



# ROBERT WALTERS WHITEPAPER RETURN OF THE ASIAN TALENT

## FOREWORD

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It is an exciting time for Southeast Asia. The region's rapid economic progression has brought about a shortage of white-collared professionals working in emerging markets such as Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. As multinational companies expand into these countries, there is a strong demand for business-savvy talent with bilingual abilities and global mindsets.

Meanwhile, mature markets like Malaysia and Singapore, where candidates exceed the number of jobs available, are constantly in search of quality talent. One of the initiatives in Malaysia's Economic Transformation Programme launched in 2010 addresses the shortage of professionals and technical experts in the country, actively attracting overseas Malaysians to return to help fuel the local workforce.

In 2015, Robert Walters launched an award-winning campaign to actively and continuously engage overseas Singaporeans who may be looking for employment opportunities back home. 'Balik Kampung with Robert Walters', which was inspired by a familiar local phrase that essentially means 'to return home', saw a healthy demand of overseas Singaporeans keen to return and an equal number of employers who view them as an asset. Similar initiatives exist in selected Robert Walters' Southeast Asian offices, in line with the demand seen in the Southeast Asian region.

## SUMMARY

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This Robert Walters whitepaper has been created to help employers better understand the different motivators and incentives that will influence overseas Asians to seek employment opportunities back home. It explores:

- The likelihood of overseas Asians returning home
- What returning Asian talent want back home
- What hiring managers can do to hire overseas Asian talent
- Successful retention of Asians who have returned

This whitepaper is based on the findings of research through surveys and in-depth interviews conducted from June to December 2015. Robert Walters surveyed over 650 job seekers and hiring managers across Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.



# DO OVERSEAS ASIANS WANT TO RETURN HOME?

The five Southeast Asian countries in focus: Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam all face challenges in attracting and retaining talent. Hiring managers in Singapore, a mature employment market, see multiple offers extended to potential candidates. Hiring budget constraints is a common problem in Indonesia. Meanwhile, hiring managers in Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam regularly encounter candidates lacking in soft skills such as presentation, communication, and stakeholder management.

A large majority of employers surveyed view overseas Asians as a viable option to address these challenges. In recent years, these countries have also been active in their efforts to attract overseas Asian talent back home to fill the skills gaps in various industries.

## How Many Asians are Working Overseas?\*

429,872	1.4 million	212,500	148,240	4 million
INDONESIA	MALAYSIA	SINGAPORE	THAILAND	VIETNAM
2014	2009	June 2015	June 2015	September 2015
Badan Pusat Statistik	World Bank	Population in Brief	Thai Labour Ministry	Vietnam News

## Why Asians Choose to Work Overseas

- » A more attractive job opportunity with higher pay, benefits or secondment
- » Exposure to a different business culture and lifestyle
- » Saw overseas posting as career development

