

Personal experience drives advice for women working abroad

By Michelle Archer
Special for USA TODAY

Get Ahead by Going Abroad: A Woman's Guide to Fast-track Career Success

By C. Perry Yeatman
and Stacie Nevadomski Berdan
Collins, 242 pages, \$24.95



Yeatman: Went from \$25,000 a year to \$500,000 in 10 years.



Berdan: Moved to Hong Kong the day after her wedding.

Landing an overseas assignment is a lot like winning a role on Broadway: You'll be in the spotlight, the stakes are high and you darn well better know how to act.

Along with pressure comes potential for great reward, and good reviews can catapult a career. That's especially true for women, according to *Get Ahead by Going Abroad: A Woman's Guide to Fast-track Career Success* by C. Perry Yeatman and Stacie Nevadomski Berdan.

Yeatman, now a vice president at Kraft, grabs readers right away with her enviable personal experience. At 25, she was making \$25,000 a year as an account executive when she took her first job overseas. Upon her return 10 years later, after stops in Singapore, Moscow and London, she was earning

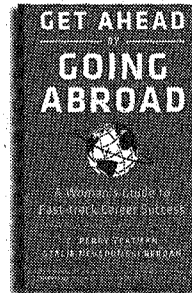
more than \$500,000 a year. She tells of having an office off of Red Square, touring Bangkok with Margaret Thatcher, shopping in Istanbul and scuba diving in the Maldives, none of which would have happened had she stayed in the USA.

Berdan moved to Hong Kong the day after her wedding. She spent three years in Asia with public-relations firm Burson-Marsteller,

leaving the USA as a 27-year-old vice president and returning as a global managing director.

Yeatman and Berdan combined their experiences with those of dozens of other women to offer thorough advice ranging from how to get an overseas job to dealing with culture shock and paperwork. They cover the personal side, too, including shopping deals and tips

10 ways to land a foreign assignment



1. Perform your current duties with excellence.
2. Make your international aspirations known often and broadly. Incorporate this into your performance reviews.
3. Find a mentor to advocate for you, especially one with an international network.
4. Learn and/or practice a foreign language.
5. Research those countries you might be transferred to so that you can make an informed decision.
6. Demonstrate your cultural awareness and sensitivity while still in your home market.
7. Point out ways you can make a difference for your organization overseas.
8. Package yourself and your accomplishments in a non-self-serving way that demonstrates your potential value.
9. Volunteer for special projects involving international work.
10. If you believe that you will not be transferred by an organization, you can move to the country of your choice on your own.

for those who bring "trailing spouses" (husbands) and children.

Gender stereotypes that limit women from being considered for overseas assignments still exist but are diminishing, the authors say.

Snagging the first international assignment is the hardest part. The right combination of professional or academic skills, perseverance and good luck makes it simpler, they

say. Raise your hand for more assignments, make contacts with international leaders and network, they advise. Be sure everyone knows your desire to work abroad, including your immediate supervisors and the international players in your own organization.

Some women profiled in the book simply moved to their country of choice without a job and

found freelance work or positions in the local offices of multinational companies, though the authors warn to investigate local employment laws beforehand.

What's most captivating about the book are the personal anecdotes. There's Mary (no last name used) from the Federal Aviation Administration, who speaks of going to Singapore as a size 14-16 and being shooed out of dress shops by the sales staff, who told her, "You are King Kong size."

But for all the horror stories, there are countless inspirational ones, such as former Amoco executive Anna Catalano's experience in China. While trying to establish a joint venture with the largest Chinese electric company, Catalano found herself and two other female Amoco executives across the negotiating table from a team of Chinese men, something she was sure had never happened before. They managed to beat out the competition to become the Chinese company's primary partner.

The anecdotal stories are sprinkled throughout, so it's tricky remembering who's who. Yet this is a handy book, with plenty of insight.