

SUMMARY REPORT

General Electric Medical Systems Global Assignment Survey

Purpose. This survey was conducted to provide an initial assessment of the needs of GEMS employees who are assigned to work in locations outside of the United States. A second goal of the survey was to determine to what extent these needs were being met and how satisfied these employees were with the global assistance services received. To obtain a more complete picture, both the employee and his or her family members on assignment were asked to participate in the survey.

Procedure. The survey was developed in a three step process. First, the materials used in the global assignment training programs were reviewed. Second, open-ended interviews were conducted by researcher Mark Attridge with five families currently on global assignment. And third, this information was used to create an initial draft of the survey, which was then revised by Nan Sheppard at GEMS and Mary Pigatti at OPTUM® Global Assistance Program. In early March, 1995, the adult version of the survey was mailed to all current GEMS employees on global assignment (N = 50) and to their spouses (N = 35) and the youth version of the survey was mailed to their children (N = 63). The initial due date for survey response was March 31, but due to delays in getting the survey and a low response rate, surveys were received by mail and by FAX until the end of May, 1995. The completion of surveys was both voluntary and anonymous (although respondents could indicate their name if desired).

Sample Characteristics

Employees. A total of 15 GEMS employees (13 males and 2 females) returned the survey. This was a response rate of 30%. Of this group, 12 reported that their spouse was on assignment with them and 10 reported also having children with them while on assignment. Concerning the length of current global assignment, 3 employees had been on assignment less than 3 months, 1 employee from 3 to 6 months, 2 employees from 6 to 12 months, and 9 for more than a year. The country of assignment ranged from France (10 employees), Japan (1), Hong Kong (1), and Spain (1) (2 = left item blank).

Spouses. A total of 10 spouses of GEMS employees (all female) also returned the survey. This is a response rate of 29%. Concerning the length of current global assignment, 1 spouse had been on assignment less than 3 months, 1 spouse from 6 to 12 months, and 8 for more than a year. The country of assignment included France (7), Japan (1), China (1), and Spain (1). Both the employee and spouse from 7 couples are represented in this study.

Children. 15 children of GEMS employees also returned a survey. This is a response rate of 24%. This group included 8 males and 7 females. The age ranges included 4 who were between 0-5 years old, 7 who were between 6 and 12 years, and 4 who were between 13-18 years. Concerning the length of current global assignment, 2 children had been on assignment less than 3 months, 2 children from 6 to 12 months, and 11 for more than a year. Country of assignment included France (11), China (1), and Spain (2).

Thus, this sample represents about one-third of current GEMS global assignment families. The typical survey respondent had been on assignment in France for more than a year.

Current Life Satisfaction

To provide a context for interpreting the other questions on the survey, respondents were first asked a series of questions to determine their current level of satisfaction with several areas of life. Each area listed below was rated on a scale of 1 to 5 scale with 1 = "terrible" and 5 = "delighted" and was prefaced by the phrase: "How do you feel about your..."

	Employees	Spouses	Children
work assignment	4.13	3.00	--
career development	4.00	2.40	--
intimate / family relationships	3.00	3.11	4.39
social / friend relationships	3.20	3.44	4.08
physical well-being	3.53	3.67	4.85
life in general	3.73	3.44	4.39

The average ratings suggest that both employees and their spouses were moderately satisfied with these areas of their lives. An exception was that satisfaction with career development was rated as lower than the scale midpoint for spouses. Children were quite satisfied with each area.

Results: Employee and Spouse

Needs Assessment and Satisfaction with Services

The results of the survey are presented according to the different areas that were assessed. The general process involved having the person rate each area on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 = low and 5 = high, both for the importance of that area for a successful global assignment experience and for their satisfaction with the services received for that area.