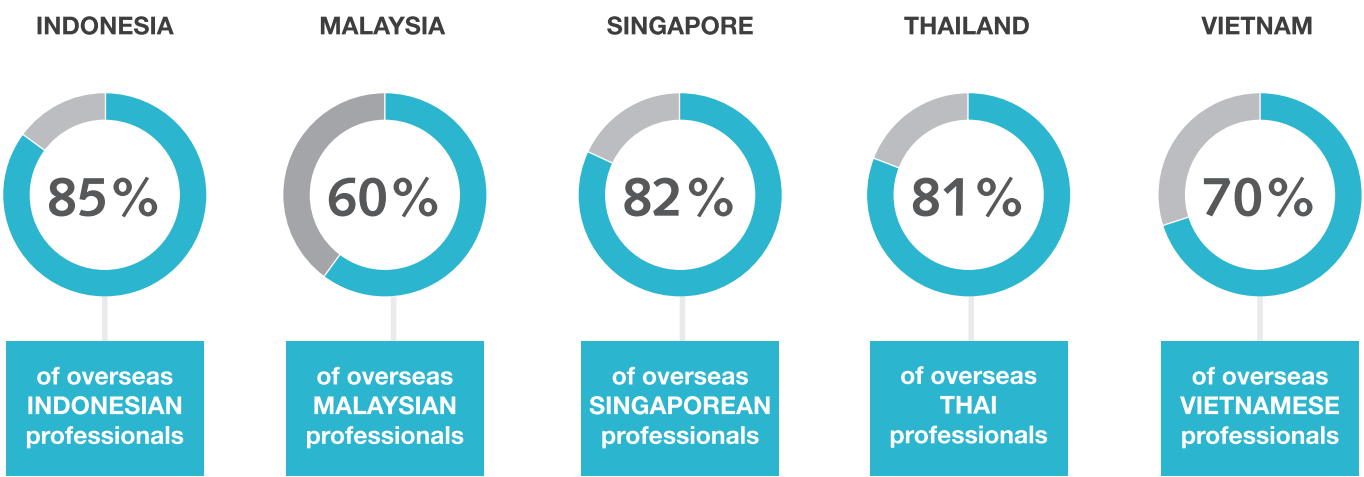


"Outbound mobility in Vietnam has increased significantly over the past decade and many companies in Vietnam face a severe shortage of skilled local talent. Companies in Vietnam are now very keen to hire skilled Vietnamese professionals who have gained international experience but understand the local culture and language better than any expatriate. This will enable hiring managers to develop high-potential local talent and prepare them to take on middle-management and senior positions."

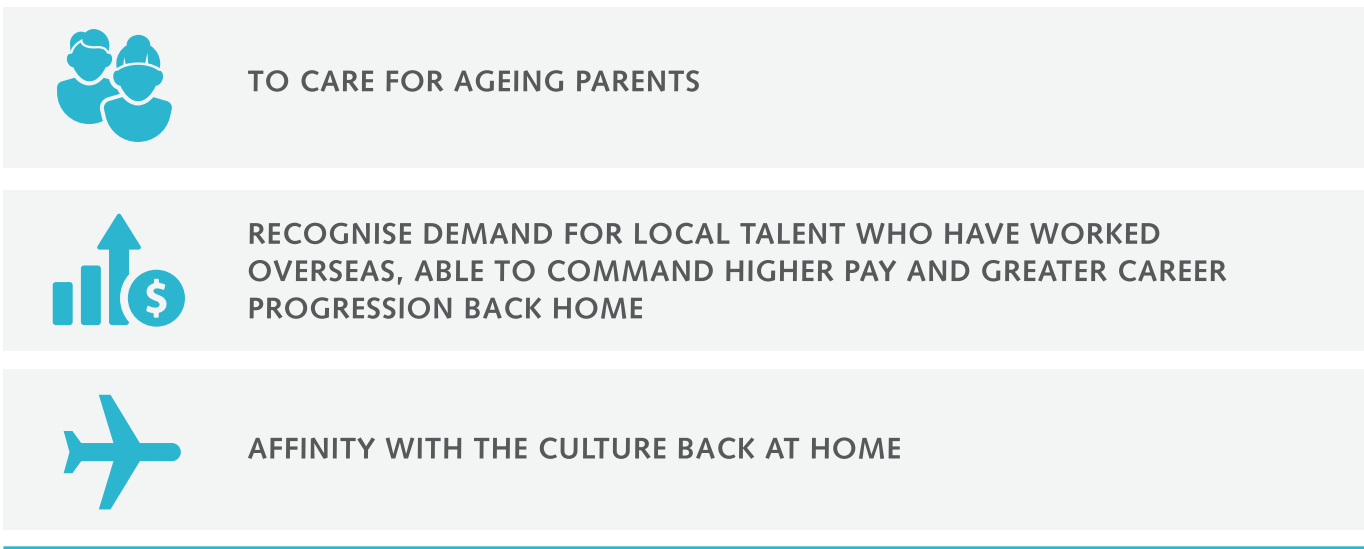
**Gerrit Bouckaert**  
Country Manager  
Robert Walters Thailand and Vietnam



