

## Chapter 1: Status and Training before Departure

In this chapter we will look at whether the expatriates wished to come to Japan, the amount of advance notice that they received, the existence of regulations or guidelines in the dispatching organization concerning the assignment period, whether the person dispatched to Japan and his or her accompanying family members received any pre-departure training, and if so, the nature of that training, and the state of the expatriate's Japanese language ability.

### 1. Status Before Assignment to Japan

#### (1) Desire to come to Japan

We asked the respondents whether they had wanted an overseas assignment in Japan at the time that their current assignment was determined. In response, 91.9% overall said that they had wanted to come to Japan, 1.3% said that they had not wanted to come, and 6.2% had no strong feelings either way, which makes it clear that over nine-tenths of the persons surveyed wanted to come. On the other hand, only an extremely small minority of about 1% did not want to come (cf. Table 1-1).

**Table 1-1: Desire to come to Japan (by the location of the headquarters of the dispatching organization)**

	Total	Wanted to come	Didn't want to come	No strong feelings either way	N.A. (No Answer)
North America	(92) 100.0	90.2	1.1	8.7	0.0
Europe	(173) 100.0	93.6	1.7	4.6	0.0
Oceania	(12) 100.0	91.7	0.0	8.3	0.0
Asia	(23) 100.0	87.0	0.0	8.7	4.3
N.A.	(7) 100.0	85.7	0.0	0.0	14.3
Total	(307) 100.0	91.9	1.3	6.2	0.7

Looking at the figures by location of the headquarters of the dispatching organization, we find that the percentage of expatriates desiring an assignment in Japan was somewhat lower among respondents from Asia (87.0%), but it may be said that there was almost no difference by region.

## (2) Advance Notice of the Assignment to Japan

The respondents received notification of their assignment to Japan an average of 4.5 months before departure. If we consider the fact that workers dispatched from Japanese companies are notified 3.2 months in advance, a period of 4.5 months does not seem like such a short period of time. (See The Japan Institute of Labour, *The Fourth Survey on Work and Life among Japanese Expatriates at Japanese-affiliated Companies Abroad*, December 2001.) Some respondents, 12.1%, were notified only one month before, while, on the other hand, more than three-tenths, or 33.6%, were informed 6 or more months beforehand (cf. Table 1-2).

**Table 1-2: Advance notification of assignment to Japan (by the location of the headquarters of the dispatching organization and by industry)**

	Total	1 month in advance	2 months in advance	3 months in advance	4 to 5 months in advance	6 or more months in advance	N.A.	Average
<b>Location of headquarters</b>								
North America	(92) 100.0	17.4	13.0	26.1	17.4	26.1	0.0	3.9
Europe	(173) 100.0	10.4	12.1	20.2	13.9	43.4	0.0	5.1
Oceania	(12) 100.0	0.0	25.0	58.3	8.3	8.3	0.0	3.4
Asia	(23) 100.0	13.0	47.8	26.1	4.3	8.2	0.0	2.6
N.A.	(7) 100.0	0.0	42.9	14.3	14.3	14.3	14.3	3.2
<b>Industry of the dispatching organization</b>								
Manufacturing	(115) 100.0	6.1	13.9	25.2	14.8	40.0	0.0	5.1
Non-manufacturing	(189) 100.0	15.9	18.0	22.2	13.8	29.6	0.5	4.1
N.A.	(3) 100.0	0.0	0.0	66.7	0.0	33.3	0.0	4.0
Total	(307) 100.0	12.1	16.3	23.8	14.0	33.6	0.3	4.5

Note, however, that the greatest difference in advance notification periods was by location of the headquarters of the dispatching organization. Advance notification was longest in Europe, with 43.4% receiving notice 6 or more months

beforehand, and the average notification period being 5.1 months. In Asian companies, notification most often occurred 2 months in advance, with even the average, 2.6 months, being rather short.

There was also a great difference by industry. While prior notice was given 5.1 months ahead of time in the manufacturing industries, the average in the non-manufacturing industries was 4.1 months in advance. It was relatively common for employees in the non-manufacturing industries to be notified 1 or 2 months in advance. In fact, the percentage of persons in the non-manufacturing industries who were notified only 1 month in advance was rather high at 15.9%, and slightly fewer than six-tenths, or 56.1% received 3 months' notice or less. Similar percentages for the manufacturing industries were relatively small, with 6.1% receiving 1 month's notice and 45.2% receiving 3 months' notice or less. We therefore found quite a difference between the manufacturing and non-manufacturing industries. This is probably because overseas assignments are a part of normal operations and a normal phase of one's career in such non-manufacturing industries as trade, finance and insurance, and the service industries.