Pre-Decision or Pre-Departure Needs. Table 1 shows the results for ratings of the importance and satisfaction with services for 14 need areas associated with pre-decision or pre-departure aspects of global assignments. For employees, almost all of the areas received an average rating for importance that was close to or above the scale mid-point of 3. The most important areas included: moving, personal tax consultation, and global human resources preparation sessions. Spouses also considered many of the areas to be of similar importance. The level of satisfaction with pre-departure services averaged 2.94 for employees and 3.13 for spouses, both of which are near the scale midpoint of 3.0. Average ratings ranged from a high of 4.5 for the house hunting trip to a low of 2.0 for financial consultation. For employees, although 8 areas of service were rated above the scale midpoint for satisfaction, 6 were rated below the midpoint which suggests some dissatisfaction with several areas. Also, most of the employees and spouses had not used the human resource services for these needs. This, however, is partly due to the recent development of many of these programs and their unavailability to some of these respondents.

Post Arrival and On Assignment Needs. Table 1 also shows the results for ratings of the importance and satisfaction with services for 7 need areas associated with the period of post arrival and currently on assignment. For employees, almost all of the areas received an average rating for importance that was close to or above the scale midpoint. The most important areas included: in-country community orientation, in-country administration and work orientation, and language training. Spouses also considered these areas as important, especially the on-going language training. The level of satisfaction with all of the post arrival and on assignment services averaged 2.76 for employees and 2.96 for spouses, both of which are just below the scale midpoint of 3.0. The level of employee satisfaction with post arrival and on assignment services ranged from a high of 3.5 for language training to a low of 1.33 for the Buddy Program. Spouse satisfaction with services in these areas was in the moderate range. Again, the majority of employees and spouses had not used human resource services for these post arrival and on-assignment needs.

Specific Issues: Work. Table 2 shows the results for ratings of the importance and extent of getting needs met for specific issues concerning work and global assignments. For both employees and spouses, each of the 13 work issues was judged as important to a successful global assignment. The most important issues included: quality of supervisor / management relations, career and professional development, and preparation for next assignment or repatriation. All spouses gave the issues of preparation for next assignment and expatriate benefits and allowances the maximum importance rating of 5. Most of the work issues were rated in the moderate range for having one's needs met concerning that issue. The average "needs met" rating across all the work issues was 3.20 for employees and 2.70 for spouses. These ratings ranged from a high of 3.85 for benefits to a low of 2.6 for contact and relationship with the sponsor. Work areas that employees volunteered as important and yet lacking in support included a support infrastructure in the home country (for better repatriation) and training and site tour for a new assignment.

Specific Issues: Daily Life / Family. Table 2 also shows the results for ratings of the importance and extent of getting needs met for specific issues concerning daily life and family aspects of global assignments. For both employees and spouses, each of the 15 issues was judged as important to a successful global assignment. The most important issues included: finding a place to live, exploring school and day care opportunities for children, and decisions about the transfer of personal belongings. Spouses also found important the issues of exploring their career alternatives (recall that career development was rated somewhat low by spouses in the life satisfaction section) and connecting with other expatriates. The average rating for getting their needs met for the daily life and family issues was 3.14 for employees and 3.00 for spouses. These ratings ranged from a high of 4.55 for assistance with finding a place to live to a low of 1.76 for exploring career alternatives for spouse.

Comments. Optional written comments were provided by only a few survey respondents. The exact comments are listed in Table 3. There are many ideas for services and kinds of assistance that would benefit these workers and their families. The role of language training, quality of life experiences and connection to US entertainment, and interacting with other expatriate families who have gone through a global assignment were noted.

Results: Youth

The children were asked to describe what they liked the most and also what they disliked the most about the following key areas: Home and neighbors, school, friends, and other. Table 4 presents the specific statements written by the 15 children in the study. Most liked their home but found it a bit hard to meet others in the neighborhood. A mixture of good and bad experiences were noted concerning the schools. There were more liked than disliked aspects of the area of friends. In the "other" category, children generally noted how much they liked the travel and quality of life. One reported missing the U.S.. These comments seem to reflect the overall life satisfaction ratings (see page 2) that were all close to the high end of the rating scale.

