

# A WORLD OF EXPERIENCE

Swapping home comforts for a stint overseas can be a daunting prospect but working abroad can diversify your skills, benefit your employer – and put you in line for senior positions. **Karen Higginbottom** reports

**W**e live in an increasingly globalised economy with companies spanning many countries and cultures.

In some organisations, experience of working overseas is a prerequisite for a senior leadership post. According to the latest global annual CEO survey by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), Growth Reimagined, 20% of CEOs lead organisations based in a nation other than the one where they were born.

On top of this, executives surveyed for the Global Professionals on the Move report 2011 cited improved career opportunities and greater earning potential among their top reasons for relocating to another country.

International assignments can definitely advance your career as a manager, says Tim Smeaton, CEO of specialist recruitment firm Hydrogen, which commissioned the report. "It

differentiates you from your peers. There are two core reasons for this: people who work in emerging markets are often faced with more opportunities and a great deal of responsibility. They have to deal with a different culture and set of regulations, and must get to grips with a different customer base. Our clients are progressively seeing their business on a global level."

Overseas postings can have a beneficial impact on both the individual employee and the organisation, says Michael Dickmann, professor of international human resource management at Cranfield School of Management. "Almost all the expatriates I've interviewed have said they developed as a person. In terms of benefits to the business, it's slightly more ephemeral. Organisations find that the expatriate's communication skills have improved and the individual has become more tolerant."

Managers can develop many other skills from international assignments, says Ben Wilkins, director of

international assignment services practice at PricewaterhouseCoopers. "They are managing cross-cultural situations and developing their abilities in that area. They also have a better understanding of how their organisation works through seeing it from a different perspective."

## PARIS POSTING

An international assignment helped 41-year-old Ross James secure his partnership at auditing firm Deloitte. He undertook two international placements for the company in France: the first in 1995 when he was a newly qualified accountant, and another in 2003. "My first secondment was my choice," he says. "I wanted to use my language skills, and the decision to go to France did change the course of my whole career."

James started off as a manager in the audit division in Paris but found that he was increasingly working on special projects as a consequence of being an expatriate in Paris.

As a result of his first placement, ►