### **(3) Regulations or Guidelines Concerning Assignment Periods**

#### [1] Existence of Regulations or Guidelines

Asked whether their dispatching organization had regulations or guidelines concerning the length of overseas assignment periods, 21.2% of expatriates said that it had regulations, 42.0% said that it had guidelines, 34.2% said that it had neither regulations nor guidelines, and more than six-tenths, or 63.2% said that it had regulations or guidelines (cf. Table 1-3).

Existence of regulations and guidelines concerning overseas assignment periods differed greatly depending on the headquarters of the dispatching organization. Most North American companies had neither regulations nor guidelines, but on the other hand, most Asian companies had regulations, and very few had neither regulations nor guidelines.

The existence of regulations or guidelines also differed greatly according to the size of the dispatching organization. Although six- to seven-tenths of companies with fewer than 1,000 employees had neither regulations nor guidelines, the percentage of companies having regulations or guidelines grew along with the number of employees. Thus, for example, 83.9% of large corporations with 20,000 or more employees had regulations or guidelines about overseas assignments.

Furthermore, a less noticeable tendency was for dispatching organizations with labor unions to have regulations or guidelines, and this is believed to be because the labor unions apply a certain amount of control to the assignment of employees.

**Table 1-3: Existence of regulations or guidelines concerning overseas assignment periods (By the location of the headquarters of the dispatching organization, the number of employees in the dispatching organization, and the existence of labor unions at the dispatching organization)**

	Total	Regulations	Guidelines	Neither	N.A.
<b>Location of headquarters</b>					
North America	(92) 100.0	15.2	40.2	44.6	0.0
Europe	(173) 100.0	23.1	43.9	31.2	1.7
Oceania	(12) 100.0	25.0	41.7	33.3	0.0
Asia	(23) 100.0	30.4	39.1	13.0	17.4
N.A.	(7) 100.0	14.3	28.6	42.9	14.3
<b>The number of employees in the dispatching organization</b>					
Fewer than 500 employees	(37) 100.0	13.5	24.3	59.5	2.7
500–999 employees	(14) 100.0	7.1	14.3	71.4	7.1
1,000–4,999 employees	(80) 100.0	17.5	36.3	42.5	3.8
5,000–9,999 employees	(38) 100.0	26.3	36.8	34.2	2.6
10,000–19,999 employees	(34) 100.0	26.5	44.1	29.4	0.0
20,000 or more employees	(87) 100.0	24.1	59.8	13.8	2.3
N.A.	(17) 100.0	29.4	47.1	23.5	0.0
<b>Labor unions</b>					
Yes	(173) 100.0	24.3	46.8	26.0	2.9
No	(121) 100.0	16.5	36.4	44.6	2.5
N.A.	(13) 100.0	23.1	30.8	46.2	0.0
<b>Total</b>	(307) 100.0	21.2	42.0	34.2	2.6

**Table 1-4: Overseas Assignment periods regulated by regulations or guidelines (By the location of the headquarters of the dispatching organization, age and the position of the employee)**

	Total	2 years or less	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years or more	N.A.	Average
<b>Location of headquarters</b>								
North America	(51) 100.0	17.6	45.1	25.5	7.8	0.0	3.9	3.2
Europe	(116) 100.0	6.9	38.8	15.5	25.0	1.7	12.1	3.7
Oceania	(8) 100.0	25.0	50.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.0
Asia	(16) 100.0	0.0	62.5	31.3	6.3	0.0	0.0	3.4
N.A.	(3) 100.0	33.3	0.0	66.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.3
<b>Age</b>								
20s	(6) 100.0	50.0	33.3	16.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.7
30–34	(32) 100.0	21.9	43.8	15.6	3.1	0.0	15.6	3.0
35–39	(33) 100.0	12.1	39.4	24.2	15.2	0.0	9.1	3.5
40–44	(49) 100.0	4.1	59.2	20.4	14.3	0.0	2.0	3.5
45–49	(23) 100.0	8.7	43.5	17.4	26.1	0.0	4.3	3.6
50–54	(29) 100.0	6.9	27.6	20.7	31.0	3.4	10.3	4.0
55 or older	(22) 100.0	0.0	27.3	27.3	27.3	4.5	13.6	4.1
<b>Current job rank</b>								
Chairman or president	(62) 100.0	4.8	29.0	22.6	32.3	3.2	8.1	4.0
Executive class	(37) 100.0	13.5	37.8	18.9	18.9	0.0	10.8	3.5
Head of Department	(53) 100.0	13.2	58.5	13.2	7.5	0.0	7.5	3.2
Head of division	(13) 100.0	7.7	46.2	38.5	0.0	0.0	7.7	3.3
Section chief	(11) 100.0	9.1	36.4	36.4	18.2	0.0	0.0	3.6
Non-managerial/staff	(8) 100.0	25.0	37.5	12.5	12.5	0.0	12.5	3.1
Advisor, coordinator, consultant	(8) 100.0	0.0	62.5	25.0	0.0	0.0	12.5	3.3
N.A.	(2) 100.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.5
<b>Total</b>	(194) 100.0	10.3	42.3	20.6	17.5	1.0	8.2	3.5