Conclusions

This survey is limited to the approximately one-third of current GEMS employees, spouses and children on global assignment. The current life satisfaction ratings reveal that these people are moderately satisfied with their lives. The overall picture from the ratings of importance for various issues occurring during pre-decision/pre-departure, post arrival and on assignment, work, and daily life and family is that there are few areas that were not considered at least moderately important. The level of satisfaction with services designed to address these issues tended to be variable, with some services meeting the needs of employees and others not meeting their needs. This survey offers a starting point for suggesting areas in which the global assignment human relations programs can be changed and improved. Future study of these issues could include the assessment of the views and experiences of recently expatriated GE employees and their families.

Table 1

Needs Assessment and Satisfaction with Services	How <u>important</u> is this area to you for a successful global assignment experience?	If you have received GE / GAP training or assistance for this area, how <u>satisfied</u> were you with it?
PRE-DECISION or PRE-DEPARTURE	Low 1 2 3 4 5 High Average (n=left it blank) EMPLOYEE (n=15) SPOUSE (n=10)	Low 1 2 3 4 5 High Average (n=left it blank) EMPLOYEE (n=15) SPOUSE (n=10)
Moving: packing, shipping, storing	4.47 (0) 4.33 (1)	3.88 (7) 4.29 (3)
Personal tax consultation	4.13 (0) 4.00 (1)	3.89 (6) 3.67 (4)
Global human resources preparation sessions	4.07 (0) 3.75 (2)	3.50 (9) 3.25 (6)
House hunting trip to country of assignment	4.00 (0) 4.80 (0)	4.50 (7) 4.38 (2)
GEMS sponsor appointment	4.00 (1) 3.67 (7)	2.60 (10) ----- (10)
Workshop: Living and Working in ...	3.92 (2) 3.50 (2)	4.20 (10) 3.80 (5)
Language training	3.67 (0) 4.22 (1)	3.83 (10) 3.33 (7)
GE medical clinic debriefing	3.40 (0) 3.60 (5)	3.63 (7) 3.50 (8)
GEMS expatriate workbook	3.40 (0) 3.50 (4)	3.63 (7) 4.00 (6)
GEMS expatriate mentor <i>and/or</i> mentor family	3.36 (1) 3.17 (4)	2.50 (9) 2.00 (9)
OPTUM GAP financial consultation	3.33 (3) 3.33 (4)	2.00 (13) 1.00 (9)
OPTUM GAP legal consultation	3.08 (3) 2.50 (4)	2.50 (13) 2.00 (9)
Face-to-face session with OPTUM GAP counselor	3.00 (3) 3.00 (4)	2.25 (11) 2.00 (7)
Workshop: Managing the Transition Overseas (GAP)	2.92 (3) 3.17 (4)	2.50 (11) 3.50 (7)

POST ARRIVAL and ON ASSIGNMENT	Low 1 2 3 4 5 High Average (n=left it blank) EMPLOYEE (n=15) SPOUSE (n=10)	Low 1 2 3 4 5 High Average (n=left it blank) EMPLOYEE (n=15) SPOUSE (n=10)
In-country community orientation	4.07 (1) 4.22 (1)	3.20 (4) 2.50 (4)
In-country administrative / work orientation	4.07 (1) 4.00 (5)	2.00 (8) 2.50 (8)
Language training	4.00 (2) 4.33 (1)	3.50 (9) 3.80 (5)
Global Human Resources updates (i.e., job postings)	3.57 (1) 3.00 (7)	3.00 (9) ----- (10)
Corporate communications	3.29 (1) 3.40 (5)	3.29 (8) 4.00 (7)
Buddy Program - host country	3.17 (3) 2.86 (3)	1.33 (12) 2.00 (9)
OPTUM GAP initiated follow-up	2.64 (3) 2.71 (3)	3.00 (12) 3.00 (6)

