REPATRIATION:

What is Repatriation?

Repatriation generally refers to the termination of the overseas assignment and coming back to the home country or to the country where the HQ is located or to the home subsidiary from where he/she was expatriated

So, Expatriation process also includes repatriation:
The activity of bringing the expatriate back to the home country.

Therefore, Repatriation may be defined as the activity of bringing an expatriate back to the home country and Repatriation is the final step in the expatriation process (recruitment & selection ➔ pre departure training ➔ foreign assignment ➔ repatriation or reassignment)

Reasons of Repatriation?

1. **Most common Reason:** the period of posting got over
2. **Second com. Reason:** The expats want their children study in a home country school.
3. **Third com. Reason:** the need for the expats to move on to another global assignment of a similar kind – where he/she would have the opportunity to use the skills and expertise acquired.
4. **Forth com. Reason:** the assignees are not happy in their overseas assignment. Un-happiness can be result of:
   - inability to adjust to host country environment
   - spouse’s or children’s unwillingness to stay
   - lack of moral support from HQ at the time of crisis.
5. **Fifth Com. Reason:** Expats return because of failure to do the assigned job

Repatriation Process: Repatriation process has a sequence of four phases:

![Repatriation Process Diagram]

### Phases of Repatriation Process (1)

1. **Preparation** – Approx. 5-3 month before the expat returns to the home country, he or she should be taken through a re-entry phase, followed by actual repatriation.

This involves developing plans for the future and collecting information about the new position the expat is likely to occupy after returning home.

During the pre re-entry phase, the mentor can play an advisory role in finding the expat a suitable position within the organization. The company may provide a checklist of items to be considered while leaving the host country.

2. **Physical Relocation** – This stage involves removal of personal belongings, breaking ties with colleagues and friends and traveling to the next posting, usually the home country.

Professional re-entry training should also be given to expat and his or her family that covers social cultural contrast orientation, an updated political and social issues and changes in the home country, job opportunities for the partner, an evaluation of the experiences in the host culture and the psychological aspects of repatriation.
Phases of Repatriation Process (2)

3. **Transition** – Phase in which the expatriate and his or her family readjust to their return to the home country. Some companies hire relocation consults to assist in this phase also. Typical activities include acquiring temporary accommodation, making arrangements for housing and schooling, performing necessary administrative tasks (e.g. renewing driver’s license, applying for medical insurance, opening bank accounts)

4. **Readjustment** – This phase involves coping with reverse culture shock and the expatriate’s career demands on the organization. Generally, the more the host country culture differs from the home country culture, the more difficult the reintegration process will be. Likewise, the more successful the expat was in the host culture, the more difficult it is to adjust to the work environment at the home base.

Challenges of effective Repatriation? Based on three factors:

- **Organizational Factors:**
  - Recent research indicates that the majority of organizations have no formal repatriation programme to help expatriates readjust on return to the home country
  - Only a small proportion of the repatriation programmes have consideration for the spouse
  - Typical reasons given by organizations for not having a repatriation programme include:
    - Lack of the requisite expertise
    - Programme cost
    - Lack of a perceived need by top management
  - Some organizations provide a form of repatriation assistance in the form of a “mentor”
  - The mentor is usually a superior to the expatriate and provides assistance in the form of information, by maintaining regular contact with the expatriate, and by taking the expatriates interests regarding promotion and job placement on return etc. into account

- **Individual Factors:**

- **Social-cultural Factors:**

Research indicates that the likelihood of an organization using mentors depends on the size of the expatriate workforce, the organizational unit responsible for handling expatriates and the nationality of the organization.

