

# **THE TRINIDADIAN EXECUTIVE IN JAMAICA**

**December 15, 2006**

**Prepared by**

**Francis Wade  
Dale Wade  
Ann-Marie Jarrett**



**Framework Consulting, Inc.**

3389 Sheridan Street #434  
Hollywood, FL 33021, USA  
[www.fwconsulting.com](http://www.fwconsulting.com)  
[fwcinfo@fwconsulting.com](mailto:fwcinfo@fwconsulting.com)  
(954) 323-2552

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## **ABSTRACT**

The late 1990s saw a rapid expansion in the number of Trinidadian executives entering Jamaica to run companies. They came to help fulfill acquisition strategies undertaken by their parent companies, who themselves were taking advantage of the failure of several Jamaican institutions.

The unspoken expectation was that the Trinidadian executives would be able to bring some of what had been missing: capital, technical expertise, and improved management techniques.

What they found surprised them: a challenging economic environment, a work force that was culturally very different, and inefficiencies that they were unprepared to deal with. As a result, many had to teach themselves new approaches to managing and communicating on the job in order to survive.

This study focused on their combined cultural experiences, with an interest in drawing out lessons that can be passed on to future executives coming to work in Jamaica, regardless of national origin.

## BACKGROUND

The very public collapse of several Jamaican companies in the late 1990s set the stage for a much-needed rescue, with much of the necessary help coming from Trinidad. With a buoyant economy, Trinidadian companies were looking for ways to expand their presence in the region while maintaining the levels of growth to which their shareholders had become accustomed. Acquiring Jamaican companies that had suddenly become available seemed like the best strategy to pursue.

For the Jamaican government and people, Trinidadian capital was welcome. It meant that thousands of jobs could be saved, even though Jamaica ceded control of several of its key companies. In fact, the choices facing the government and liquidators were few, as Jamaican investors showed a marked reluctance to take over failed entities such as Mutual Life, Citizens Bank, and Caribbean Cement Company.

The speed with which the Trinidadian companies responded to RFPs was gratifying. However, in many cases this speed resulted in rushed approaches to the acquisitions and a lack of preplanning.

For example, several companies had no idea which of their executives would move to Jamaica to run the new company if the acquisition were successful. Also, most executives were sent with mandates to return profits to the shareholders, but they had no guidance on the corporate culture to create in the long term that would sustain value creation.

The result of this lack of planning was, for many, a series of unwelcome surprises that could have been avoided with better (i.e., broader) due-diligence efforts. The material fallout included additional costs of time and capital, worker distrust, and a misalignment of corporate cultures between the parent company and its new subsidiary.

## THE CARIBBEAN ACQUISITION PROJECT

In 2001–2002, Framework Consulting launched the Caribbean Acquisition Project—an effort to discover the best practices being used by outside companies as they undertook acquisitions in Jamaica. Ten companies were studied at varying depths of detail. Over thirty executives were interviewed in person about their experiences in acquiring Jamaican companies. The results were published in the research report entitled “Filling the Gap: The Caribbean Acquisition Project Phase 1: Jamaica.”<sup>1</sup>

Significantly, most of the companies studied were Trinidadian.

In 2006, we followed up that study with the research on which this report is based. The initial research revealed some curious and significant trends among the Trinidadian executives, and we used the initial findings, along with an increased understanding of Trinidadian culture, to discover what current lessons may be gleaned. Once again, we interviewed over thirty executives who had worked in Jamaica, all of whom were Trinidadian and had spent at least six months working on the island.

We asked a variety of open and closed questions, looking at the strengths and weaknesses of Trinidadian ownership, leadership, and management. To gather the data, we used a cross-cultural team with work experience in Trinidad, Jamaica, and the U.S.

In this paper, we describe the challenges Trinidadian executives faced, why those challenges existed (and still exist), and some of the ways in which executives coming to work in Jamaica in the future can better adapt themselves to very different norms and conditions.

In a qualitative study such as this one, it is important to note that the nature of the answers given depends a great deal on who is asking the questions. As such, we freely acknowledge that there is a subjective quality to the responses we collected.

We make no attempt to be impartial, unattached observers. Instead, our goal is to be useful, and the models that we describe are intended to be practical rather than scientific, pragmatic rather than empirical. Our conclusions rely heavily on our own experiences of working with Trinidadians and Jamaicans across the Caribbean region.

## FINDINGS AND REASONING

### *Missing Foresight*

In our interviews, many Trinidadian executives spoke about their companies' need to see themselves as multinational entities rather than local companies with foreign branches.

They noted that when Trinidadian companies entered Jamaica, they did so without focusing adequately on future of the new company within the existing group of companies. Specifically, they made no explicit decisions regarding the culture of the company they were acquiring and how it would fit in with current operations of the parent company and other subsidiaries.

