

## Chapter 12

# POST MORALE

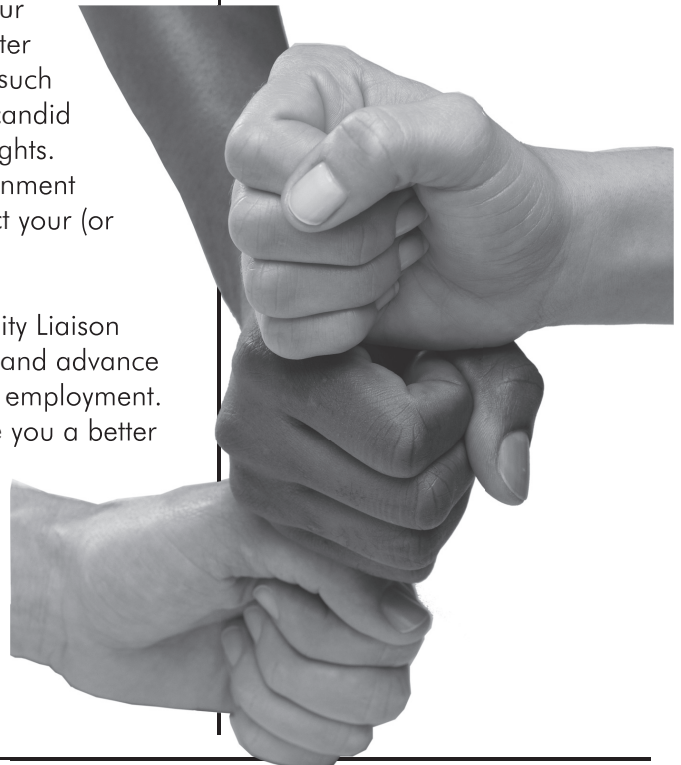
Post morale makes a big difference to your overseas tour. Do people enjoy working and socializing together? Is there a feeling of being one team, with an important goal? Do employees and family members feel listened to and valued? Is it clear, no matter what the circumstances, that management is trying to improve the situation?

Post morale can be affected negatively by external factors such as on-going crisis situations, uncertainty, anti-American sentiments, or limited resources and facilities. However, individual attitudes and actions can temper the impact of these outside influences. Morale can change with the arrival or departure of a single person or family.

While post leadership perhaps makes the biggest difference, each person affects mission morale. The following checklists suggest ways that everyone can help build and maintain high post morale.

### PRIOR TO ARRIVAL AT POST

- ❑ Do your homework! Make sure that every post on your bid list meets your needs. The Overseas Briefing Center can help, offering everything from official resources, such as TMTTHREE (“welcome”) cables or post reports, to candid anonymous opinions in the form of Personal Post Insights. Pay attention to factors such as availability of entertainment options and freedom of movement if these will impact your (or your family members’) well-being.
- ❑ Once you have an assignment, contact the Community Liaison Office (CLO) Coordinator for additional information and advance help with factors such as schools and family member employment. Ask to receive the post newsletter, if available, to give you a better idea about what’s happening.
- ❑ Find names and contact information for people who can answer questions for everyone in your family, whether about the new job, life at post, schools, pet supplies, or other factors important to you. Expectations influence your later experiences



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- 1) *Be secure enough not to micromanage, criticize, worry incessantly about your image, or feel that you need to artificially “take charge” to show your leadership skills. Trust your employees and let them do the job they are trained to do.*
- 2) *Provide a sense of mission and purpose. Help all to feel that they are making meaningful contributions and are part of a team working for an important goal.*
- 3) *Foster a respectful work environment and support community-building activities. Provide positive reinforcement and praise.*
- 4) *Listen to employees and family members. Recognize that schools and families are important and allow employees time for them.*

and the way you interpret them, so try to clarify on-the-ground conditions.

- Ask about your housing, with as many details as possible. If you will be staying in temporary quarters, find out what they are like and how long you might expect to remain there. Even if the news initially disappoints, you are better off being mentally prepared.
- Learn as much about the country and its language as you can. This matters for family members as well as employees. Even a few words of the local language can make a difference.
- Notify post of your arrival and who will be accompanying you. Let the Management Officer know if you are traveling with a pet. Try to plan your arrival at a time that is convenient for those meeting you.
- Make personal and financial arrangements prior to leaving the U.S. or your previous post.
- Pack your carry-on bags, luggage, and air freight wisely so that you can manage even if some of your luggage is lost or delayed.

- Be sure to let your sponsors (or the CLO Coordinator) know if you have special dietary needs or restrictions, since someone might be planning to purchase basic supplies or prepare a welcoming meal for you.

### AS A NEW ARRIVAL

- Thank everyone who provided pre-arrival information and those who spend time acquainting you with your new office and community. (Bringing small gifts of hard-to-find items might be a much-appreciated gesture.)
- Don't forget to pay back your sponsor for any expenses incurred on your behalf (yes, even if you never use the instant coffee).
- Attend briefings and orientation programs. Make sure family members obtain embassy ID cards and get the information they need.
- Keep an open mind and be flexible. Accept that your new life is different from the old. Try to avoid saying, "In [place name] we...."
- As the accompanying spouse or partner, remember how important and valuable you are, no matter what impression others give you. Don't hesitate to speak up or ask for help.
- Practice stress management techniques: eat nutritiously, get enough sleep, exercise, and take plenty of breaks for enjoyable activities.