Percentage of Overseas Talent Interested to Return Home



Top 3 Reasons Why Overseas Asians will Consider Returning Home



Other Pull Factors



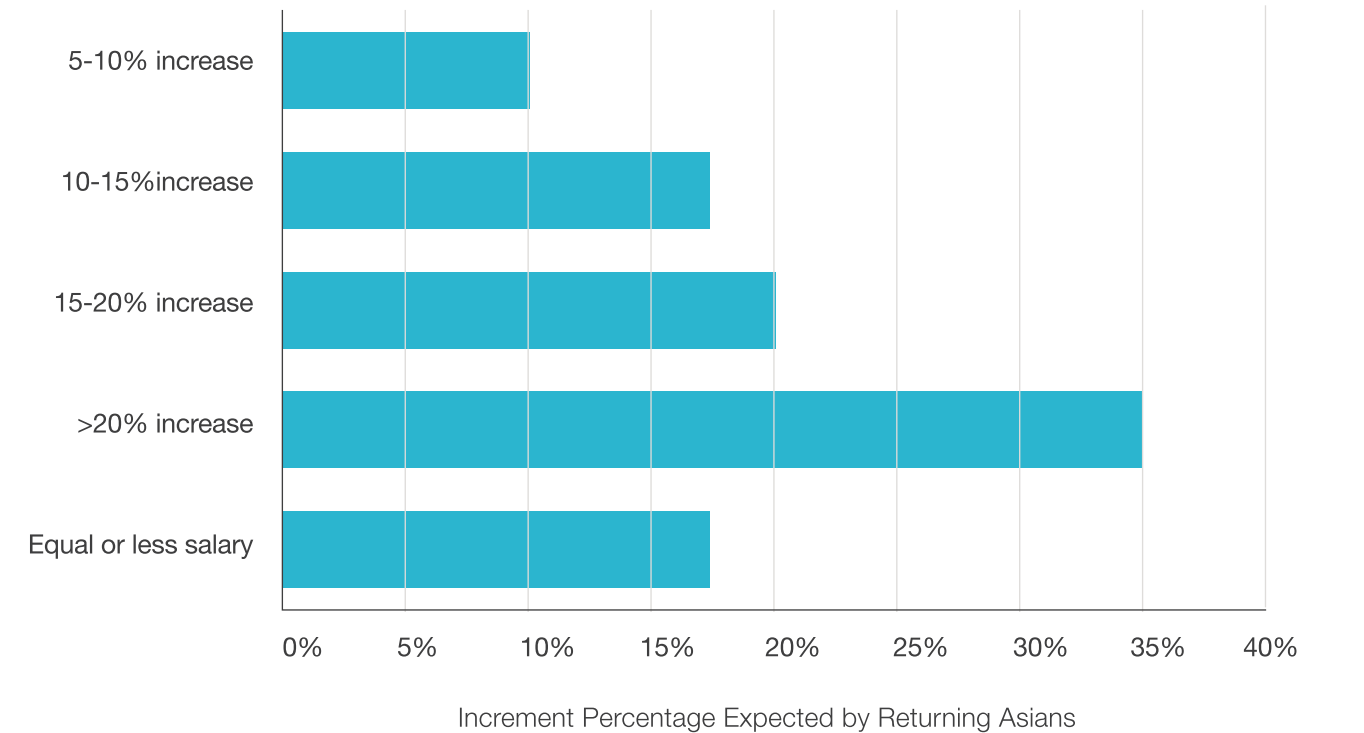
WHAT OVERSEAS ASIANS WANT BACK HOME

Overseas talent are in high demand as Southeast Asian countries play catch up to the other globalised parts of the world. Returning Asians have an edge, one that comprises a global mindset and an in-depth understanding of the local culture. How hiring managers can effectively attract them home will depend on their understanding of what these returning Asians want.

What Returning Asians Look For in an Employment Package



Salary Increment Expectations




















Key Learning #1 - Be Prepared To Negotiate

Most returning candidates will expect a significant increment over local rates based on the remuneration they are drawing overseas.