## [2] Assignment Periods Stipulated by the Regulations or Guidelines

We asked the expatriates, who indicated the existence of regulations or guidelines about assignment periods, how long the period was, and the average was about 3.5 years.<sup>1)</sup> Periods of 2 years or less were the exception, at 10.4%. The most common responses fell into the ranges of 3 years (42.5%), 4 years (20.7%), and 5 years (17.1%) (cf. Table 1-4).

Furthermore, the assignment periods differed depending on the location of the headquarters of the dispatching organization, and the expatriate's current position and age. While the average assignment periods were 3.2 years for North American companies and 3.0 years for companies in Oceania, the average for European companies was noticeably longer at 3.7 years. In fact, the assignment periods of European companies were long, with 24.3% being 5 years. There was actually a correlation between the age of the respondent and the length of the assignment period, with the assignment periods tending to be longer the older the expatriate was. Similarly, there was a tendency for assignment periods to be longer for persons whose positions were chairman, company president, or executive. This is probably due to the strong correlation between a person's age and position, but at the same time, it may also be true that higher-ranking employees are assigned for longer periods because the dispatching organization seeks administrative continuity.

However, we must keep in mind that whether a company actually abides by its regulations and guidelines about assignment periods is likely to be affected by the circumstances at the dispatching organization and the local receiving organization, or else by the need to train a successor to the expatriate employee.

## **(4) Expatriates and Union-Management Discussions**

We asked expatriates who were labor union members at their dispatching organizations whether their overseas assignment had been the subject of union-management discussions, and we found that such consultations had occurred in 1.6% of cases and had not occurred in 19.9% of cases, so it was clear that these assignments were rarely the subject of consultations. Most of the respondents, 77.7%, were either of unclear status or were not union members, so if we remove them from consideration as inapplicable, the overseas assignments of expatriates who were union members was the subject of union-management discussions in no more than 7.2% of cases, a negligible figure. There were no differences by location of the dispatching organization's headquarters (cf. Table 1-5).

**Table 1-5: Whether the expatriate's assignment was the subject of union-management discussions (by the location of the headquarters of the dispatching organization)**

	Total	Yes	No	N.A. or respondent not a union member
North America	(92) 100.0	1.1	5.4	93.5
Europe	(173) 100.0	1.7	24.9	73.4
Oceania	(12) 100.0	0.0	25.0	75.0
Asia	(23) 100.0	4.3	34.8	60.9
N.A.	(7) 100.0	0.0	28.6	71.4
Total	(307) 100.0	1.6	19.9	78.5

## 2. Pre-departure Training for the Overseas Assignment

### (1) Pre-departure Training for the Expatriate

The results of our question about what kind of pre-departure training the expatriates received are shown in Table 1-6. The most common preparation was a pre-assignment trip to Japan, taken by 64.8% of respondents. This indicates a significant difference from employees sent abroad by Japanese companies, only 20% to 30% of whom took such a trip.<sup>2)</sup> The next most common type of training was roundtable discussions or individual consultations with former expatriate assignees to Japan and general information about Japan. A high percentage of respondents, about five-tenths, reported undergoing both types of preparation. These are the types of training most closely concerned with life in Japan.

Types of training received by between three-tenths and four-tenths of respondents were corporate management philosophy and overseas strategy of the dispatching organization, Japanese language, and intercultural adaptation and communication. These were followed by training in overseas management and business, received by 25.1% of expatriates.

Few of the expatriates received training in English, perhaps because they were being assigned to Japan, and not even one-tenth received pre-departure training in such areas as Japanese industrial relations and labor practices or workplace disaster prevention measures.

