



## Secondments: Cross-Experiential Learning

Paul von Wittgenstein (Da Xiong)  
General Manager  
CanadAsia Management Development Ltd.

### Introduction

Greetings and welcome back. Today I want to share some information with you about an innovative way to build competencies in your organization.

Secondments have been around for a long time. I am lucky to have been involved in designing and participating in secondment programs and can personally attest to their benefits.



First of all, let's answer the question: What is a secondment?

***A secondment is the transfer of a person from their regular organization or department for temporary assignment elsewhere.***

### Secondment: Definition

A secondment is the temporary allocation or reassignment of a human resource from one work unit to another for the development of the individual, their organization and the recipient host. Secondments can be "internal" (i.e. from one department to another within the organization, such as the case for temporary cross-functional project teams); or they can be "external" between organizations.



Of course in considering secondments, there are several important considerations such as:  
Operational (can staff be reassigned and still maintain operational effectiveness)  
Potential conflict of interest risks or issues (i.e. competition or confidentiality)

However, employee secondments can benefit several parties while achieving multiple objectives for the employer, employee and host organization. Secondments are an innovative and different training approach that allows staff (secondees) to experience another sector and or see another "know how" in action.

Secondments are also a real alternative option to redundancy and / or outplacement support for individuals affected by change.



## Secondment Programs

A secondment program is an innovative and integrated approach to developing people, skills, culture and organizational competencies. Secondments can be an important part of key staff career development and organizational succession planning. They should be included as a functional choice for addressing performance shortfalls.

Basically a secondment is a period of time spent by an employee with another organization or department. Secondments provide the opportunity to develop people and partnerships.

They involve the temporary allocation of a human resource in a partnership that achieves defined corporate aims, demonstrates commitment to employee development and benefits the wider business community.



***Secondments are an important method for bringing best practices to life.***

Secondments can be one way (you send out or receive in secondees); or they can be reciprocal (you temporarily “trade” employees with other companies or departments. Regardless, every secondment should make a sustainable difference to all the parties concerned. For secondments to work, you need to ensure that;

- Employers’ business needs remain top priority
- Skills are matched to employers’ requirements
- Aspirations and expectations are aligned and managed for achieving results
- Desirable attributes are developed and success is measured

### Secondment Benefits - Employee:

- Enhance existing and gain new technical skills
- Adapt to new work environments
- Broaden and enrich work experience
- Increase career advancement eligibility
- Improve interpersonal, communication and teambuilding skills

### Secondment Benefits - Employer:

- A creative method of developing key staff
- Gaining new skills from the relevant secondees
- A way of retaining valuable skills and people
- Positive news in time of redundancies / restructuring
- The opportunity to gain fresh cultural insights
- The benefit of gaining, retaining and sharing knowledge





Transitional secondments provide a supportive and effective cushion to people affected by change, and are a cost effective way of implementing change in a time focused way that provides a benefit for all parties concerned.

**Conclusion:**

Secondments can cover a variety of different needs and requirements.

1. **Training secondments** offer a creative way of training and developing key staff that prepare for meeting the future needs of the business. They further allow the organization to address skills shortages, know how, and technical expertise.
2. **Developmental secondments** allow for the two way transfer of skills, with specific matching of needs and requirements, in a time focused manner. In doing so this allows for the training, motivation and provision of skills to employees
3. **Interim recruitment secondments** is an established and proven method of importing skills and experience to bring about change quickly and in a time focused manner, without an ongoing commitment. Interim Recruitment has an immediate impact allowing for "business as usual" to be maintained

So how does this help you and how can you use it? I suggest that managed strategically, secondments may be a useful and creative tool for dealing more effectively with staff turnover. Give it some thought.

Until next time, good business to you.

Paul von Wittgenstein (Da Xiong), P. Ent.  
General Manager  
**CanadAsia Management Development Ltd. (CAMD)**

[www.camdltd.com](http://www.camdltd.com)

[info.sh@camdltd.com](mailto:info.sh@camdltd.com)

The German Centre, Shanghai  
Room 659, Tower 3, No. 88 Ke yuan Rd.  
Pudong, Shanghai  
China 201203

phone: 86 21 2898 6658 or 2898 6659

fax: 86 21 2898 6670