Jobs/Disciplines of Interest to Returning Asians

INDONESIA		
 Banking and Financial Services	 Information Technology	 Accounting and Finance
MALAYSIA		
 Accounting and Finance	 Banking and Financial Services	 Supply Chain, Procurement and Logistics
SINGAPORE		
 Banking and Financial Services	 Information Technology	 Sales & Marketing
THAILAND		
 Engineering	 Information Technology	 Sales
VIETNAM		
 Banking and Financial Services	 Information Technology	 Accounting and Finance



"Hiring managers will need to strike a balance between budgetary constraints and hiring the right candidates. It will be useful to weigh the cost of hiring versus not hiring: not hiring the right candidate due to initial cost savings may prove to have a greater adverse impact on the business in the long run. Our Global Salary Survey 2016 reflected the strong demand for skilled IT professionals, particularly for those with specialist skills in cyber security and e-commerce. With returning Asians also seeking employment opportunities in this sector, we expect IT to be one of the most active areas of recruitment in 2016."

**Toby Fowlston**  
Managing Director  
Robert Walters Southeast Asia



80%

of overseas Asians surveyed  
will not return before having  
secured a job back home



# WHAT HIRING MANAGERS CAN DO TO HIRE OVERSEAS ASIAN TALENT

Hiring managers see returning Asians as an asset, and in many instances, believe they will help close the skills gap in many markets.

42% of overseas Asians looking for employment opportunities back home will first meet with a recruitment consultancy or headhunter, 26% will request an internal transfer home with their current employer, and 14% will use social media channels such as LinkedIn to assess the hiring markets and job positions available.

## Top 3 Concerns of Overseas Asians Thinking of Returning Home



LESS WORK-LIFE  
BALANCE OR POORER  
QUALITY OF LIFE



ABILITY TO ASSIMILATE BACK  
INTO THE CULTURE DUE TO THE  
LENGTH OF TIME AWAY



UNDER-DEVELOPED  
INFRASTRUCTURE AND  
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

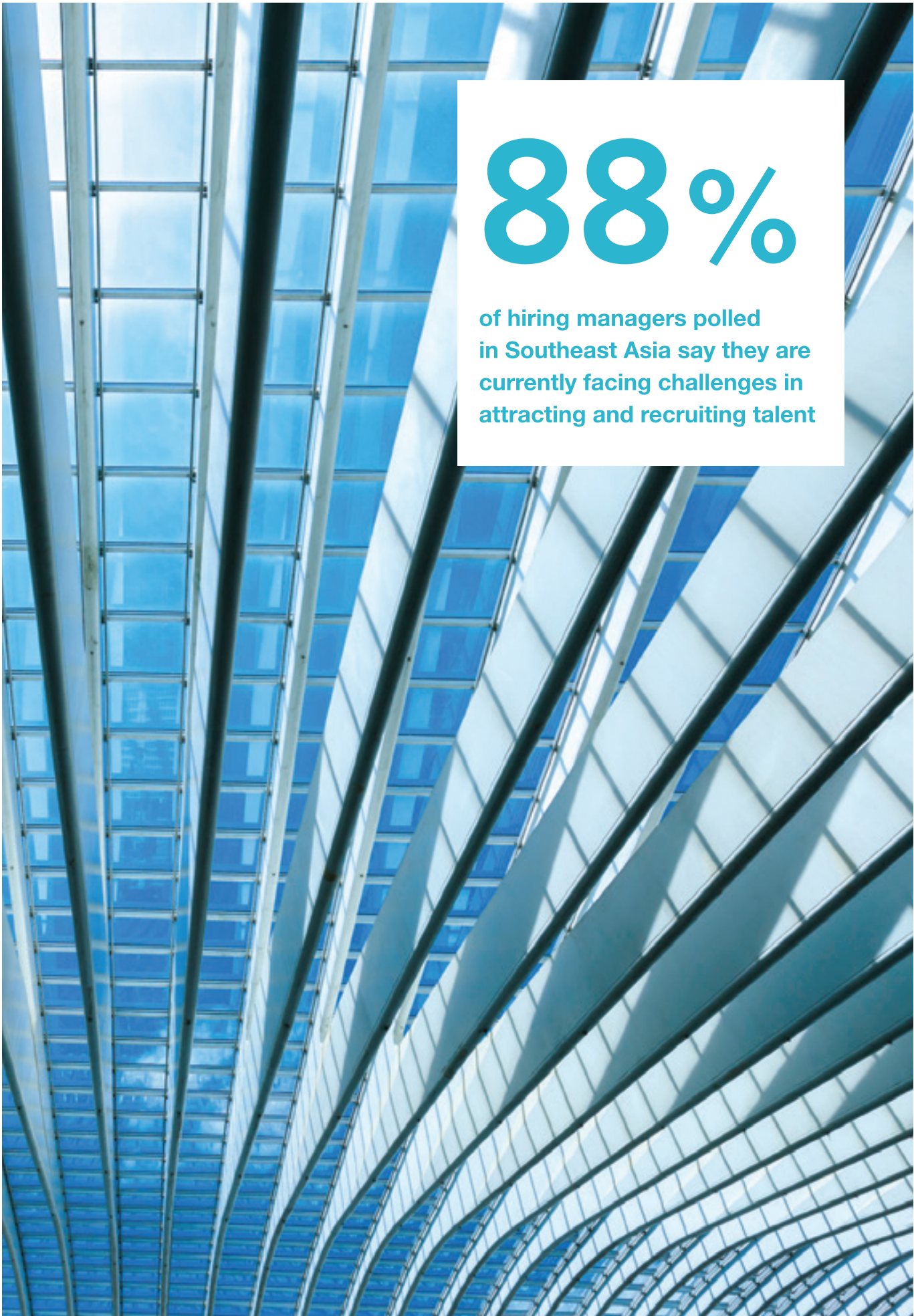
Overseas Asians surveyed believe there are things employers can do to ensure a smoother transition back home, such as:

- 32% Offer an attractive salary increment
- 30% Offer holistic employment packages and benefits
- 12% Map out a clear career progression path



"Similar to most markets, companies in Indonesia tend to turn to internal HR and talent acquisition before turning to the services of a recruitment company. Recruiters can offer international expertise with tight and well-controlled processes where search, interviews, background checks and offer negotiations all occur within one to two months. Companies that choose to work with recruiters tend to be the most successful in securing quality returning Indonesians they are looking for."

**Rob Bryson**  
Director  
Robert Walters Indonesia





Key Learning #2 - Go Beyond The Standard Employment Contract

Returning Asians will have to move their lives back to their home countries, which is often logistically challenging. Hiring managers can help ease the process by:



OFFERING TO PAY FOR THE SHIPPING OF ITEMS BACK HOME



ASSISTING WITH ACCOMMODATION SEARCH



ALLOWING FOR TIME OFF IN THE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF SETTLING IN (ESPECIALLY FOR CANDIDATES WITH CHILDREN)

HOW TO RETAIN ASIANS WHO HAVE RETURNED HOME

Beyond attracting returning Asians is the issue of retention. The competitiveness of Southeast Asia will see many Asians with overseas experience in great demand, and hiring managers will have to follow through on what they have agreed on.

Stay Or Leave

WHAT WILL MAKE THEM STAY		
Being well-appreciated and compensated in the company	A clear career progression path in the company that includes leadership and promotion opportunities	Being able to settle family down comfortably
WHAT WILL MAKE THEM CONSIDER LEAVING AGAIN		
Hiring managers or employers not delivering on their promises of benefits or career progression	Lack of work-life balance	The inability to readjust to the home culture



"Returning Asians may be familiar with their home countries, but it helps when hiring managers understand that the first few weeks will involve residual errands from their move back home. The little things will go a long way in showing returning Asians they are working for a company that values its employees beyond the bottom line."

Gerrit Bouckaert  
Country Manager  
Robert Walters Thailand and Vietnam









Key Learning #3 - Focus on Career Growth

A clear career progression path is essential for most employees, and more so for returning Asians who will be re-building their lives and careers back at home.

From an earlier Robert Walters survey titled ‘Using Career Progression to Recruit the Best Professionals’, the types of career progression most sought after include:

-  EXPANDED PORTFOLIO AND WORK EXPERIENCE
-  INTERNAL MOBILITY (BOTH LOCALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY)
-  EDUCATION AND TRAINING
-  SET PATHWAY TO PROMOTION ESPECIALLY FOR CANDIDATES WITH CHILDREN

Key Learning #4 - Do Not Overpromise And Not Deliver

To retain overseas Asian professionals who have returned, be honest about what you can offer and what they can expect. Make sure expectations are aligned from the start.