**Table 1-6: Pre-departure training for the expatriate employee (by the type of training)**

	Total	Yes	No	N.A.
	(307)			
Japanese language	100.0	35.2	63.2	1.6
English language	100.0	8.5	74.3	17.3
Intercultural adaptation and communication	100.0	30.3	63.5	6.2
Overseas management and business	100.0	25.1	68.1	6.8
Japanese industrial relations and labor practices	100.0	5.5	86.3	8.1
General information on Japan	100.0	47.2	47.6	5.2
Roundtable discussions or individual consultations with former expatriates to Japan	100.0	54.4	40.4	5.2
Crisis management and safety measures	100.0	11.4	81.4	7.2
Health and illness management (including communicable diseases and AIDS)	100.0	18.6	73.9	7.5
Work disaster prevention measures	100.0	8.8	83.1	8.1
Corporate management philosophy and overseas strategy of dispatching organization	100.0	41.4	52.4	6.2
Pre-assignment trip to Japan	100.0	64.8	30.3	4.9

Compared to the training received by employees dispatched overseas by Japanese companies (See The Japan Institute of Labour, *The Results of the Forth Survey on Work and Life among Japanese Expatriates at Japanese-affiliated Companies Abroad*, December 2001.), the training received by expatriates featured a pre-departure trip to the host in a higher percentage of cases, and the number who had roundtable discussions or individual consultations with former expatriates or received general information about the host country was about 20% higher. Compared to instruction in the host country language for Japanese assigned to non-English-speaking countries, the percentage of expatriates receiving instruction in the Japanese language, 35.2%, was rather high. About 10% more expatriates than Japanese received instruction in intercultural adaptation and communication. In contrast, the expatriates were less likely than the Japanese to receive instruction in the English language, Japanese industrial relations and labor practices, crisis management and safety measures, or health and illness management. The low percentage of expatriates receiving instruction in English may be due to their already being sufficiently proficient in it or because English was not considered particularly necessary for work in Japan. (We plan to take another look at this point.) The low percentages for Japanese industrial relations and labor practices, crisis management and safety measures, and health and illness management are probably due to a belief that these will not often be necessary in Japan.



Whatever the case, pre-departure training for expatriates dispatched to Japan by foreign companies are characterized by pre-assignment trips to Japan, group discussion and individual consultations with previous expatriates, and general information on Japan, all of which were experienced by high percentages of expatriates. A fair percentage of them also received instruction in the Japanese language.

Furthermore, a look at Table 1-7 shows that when pre-departure training is analyzed by the country where the headquarters of the dispatching organization is located, we learn the following: expatriates dispatched by companies headquartered in Asia most often received instruction in English language, overseas management and business, crisis management and safety measures, and workplace disaster prevention measures. The fact that expatriates from North America and Oceania hardly ever received instruction in English is only to be expected, since it is their native language. On the other hand, a markedly low percentage of Asian expatriates took pre-assignment trips to Japan. This kind of training is one that North American and European or Western multinational corporations are especially enthusiastic about. With the exception of this item, Asian multinational corporations are actively engaged in pre-departure training for their expatriate employees.

**Table 1-7: Pre-departure training for the expatriate (by the location of the headquarters of the dispatching organization)**

	Total	Japanese language	English language	Intercultural adaptation and communication	Overseas management and business	Japanese industrial relations and management practices	General information about Japan	Discussion and consultations with former expatriates	Crisis management and safety measures	Health management and anti-illness measures	Work disaster prevention measures	Corporate management philosophy and overseas strategy	Pre-assignment trip to Japan
North America	(92) 100.0	33.7	0.0	31.5	22.8	6.5	45.7	55.4	9.8	14.1	6.5	34.8	72.8
Europe	(173) 100.0	38.7	10.4	28.3	23.1	5.8	43.9	53.8	9.8	19.7	8.1	42.8	64.7
Oceania	(12) 100.0	16.7	0.0	25.0	8.3	0.0	66.7	66.7	8.3	16.7	16.7	50.0	58.3
Asia	(23) 100.0	26.1	30.4	39.1	52.2	4.3	60.9	52.2	26.1	21.7	21.7	47.8	34.8
N.A.	(7) 100.0	28.6	14.3	42.9	42.9	0.0	71.4	42.9	28.6	42.9	0.0	57.1	71.4
Total	(307) 100.0	35.2	8.5	30.3	25.1	5.5	47.2	54.4	11.4	18.6	8.8	41.4	64.8

## (2) The Effectiveness of Pre-departure Training

When we asked about the effectiveness of the aforementioned pre-departure training that the expatriates had received, over half the respondents rated all the items as effective, with the exception of Japanese language and intercultural adaptation and communication.