Table 2

Specific Issues	How <u>important</u> is this issue to you for a successful global assignment experience?	In general, to what extent have your needs concerning this issue been met so far?	
WORK	Low 1 2 3 4 5 High Average (n=left it blank) EMPLOYEE (n=15) SPOUSE (n=10)	Low 1 2 3 4 5 High Average (n=left it blank) EMPLOYEE (n=15) SPOUSE (n=10)	
Quality of supervisor / management relations	4.47 (0) 4.00 (8)	3.33 (3)	2.00 (8)
Career and professional development	4.40 (0) 4.67 (7)	3.00 (3)	2.00 (7)
Preparation for next assignment or repatriation	4.29 (1) 5.00 (7)	2.60 (10)	1.00 (8)
Communications with home office	4.27 (0) 4.50 (8)	3.46 (2)	2.00 (8)
Support from host country business colleagues	4.20 (0) 3.50 (6)	3.83 (3)	3.00 (7)
Understanding of local business protocol and customs	4.13 (0) 4.50 (6)	3.42 (3)	4.25 (6)
Expatriate benefits / allowances	4.07 (0) 5.00 (7)	3.85 (2)	4.00 (6)
Compensation	4.07 (0) 4.33 (7)	3.83 (3)	3.50 (8)
Clarity of employee job duties while on assignment	4.00 (0) 4.50 (6)	3.50 (3)	2.67 (7)
Contact and relationship with sponsor	4.00 (1) 3.50 (8)	2.60 (5)	2.00 (8)
Ability to communicate effectively in host language	4.00 (1) 4.40 (5)	3.18 (4)	3.20 (5)
Duration of global assignment	3.80 (0) 4.75 (6)	3.45 (4)	2.75 (6)
Other : (a) support infrastructure in home country (b) training and site tour for new assignment	4.50 (13) 0 (10)	1.50 (13)	0 (10)
DAILY LIFE / FAMILY "Assistance with..."	Low 1 2 3 4 5 High Average (n=left it blank) EMPLOYEE (n=15) SPOUSE (n=10)	Low 1 2 3 4 5 High Average (n=left it blank) EMPLOYEE (n=15) SPOUSE (n=10)	
Finding a place to live	4.54 (2) 4.70 (0)	4.55 (4)	4.33 (1)
Exploring school / daycare options for children	4.25 (3) 4.40 (0)	3.25 (7)	3.00 (2)
Decisions about transfer of personal belongings	4.23 (2) 3.90 (0)	3.82 (4)	3.13 (2)
Finding acceptable medical and dental care	4.15 (2) 4.50 (0)	2.25 (3)	2.56 (1)
Meeting people from local community	4.00 (1) 3.90 (0)	2.64 (4)	2.78 (1)
Setting up the household (shopping, operating machines)	4.00 (2) 3.60 (0)	3.60 (5)	2.75 (2)
Banking and financial matters	3.92 (2) 4.20 (0)	3.30 (5)	3.50 (2)
Learning about community and social events	3.85 (2) 3.90 (0)	2.82 (4)	2.22 (1)
Private transportation (car lease / purchase options)	3.75 (3) 3.60 (0)	3.00 (4)	2.63 (2)
Visits to home country	3.62 (2) 4.00 (0)	3.11 (6)	3.57 (3)
Exploring career alternatives for spouse	3.54 (2) 4.44 (1)	1.75 (7)	2.00 (5)
Orientation to the culture of the host country	3.54 (2) 3.80 (0)	3.38 (7)	2.88 (2)
Dealing with culture shock	3.43 (1) 3.70 (0)	3.00 (7)	3.33 (1)
Connecting with other expatriates	3.23 (2) 4.44 (1)	3.50 (3)	3.22 (1)
Public transportation	3.00 (2) 3.20 (0)	3.20 (5)	3.00 (2)
Other (1): maintain time period of work contract	0 4.00 (9)	0	1.00 (9)