"Employees today want to know if companies can provide a clear career path and progression to support their growth in the organisations. When hiring managers are clearer about the goals and progression during the interviewing process, they will be more inclined to hire the right candidates and also retain them for a longer term."

**Sally Raj**  
Managing Director  
Robert Walters Malaysia





# LOOKING TO HIRE ASIAN TALENT WORKING OVERSEAS? WORK WITH ROBERT WALTERS

In anticipation of an increasing demand for overseas Asian talent, Robert Walters launched a region-wide initiative to attract Southeast Asian professionals currently working and living overseas to return home.

## How It Benefits You

- Gain access to a new pool of previously untapped Asian candidates
- Ability to plan for the future by building a long-term talent pipeline for your organisation
- Comprehensive and thorough end-to-end candidate management process from overseas sourcing, interviews to offer management
- Opportunities to participate in or partner with us on overseas Returning Asians events
- Our non-commission business model means we offer our clients a consultancy-based service instead of sales-based recruitment. We operate on a team bonus scheme ensuring our consultants are focused on achieving the best fit for candidate and client rather than chasing commission.

## Why Work With Robert Walters

- With offices and established networks across 25 countries, we are able to identify and track overseas talent registered across the world
- We connect with, engage and grow our database of overseas Asian talent through various marketing collateral and avenues such as newsletters, market updates, job alerts, a microsite, media coverage and events
- As thought leaders, we are able to provide overseas talent with useful and important insight to aid them with their decision to move back home
- Our dedicated International Candidate Managers actively reach out to overseas talent and associations to ensure our database is kept relevant and up-to-date
- The ability to anticipate and meet the needs of our clients has won our Singapore-based Balik Kampung initiative a number of awards. We are the first global specialist recruitment consultancy to launch a targeted initiative to reach out to overseas Singaporeans.

The estimated figures on the number of overseas Asians are retrieved from the following sources:

Number of Indonesian Overseas Workers by Country of Destination and Sex, 2013 and 2014. (n.d.). Retrieved December 22, 2015, from <http://www.bps.go.id/linkTabelStatis/view/id/1808>  
Will Malaysia's brain drain block its economic ambitions? - BBC News. (2013, June 5). Retrieved December 22, 2015, from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-22610210>  
Population in Brief, (2015), 17-17. (2015). Retrieved December 22, 2015, from <http://population.sg/population-in-brief/files/population-in-brief-2015.pdf>  
148,240 Thais work overseas - The Nation. (2015, August 12). Retrieved December 22, 2015, from <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/breakingnews/148240-Thais-work-overseas-30266445.html>  
Overseas professionals still find it difficult to return to Viet Nam – Opinion – VietNam News. (2015, September 8). Retrieved December 22, 2015, from <http://vietnamnews.vn/opinion/275498/overseas-professionals-still-find-it-difficult-to-return-to-viet-nam.html>

# AN AWARD-WINNING BUSINESS

## Balik Kampung - An Award-Winning Initiative

Following the implementation of the Fair Consideration Framework in 2014 to ensure a core Singaporean workforce and in anticipation of an increasing demand for Singaporean talent, Robert Walters Singapore launched the Balik Kampung initiative to attract Singaporeans currently living and working abroad to come home.

Similar initiatives exist in selected Robert Walters' Southeast Asian offices, in line with the demand seen in the Southeast Asian region.



**BALIK KAMPUNG  
WITH  
ROBERT WALTERS**

Reaching out to overseas  
Singaporeans on job  
opportunities back home



**Grand Winner**  
Asia Recruitment Agency of the Year



**Winner**  
Best Large Recruitment Business

## Robert Walters Whitepaper Series

The whitepapers include:

- Using career progression to recruit the best professionals
- Acquiring insights from the exit process to build a better workplace

To request a copy or for more information, please contact your Robert Walters recruitment consultant.

## Visit Robert Walters Online

Follow us today for the latest salary trends and market information to help fulfil your business and career needs.





If you are interested to find out more about our Returning Asians initiative or wish to discuss your recruitment needs in Southeast Asia, please contact **Toby Fowlston** at **[toby.fowlston@robertwalters.com.sg](mailto:toby.fowlston@robertwalters.com.sg)** or **+65 6228 0200**.

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