The type of pre-departure training that received the highest rating was the one most commonly implemented, the pre-assignment trip to Japan, followed by instruction in English, roundtable discussions and individual consultations with returnees, and others. After their arrival, the respondents rated the pre-assignment trip, discussions and consultations with former expatriates, which provide specific information about the destination country as especially useful, along with English (although few expatriates received such instruction) (cf. Table 1-8).

**Table 1-8: The effectiveness of pre-departure training for expatriates (by the type of training)**

	Total	Very Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Effective	N.A.
Japanese language	(108) 100.0	8.3	30.6	39.8	19.4	1.9
English language	(26) 100.0	19.2	61.5	7.7	0.0	11.5
Intercultural adaptation and communication	(93) 100.0	16.1	33.3	41.9	5.4	3.2
Overseas management and business	(77) 100.0	22.1	44.2	20.8	2.6	10.4
Japanese industrial relations and labor practices	(17) 100.0	23.5	35.3	29.4	0.0	11.8
General information about Japan	(145) 100.0	11.7	49.7	29.7	2.1	6.9
Discussions and individual consultations with former expatriates	(167) 100.0	29.3	40.7	21.6	1.8	6.6
Crisis and management safety measures	(35) 100.0	20.0	57.1	11.4	2.9	8.6
Health and illness management (including communicable diseases, AIDS, etc.)	(57) 100.0	17.5	43.9	31.6	0.0	7.0
Work disaster prevention measure	(27) 100.0	18.5	48.1	18.5	0.0	14.8
Corporate management philosophy and overseas strategy of dispatching organization	(127) 100.0	14.2	55.9	22.0	1.6	6.3
Pre-assignment trip to Japan	(199) 100.0	39.2	41.2	11.6	0.5	7.5

### (3) Pre-departure training for accompanying family members

When we asked the respondents about pre-departure training for their accompanying family members, we found first of all that for every item, a lower percentage of family members received such training than did the expatriate employee. While over three-tenths received general information about Japan and had roundtable discussions and individual consultations with former expatriates, only a very small percentage received instruction in English or in crisis management and safety measures. (Table 1-9)

**Table 1-9: Pre-departure training for accompanying family members (by the type of training)**

	Total	Yes	Yes	N.A.
	(256)			
Japanese language	100.0	18.4	77.0	4.7
English language	100.0	5.9	78.9	15.2
General information about Japan	100.0	36.7	56.6	6.6
Discussions and consultations with former expatriates	100.0	34.8	57.4	7.8
Crisis management and safety measures	100.0	5.1	86.7	8.2
Health management and anti-illness measures (including communicable diseases, AIDS, etc.)	100.0	11.7	80.1	8.2

Table 1-10 shows the results of analyzing pre-departure training for accompanying family members by location of the headquarters of the dispatching organization. That is, training items directly related to life in Japan, such as general information about Japan and discussions and consultations with returnees were implemented at nearly the same rate for family members as for employees at companies based in North America or Oceania. In contrast, the implementation rate for family members in Asian companies was low, in contrast to the implementation rate for the employee. Based on this, we see that in North American companies in particular, training in matters connected with everyday life is usually given to both employees and their family members to nearly the same degree, while Asian companies proactively provide training for employees but do not take much of a role in providing training for accompanying family members.

**Table 1-10: Pre-departure training for accompanying family members (by the location of the headquarters of the dispatching organization)**

	Total	Japanese language	English language	General information about Japan	Discussion and consultations with former expatriates	Crisis management and safety measures	Health management and anti-illness measures (including communicable diseases, AIDS, etc.)
North America	(78) 100.0	17.9	1.3	50.0	41.0	5.1	9.0
Europe	(143) 100.0	20.3	8.4	30.8	32.2	4.9	13.3
Oceania	(10) 100.0	10.0	0.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	10.0
Asia	(20) 100.0	10.0	10.0	25.0	25.0	10.0	10.0
N.A.	(5) 100.0	20.0	0.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	20.0
Total	(256) 100.0	18.4	5.9	36.7	34.8	5.1	11.7

### **3. The Need for Language Skills in the Workplace**

#### **(1) The Need for Japanese Language**

Only a little more than half (53.1%) of the expatriates thought that Japanese language skills are necessary, and 45.9% stated that such skills were not necessary (cf. Table 1-11).