Table 3

OPTIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS

Employee Comments

1. Language is important but it is not considered as important by host country, management and time to study a language especially in year one of a hopefully multi-year and successful assignment is not supported/prioritized. Ex. It is not valued. No help was offered to receive U.S. sporting events via satellite(yes some things like NCAA b-ball tournament NBA playoffs and finals, superbowl I have missed a lot in the 9 years of living as an expat). Generally, I experienced a very weak intro. and welcome to this assignment.

Spouse Comments

1. I find it telling that the spouse version of this survey does not differ from the employee version. Over half the questions either do not apply to me or refer to things with which I am unfamiliar. I have received no Gap training or assistance. The assistance I have gotten has come from GETSCO to help with housing, schools and community orientation. I would qualify the work the corporate relocation company did as average. I have found the people at GETSCO to be very polite and helpful but do not understand what questions are appropriate to address to them and what I should just be figuring out myself. In moving to a new global assignment, the spouse is often faced with creating a whole new life for him or herself and the children. While the employee finds an infrastructure and daily routine already established by the office environment, the spouse has no frame work on which to fall back on. The employee is immediately introduced to colleagues and business associates while the spouse can feel isolated and alone. Changing assignments may mean leaving a good job behind, along with friends and having to adapt to a new home, school, and perhaps a new language. In order for the global assignment to be a success, the needs of the spouse and the children must be taken into account, in particular in the areas of language training, exploring career alternatives for the spouse and assistance with finding appropriate schooling for the children.

2. My French teacher was great but there wasn't time for enough lessons. The sea shipment went well, the air shipment was a disaster. The clinic visit was good except they drew too much blood. My language lessons have not started yet due to company foot-dragging. OPTUM tried to contact us but had a wrong phone number. I haven't tried to return the call because I don't know how to make a collect call. A big opportunity to be of service: help with lease or purchase of cars, could be as simple as a list of recommended used cars and dealerships.

3. I think some formal mentor-family program would be a great idea. The corporate relocation people tried to be helpful but it was very superficial instead of practical and the big deal was being "taken" out to lunch. Forget that- I want to know how to put salt in my dishwasher/what kind of detergent-what are all the different kinds of flour in the store, etc. It seems ridiculous to re-invent the wheel every time. The spouse (women) do an informal helping program but you feel like you might be bothering someone etc. Also people have different needs based on children- ages, location, schools- the best preparation for this whole experience was Marc Boute program- the human relations experience out in Waukesha was not very helpful and one more duty/responsibility at a time when things were very busy-if at the time we could have met an expat family, that might have been handy.