**Individual relations – Job Related factors**

- Career anxiety
  - No post-assignment guarantee of employment
  - Loss of visibility and isolation
  - Changes in the home workplace
- Work adjustment
  - The employment relationship and career expectation
  - Re-entry position
  - Devaluing of the international experience
- Coping with new role demands
  - Role behavior
  - Role clarity
  - Role discretion
  - Role conflict
- Loss of status and pay
  - Autonomy
  - Responsibility
  - Lower pay in absolute terms
  - Drop in housing conditions

**Social – cultural factors**

- If an expatriate served in a foreign assignment in a high-profile position where he or she enjoyed considerable and sustained interaction with the social, economic and political elites of the host country, a feeling of disappointment may emerge after return to the home country.
- In addition to the expatriate’s social readjustment problems, the social readjustment problems of his or her accompanying family members must also be taken into consideration as well.
- Reestablishment of social networks in the home country may be difficult if, for e.g., the expatriate and family are repatriated to another locality in the home country. It may be that friends have moved away while the expatriate was on assignment and that other friends may have joined the workforce and have no time for social activities.
- Children may encounter social readjustment problems in school because they are not update on latest trends, and may have problems adjusting to their home country educational system.
Managing Repatriation:

Successful repatriation requires proper management or action on at least three areas:
1. Re – expatriation
2. Repatriation programme and
3. Repatriation strategies

Re expatriation:

As we already observed, a returnee is likely to be posted to another host country unit. Re expatriation is, therefore, a common phenomenon and the international HR Professional should handle it effectively.

When an expatriate succeeds on an overseas assignment, the individual’s competitiveness has been established and he/she proves to be the ideal choice for re-expatriation. Re expatriation offers several benefits to MNC:

1. Contributes to Skill of expatriates whose skill and abilities can be used as and when the need arises.
2. Relocation of competent people in international assignment
3. The normal difficulties and challenges of managing expatriation and repatriation are few as the MNC has a pool of international managers who are ready to fly to any part of the globe at any time.

MNCs need to have mentoring programme under the care of mentor. Alternatively designated as company contact, sponsor or godfather, the mentor is usually a senior person and knows the expatriate personally. The mentoring duties include:
1. Maintaining contact with the expatriate throughout the assignment.
2. Ensuring that the expatriates are kept up-to-date with the development in the home country.
3. Ensuring that the expatriates are retained in existing management development programmes
4. Assisting expatriates with the repatriation process, including helping them with a repatriation position.
5. Parallel to having mentors, MNCs also will have a repatriation programme in place, a typical repatriation programme is given below:

- Preparation, physical relocation and transition information (that the company will help with).
- Financial and tax assistance, e.g., benefit and tax changes, loss of overseas allowances, etc.
- Re-entry position and career-path assistance
- Reverse cultural shock, including family disorientation
- School systems and children’s education and adaptation
- Workplace changes, e.g., corporate culture, structure, decentralization, etc.
- Stress management and communication-related training
- Establishing networking opportunities
- Help in forming new social contracts
**Repatriation Strategy:**

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<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-expatriation</td>
<td>• Agreement outlining the type of position expatriates will be placed in upon repatriation</td>
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<td>• Agreement about the duration of stay overseas</td>
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<td>• Keeping the post back at home vacant till the assignee comes back</td>
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<td>During the assignment</td>
<td>• Continuous communication with expatriate</td>
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<td>• Visit to headquarter when on vacation to maintain visibility</td>
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<td>Preceding Repatriation</td>
<td>• Career guidance between 6-12 months before the end of assignment. Ensure that all elements of the repatriation process are transparent. Such elements to include company policies with regard to travel reimbursement leave period, shipping of household goods, and contact information about the mentor.</td>
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<td>After repatriation</td>
<td>• Training seminars to help returnees cope with reverse culture shock</td>
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<td>• Financial counseling and financial / tax assistance</td>
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<td>• Reorientation programme about the changes in the company policies, practices, personnel and strategies.</td>
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<td>• Reassurance that the company values international experience</td>
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Source: [www.expat exchange.com/ Repatriation checklist by Alexandra Tanski, Sept 001](https://www.expatexchange.com/)

**Summary:**

- Repatriation refers to the homecoming of an expatriate after completing his or her assignment in a host country.
- Though critical, many MNCs do not have a proper home coming policies.
- Repatriation poses greater challenges than expatriation. Challenges present from the employer and the assignee side. What the management should appreciate is that repatriates offer several benefits to the organization. Most returnees are likely to quit if not handled carefully.
- Repatriation process involves such steps as: preparation, relocation, transition and readjustment.
- Management of repatriation requires action in three areas: re-expatriation, repatriation programme and repatriation strategies.