However, there were marked differences depending on the industry and size of the receiving organization and the age and position of the expatriate. That is to say, the highest percentage of respondents who thought that Japanese language skills were necessary was in the manufacturing industries, and furthermore, the percentage was also higher at smaller companies. This is probably because of the necessity of communicating in Japanese with the plant personnel in manufacturing industries and the need to communicate in the local language in companies with few employees. Similarly, younger, lower-ranking people found Japanese language skills to be more necessary, since they had more direct communication with workplace personnel. In addition, a high percentage of expatriates from Asian companies found Japanese language skills to be necessary.

#### **(2) Degree of Japanese Language Ability and Changes in Ability**

We asked the respondents who considered Japanese language skills to be necessary to provide a self-evaluation of their skills at the beginning of their assignment and currently. A total of 24.6% thought that their skills were extremely high at the beginning, so that they could handle any situation (12.9%) or could get

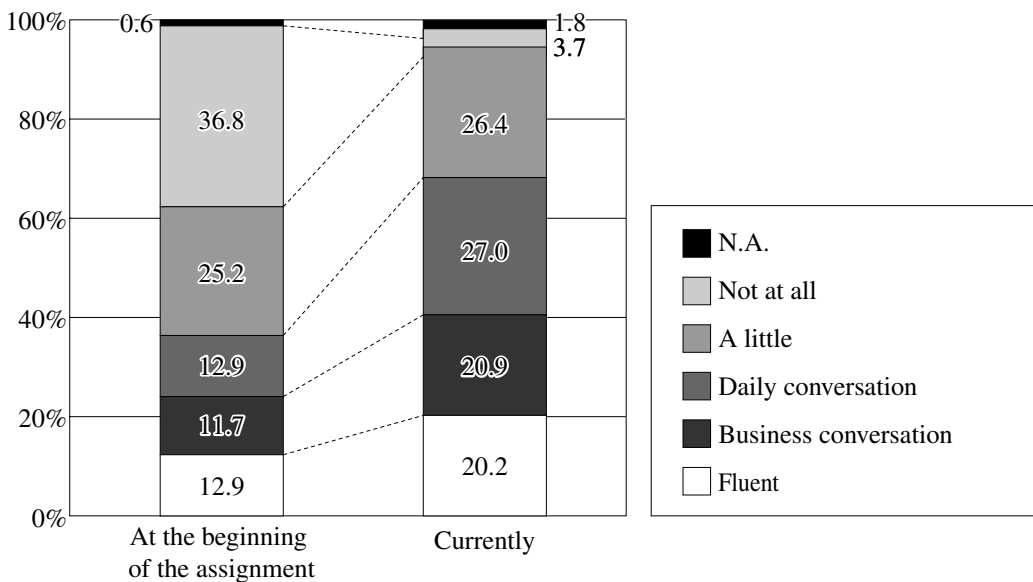
**Table 1-11: The Need for Japanese language skills (by the industry of the local organization, number of employees in the local organization, age, and position)**

	Total	Necessary	Not necessary	N.A.
<b>Industry of the local organization</b>				
	(115)			
Manufacturing industries	100.0	62.6	36.5	0.9
	(189)			
Non-manufacturing industries	100.0	47.1	51.9	1.1
	(3)			
N.A.	100.0	66.7	33.3	0.0
<b>Number of employees at local organization</b>				
Fewer than 10	(56)			
	100.0	75.0	23.2	1.8
10-30	(57)			
	100.0	66.7	29.8	3.5
30-99	(65)			
	100.0	41.5	58.5	0.0
100-499	(83)			
	100.0	39.8	60.2	0.0
500-999	(12)			
	100.0	50.0	50.0	0.0
1,000 or more	(33)			
	100.0	51.5	48.5	0.0
N.A.	(1)			
<b>Age</b>	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
20-29	(11)			
	100.0	72.7	27.3	0.0
30-34	(54)			
	100.0	63.0	37.0	0.0
35-39	(53)			
	100.0	56.6	41.5	1.9
40-44	(69)			
	100.0	53.6	44.9	1.4
45-49	(40)			
	100.0	40.0	60.0	0.0
50-54	(43)			
	100.0	48.8	48.8	2.3
55 or more	(36)			
	100.0	44.4	55.6	0.0
N.A.	(1)			
	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Current job rank</b>				
Chairman or president	(121)			
	100.0	52.1	45.5	2.5
Executive class	(58)			
	100.0	48.3	51.7	0.0
Head of Department	(65)			
	100.0	49.2	50.8	0.0
Head of division	(23)			
	100.0	56.5	43.5	0.0
Section chief	(14)			
	100.0	64.3	35.7	0.0
Non-managerial, staff	(13)			
	100.0	76.9	23.1	0.0
Advisor, coordinator, consultant	(11)			
	100.0	54.5	45.5	0.0
N.A.	(2)			
	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	(307)			
	100.0	53.1	45.9	1.0