Table 4

Youth Survey

Area	What you <u>like</u> the most about it	What you <u>dislike</u> the most about it
Home and neighbors	<p>The cookies the neighbors gave me. The house is pretty.</p> <p>Bigger, I can run around more.</p> <p>It's in a great location. We were lucky to get a modern home with friendly neighbors.</p> <p>Generally loose rules, privacy most of the time.</p> <p>My friends live so close to my home and my house is very comfortable.</p> <p>My room, the garden, the neighbor.</p> <p>The dog is friendly and Anne-Sophie (neighbor) , puzzles and toys.</p> <p>Garden, my room, the playroom and the toys in it.</p> <p>It has a computer, It's close to a lot of things.</p> <p>Friendly neighbors. Near good boulangeries and crepe stands, good view.</p> <p>I like my house because it is large and has a big yard.</p> <p>It's a quiet neighborhood, I have some friends that live by me.</p> <p>pretty, lots of plants and flowers.</p> <p>I like having a big house.</p>	<p>Curfew, one telephone, a lot of misunderstanding, communication problems with parents, dark room.</p> <p>Splinters from playroom floor</p> <p>My home is too small, We can't have a dog. It has no yard.</p> <p>Concierge a little small.</p> <p>I dislike most of my neighbors because I don't know them and they are Spanish and they don't like me very much.</p> <p>I'm not very known around here.</p> <p>Hard to meet people, most are unfriendly.</p> <p>People aren't friendly.</p>
School	<p>I like the teachers, I like the children there.</p> <p>We get to do French</p> <p>There is an open and friendly environment and the students and teachers are accepting and tolerant.</p> <p>Many fun teachers, I can be with my friends, discipline</p> <p>School is right across the street.</p> <p>Recess, library, gym</p> <p>Lots of toys. Playing in the courtyard.</p> <p>Playing, reading stories.</p> <p>I get a lot of vacation.</p> <p>Big. Good facilities. People are friendly.</p>	<p>I don't like Stephanie pushing me around and Simon hits me on the head at lunch.</p> <p>We have to use the materials.</p> <p>Although it's a great school it is desperately in need of financial aid and drastic measures need to be taken.</p> <p>The pressure, sometimes too much homework.</p> <p>My teacher yelling, when people in my class make fun of me.</p> <p>When friends hit me.</p> <p>Being bossed around.</p> <p>The bus.</p> <p>Bus. A little rowdy and obnoxious.</p>

	<p>It has an American school and has many people with the same cultural background that I have.</p> <p>It's cool because I'm known around here and you get a lot of attention.</p> <p>Some fun activities.</p> <p>I like long recesses. I go to the Lycee International, I like when my friends and family visit me in France and can see my new life.</p>	<p>Not enough people - it is too small.</p> <p>The work, it's very challenging.</p> <p>Too much homework, no playground. It's hard to learn a new language especially when I have French and American in the same day.</p> <p>Everybody fights.</p> <p>The food is terrible and we must eat there, we cannot bring anything.</p>
Friends	<p>I like their names.</p> <p>My friend doesn't play with me much.</p> <p>I have met a diverse group of people from all different backgrounds. They're great people that I'll keep in touch with long after I've left France.</p> <p>The friends I make are very close to me, I love spending time with them.</p> <p>I still have quite a few friends.</p> <p>When they're nice to me, when they play with me.</p> <p>When they give me a kiss and say good-bye after school.</p> <p>When we hold hands to walk 2x2.</p> <p>They are fun and nice.</p> <p>Same as USA</p> <p>I have some very close friends and there are some very nice people at the American School.</p> <p>I like my friends and I have really good friends.</p> <p>It's fun to learn the other native language of your friends.</p> <p>I like international friends.</p>	<p>I don't like their bad behavior. Josephine is a busy body.</p> <p>Not too many to choose from.</p> <p>When they are mean to me.</p> <p>When they hit me.</p> <p>When they push me down.</p> <p>I don't have any.</p> <p>Not near my house.</p> <p>I want a girlfriend.</p> <p>I miss my old best friend.</p> <p>I can't communicate with them.</p>
Other:	<p>It's fun here.</p> <p>We're done with the boxes in the house.</p> <p>I can do sports and play soccer.</p> <p>This has been a fantastic experience. I'll never regret living here.</p> <p>Going to the bread store with Laura and Philip.</p> <p>Quality of life and beauty of country.</p> <p>I like Spain because it is incredibly safe here. You can stay out late without worrying.</p> <p>I've had a lot of fun here in Spain.</p> <p>I like being able to go to other countries around the world.</p>	<p>The move- it was crowded with boxes.</p> <p>My only fear is having to reassimilate myself once we've moved back to the states.</p> <p>Some things I like they don't sell.</p> <p>When I fall down and scrape my knees.</p> <p>I miss the states!!! I miss the movies, the mall, the television, the food and everything! Oh yeah, I also miss my friends.</p> <p>I don't want my mom to start working again. She's a Doctor and goes on call every fourth night.</p> <p>There are gates in all the houses.</p>