE RETURN & FIRST 90 DAYS

04 Coming home is assumed to be easy, so no one checks in.

Put in place — Treat re-entry like an assignment, not a non-event — structured check-ins across the first 90 days.

05 Reverse culture shock blindsides them — often harder than the move out.

Put in place — Normalize the 're-entry curve' in advance. The dip hits harder precisely because no one warns them it's coming.

06 The loss of the expat life — autonomy, adventure, status — goes unspoken.

Put in place — Give explicit permission to grieve what doesn't come home with them. Unspoken loss is where disengagement begins.

MONTHS 3–12 BACK HOME

07 The workplace and relationships moved on without them.

Put in place — Support active reconnection — with colleagues, a culture that shifted, and friends whose lives kept going.

08 They feel like a stranger in their own country — “no one gets it.”

Put in place — Connect them with peers who've repatriated. Isolation is the quiet engine of 'maybe I should just leave.'

09 Retention is left to chance — and the person you invested in walks.

Put in place — Run a 12-month reintegration + retention plan. Attrition risk peaks 6–12 months after the return, not at the airport.

Want the system behind this checklist?

The Repatriation Toolkit gives HR and Global Mobility teams the full program — the readiness assessment, the employee track, and the partner & family re-entry paths — built to run internally.

Book a free 30-minute call: anchorpointpartners.co/contact

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