along fine in the workplace (11.7%). It was thus apparent that a certain number of expatriates had some knowledge of Japanese at the outset. On the other hand, more than six-tenths said that they either knew only a few words at the beginning (25.2%) or knew no Japanese at all (36.8%).

When we asked for a comparison with their current proficiency in Japanese, 19.8% said that they could handle any situation and 21.0% said that they could get along in the workplace with no problems, for a total of 40.8%, so the percentage of persons with Japanese language skill had doubled since the beginning of the assignment. During the same period, the percentage of persons who had no Japanese language skills at all dropped sharply from 36.8% to 3.7% (cf. Figure 1-1).

**Figure1-1: Changes in Japanese Communication Skills**



**(3) The Need for English Skills**

As many as 96.1% of respondents thought that English language skills were necessary, which means that nearly all the expatriates felt this way.

The respondents who thought that English was relatively unnecessary were Asians or employees dispatched by Asian companies, as well as, of course, people who were skilled in Japanese. It is probably because these people were able to communicate in Japanese that they did not find English particularly necessary (cf. Table 1-12).

**Table 1-12: The need for English language skills (by the location of the headquarters of the dispatching organization, nationality, need for Japanese, and ability in Japanese)**

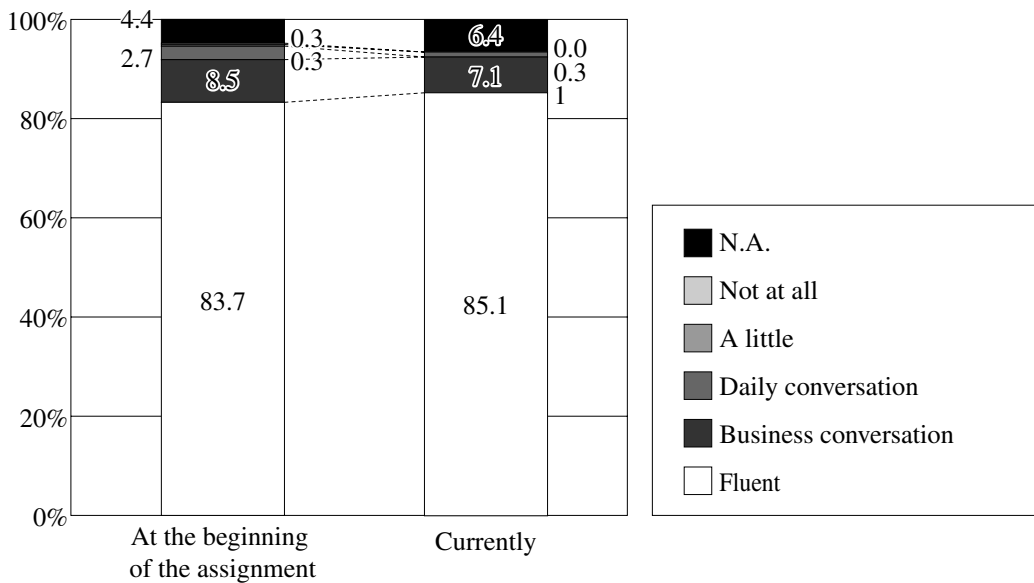
	Total	Necessary	Unnecessary	N.A.
<b>Location of headquarters</b>				
North America	(92) 100.0	98.9	1.1	0.0
Europe	(173) 100.0	96.0	2.9	1.2
Oceania	(12) 100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Asia	(23) 100.0	87.0	13.0	0.0
N.A.	(7) 100.0	85.7	0.0	14.3
<b>Nationality</b>				
North America	(78) 100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Europe	(184) 100.0	96.2	2.7	1.1
Oceania	(22) 100.0	95.5	0.0	4.5
Asia	(21) 100.0	81.0	19.0	0.0
N.A.	(2) 100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Need for Japanese (ability in Japanese)</b>				
Necessary (Fluent)	(33) 100.0	84.8	15.2	0.0
Necessary (Business conversation)	(34) 100.0	94.1	5.9	0.0
Necessary (Daily conversation)	(44) 100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Necessary (A Little)	(43) 100.0	97.7	2.3	0.0
Necessary (Not at all)	(6) 100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Necessary (unclear)	(3) 100.0	66.7	33.3	0.0
Unnecessary	(141) 100.0	98.6	0.0	1.4
N.A.	(3) 100.0	66.7	0.0	33.3
<b>Total</b>	(307) 100.0	96.1	2.9	1.0