### Management Officer List for Enhancing Post Morale

- 1) *Recognize that the services you provide are essential to post morale.*
- 2) *Listen to employees and family members. As one spouse said, “We can put up with poor living conditions if we feel that someone is listening and trying to improve things.”*
- 3) *Aim for fair treatment and clear communication.*

- ❑ Establish a routine or do what you can to gain a sense of stability and control (this is particularly important for family members, since employees have an instant routine).
- ❑ Seek out a local support network and don't allow yourself to become isolated. Make local as well as expatriate friends to enrich your experience.
- ❑ Bring home from the office publications and bulletins of interest if these are not provided via e-mail (being sure to follow adequate security precautions). Maintain good relationships at home and help with daily activities.
- ❑ Know post emergency and security plans (whether you are an employee or family member) and prepare documents and other items needed in the event of an emergency.

## WHILE AT POST

- ❑ Avoid comparisons of housing and other factors. Benefits vary from one agency to the next and apparent disadvantages in some areas may be balanced by advantages in others.
- ❑ Get to know local customs and courtesies. Try not to judge: things are "different," not necessarily "bad." Develop good communication with nationals at the mission. Practice the language. See the country.
- ❑ Take part in embassy community activities and work with others to create a supportive climate—but develop outside friends and interests as well. This makes life more interesting for everyone.
- ❑ Offer to be a sponsor for new arrivals. Share information and contacts. Loan items they might need while waiting for their shipments.
- ❑ Share books, music, videos or DVDs, catalogs, games, sports equipment, and other items that might be in scarce supply at post.
- ❑ Include colleagues in social functions who might otherwise have limited opportunity to attend such events. Invite others to special holiday events, remembering to include their houseguests, relatives, or other visitors.
- ❑ Send a guest list and, if appropriate, an explanation of purpose to colleagues invited to representational functions. As a guest, share responsibility for the success of representational functions.
- ❑ Help others at post when they go through difficult times. Provide a listening ear when needed.
- ❑ Give time to the commissary association, school board, American club council, or other organizations that benefit you.
- ❑ Continue to show appreciation to others. Take time to be thankful for extras that not every local resident has: air conditioning, pouch or APO, the IVG phone line, a backup generator, high-speed Internet, inexpensive household help, or whatever makes your life at post more pleasant.

### CLO Coordinator List for Enhancing Post Morale

- 1) *Provide accurate information.*
- 2) *Plan community building activities and make sure that the sponsor program works well (it should be a very high priority).*
- 3) *Listen to employees and family members.*

## PRIOR TO DEPARTURE FROM POST

- ❑ Follow the steps under "Prior to Arrival at Post," above.
- ❑ Find ways to say goodbye and thank you to the country and the people who helped you throughout your tour.
- ❑ Organize records at work to pass on what you have learned and eliminate discontinuity. Write your successor about the post and answer questions.
- ❑ Leave suggestions for enhancing post morale.

**RESOURCES**

**Family Liaison Office** (M/DGHR/FLO)

Room 1239, Harry S Truman Building  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520-7512  
Tel: (202) 647-1076 or (800) 440-0397  
Fax: (202) 647-1670  
Intranet: <http://hrweb.hr.state.gov/flo/index.html>  
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/>  
E-mail: [flo@state.gov](mailto:flo@state.gov) for general questions  
[FLOAskEducation@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEducation@state.gov) for education questions  
[FLOAskEmployment@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEmployment@state.gov) for questions about family member employment  
[FLOAskEvacuations@state.gov](mailto:FLOAskEvacuations@state.gov) for questions about evacuations

**Foreign Service Institute Transition Center**

(M/FSI/TC)  
George P. Shultz National Foreign Affairs Training Center (SA-42)  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20522-4202  
Physical location: 4000 Arlington Blvd., Arlington, VA (do not send mail to this address)  
Internet: <http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/>  
Intranet: <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/>

Directions, maps, parking and other information  
<http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c16687.htm>

**Overseas Briefing Center** (M/FSI/TC/OBC)

Room E2126  
Tel: (703) 302-7277  
Fax: (703) 302-7452  
E-mail: [FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov](mailto:FSIOBCInfoCenter@state.gov)  
Intranet Post Info To Go:  
<http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/tc/epb/epb.asp>

Related training videos can be viewed on site or checked out for two days from the OBC Information Center.

**Transition Center Training Division** (M/FSI/TC/T)

*Foreign Service Life Skills Training*  
Tel: (703) 302-7268  
E-mail: [FSITCTraining@state.gov](mailto:FSITCTraining@state.gov)

**Related Transition Center Training**

Realities of Foreign Service Life (MQ 803)  
Explaining America (MQ 115)  
Protocol and U.S. Representation Abroad (MQ 116)  
Communicating Across Cultures (MQ 802)  
Encouraging Resilience in the Foreign Service Child (MQ 500)  
<http://www.state.gov/m/fsi/tc/c6950.htm>