#### (4) Degree of English Language Ability and Changes in Ability

We asked the respondents who considered English language skills to be necessary to provide a self-evaluation of their skills at the beginning of their assignment and currently. Their skills at the beginning were extremely high, with 83.7% able to handle any situation and 8.5% able to get along fine in the workplace, for a total of 92.3%. Unlike their Japanese language skills, the English language skills of most expatriates were high from the beginning of their assignment.

Thus, a total of 85.1% said that they could currently handle any situation in English, while 7.1% said that they could get along fine in the workplace, for a total of 92.2%, almost unchanged from the beginning of their assignments. We may state that people who already know English are assigned to Japan and that this situation has not changed (cf. Figure 1-2). Thus we may interpret the low percentage of expatriates receiving English instruction as indicating not a belief that English is unnecessary in Japan but the fact that they have already acquired English skills.

**Figure1-2: Changes in English Communication Ability**



#### 4. Summary

Over nine-tenths of the expatriates wanted to be assigned to Japan, and almost all of them wanted an overseas assignment.

Advance notification of the assignment averaged 4.5 months. Some people (12.1%) were notified 1 month in advance, while on the other hand, more than three-tenths, or 33.6%, were notified 6 or more months in advance.



Asked about regulations and guidelines about assignment periods, 21.2% of respondents said that there were regulations, 42.0% said that there were guidelines, and 34.2% said that there were neither regulations nor guidelines. More than six-tenths, or 63.2%, said that there were both regulations or guidelines. Asked how long the assignment period stipulated in the regulations or guidelines was, they gave an average response of 3.5 years. Those whose dispatching organization was headquartered in Europe had the longest assignment periods.

Expatriates who were members of a labor union at their dispatching organization were asked whether their assignment had been the subject of union-management discussions, but this was the case for only an extremely small percentage of the respondents.

With respect to pre-departure training, the most common type was a pre-assignment trip to Japan, experienced by 64.8% of respondents, followed by roundtable discussions and individual consultations with returnees who could offer specific advice and general information on Japan. Both of these types of preparation were experienced by a rather high percentage, about 50%. We may think of this as training closely related to life in Japan. Thirty to forty percent received instruction in management corporate philosophy and overseas strategy of the dispatching organization, Japanese language, and intercultural adaptation and communication. These were followed by overseas management and business, at 25.1%. Fewer than 10% received instruction in such items as English (perhaps because they were being assigned to Japan), Japanese industrial relations and labor practices, or workplace disaster prevention measures.

The type of pre-departure training rated as most effective was the one most commonly implemented, namely, the pre-assignment trip to Japan. This was followed by English language instruction (although few expatriates received it), and roundtable discussions and individual consultations with returnees.

In addition, more than three-tenths of accompanying family members received general information about Japan and had discussions and individual consultations with returnees.

Only a little more than half the respondents, 53.1%, of the expatriates said that Japanese language skills were necessary where they worked. In contrast, as many as 96.1% of the expatriates said that English was necessary. People who were already proficient in English tended to be assigned to Japan, but their Japanese language ability also rose to a certain extent during the period of their assignment.

(Notes)

- 1) Since the pre-departure notification period for employees dispatched from Japanese companies is 4.2 years, the assignment period for foreign-affiliated companies that have regulations or guidelines is 0.7 years shorter than that of Japanese companies. For details, please see The Japan Institute of Labour, *The Fourth Survey on Work and Life among Japanese Expatriates at Japanese-affiliated Companies Abroad*, December 2001.

- 2) For employees dispatched from Japanese companies, the percentage of employees taking a pre-assignment trip is rising, from 21.2% in the 1993 survey, to 25.9% in the 1998 survey, and to 25.9% in the 2000 survey, but the percentage is clearly lower than what we find in foreign-affiliated companies. For details, please see the introductory chapter and Chapter 1 of the aforementioned report.