To paraphrase one executive: "We did not appreciate what it took to be a real multinational company, with a well-defined core, operating companies in different countries. Instead, we added on these companies without deciding whether we had a core and what exactly it was."

In the absence of a well-designed process, the result was that the companies entering Jamaica were, in hindsight, overly Trinidad-centric.

In our research, we found that efforts to create a distinct and unique center were weak and belated. The result has been strained relationships, unclear vision, and a lack of cultural continuity between parent and subsidiary. In each case, it seemed as if the local entity was set quite apart from the real seat of power. In some companies, the idea of a Jamaican MD or CEO is thought to be far-fetched: "Dem Trinis will never give up their power." Also considered far-fetched is the idea of a Jamaican being transferred to Trinidad to lead up a subsidiary in that country.

This particular state of affairs was unintended, yet it prevails. It has left employees in a vacuum, with many wondering what the parent company wants from the local company (apart from making profits) and why they should stay at the company (apart from keeping their jobs). The lack of vision has been telling, especially where managers have begun to detect an unspoken philosophy in the minds of Trinidadian executives and managers: "what was good for Trinidad is good for Jamaica."

We found this assumption to be widespread.

In addition, this was reinforced by the further assumption, again unspoken, that the cultural differences were minor.

To Jamaican employees, it seemed as if Trinidadian executives already had all the answers, creating a common opinion that the companies coming into Jamaica were arrogant and overly confident. This, in turn, was sometimes seen by Jamaicans as insulting and disrespectful.

At the same time, we did not detect any malice on the part of Trinidadian companies.

But that has not been enough. The Trinidadians' lack of foresight and inability to deal with the hidden assumptions created problems and unfortunate perceptions. Ironically, the first people to feel the brunt of these problems were the Trinidadian executives, who were simply unprepared for the challenges that faced them.

Virtually all of the companies we studied admitted that they did not do enough to sufficiently develop or prepare their migrating executives.

## ***A Lack of Preparation***

We found in our research that not only were Trinidadian executives inadequately prepared, but their jobs were made that much harder by a failure to prepare their new employees and the parent company's board members.

### **Executives**

Trinidadian executives bemoaned the fact that they had not been prepared for the significant differences they were about to encounter. In our interviews, we could find no evidence of any structured attempts to prepare them. As one executive remarked, "My preparation consisted of having drinks with my brother-in-law, who basically told me 'to watch myself with dem Jamaicans, because dem not easy, and dem backward.'"

This lack of preparation led to many surprises that could have been avoided. Many of these had to do with the way the Trinidadian executives' managerial strengths came to be problems for Jamaican managers, as we describe in the section on Cultural Strengths and Weaknesses. The executives' overall feeling was that they could have been better conditioned to deal with the change in culture they had to undergo.

Some savvy executives, feeling inadequate to the task, developed a "settling in" period for themselves. One worker we interviewed put his advice to Trinidadian executives in cricketing terms: "The Managing Director needs to play himself in when he comes to a new country [Jamaica]—he can't just start to make shots! He needs to start slowly and take a good, hard look at the wicket, the ball, and the bowlers."

These executives described how they spent anywhere from one to three months learning Jamaican culture. One spent several weeks driving around the island, from town to town, "listening to people," as it was put to us. Another spent his first few months on the job just asking questions of employees, imploring them to "not let me make a mistake."

These executives could see very clearly that their Trinidadian view of Jamaica and its people was insufficient for the task of leading them. Essentially, they proactively put themselves through a personal orientation/sensitization process, with little or no assistance from their own human resources departments in either country. A few found the book *Why Workers Won't Work* by Michael Carter to be useful.<sup>ii</sup> The resources available to them were meager, as they are to any executive coming to work in Jamaica.

The vast majority of Trinidadian executives coming to Jamaica, however, came with an unconscious assumption that the cultures were similar, only to be shocked at the differences they discovered. Many found themselves isolated, with very few other people in the company able to relate to the situation in which they found themselves.

Unfortunately—years after the fact, in some cases—we did not uncover a single company in our research that has put in place either a rotation programme for upcoming executives or a structured period of preparation for newly transferred executives. Most companies have managers who know enough to recognise that such programmes are needed, but the collective will has not emerged to develop them.

### **Employees**

We also found a lack of employee preparation inside the companies that were being led by Trinidadians. In most of these companies, rumours were rampant in the absence of solid facts. Workers heard and repeated stories about the lavish compensation packages that transferred executives were receiving as well as the

supposed reasons for their transfers. One manager was said to be brought in because he was an executive's "cousin."

Furthermore, employees were not able to comprehend the pressure that the transferred executives were under. Employees were simply not made to appreciate the inevitable culture shock, the challenges to the families, and the high expectations placed on executives by their parent companies' boards.

These gaps made the transition that much more difficult for both the executive and their employees.

## **Board Members**

The lack of preparation also extended to the board members of the parent companies, some of whom were major stockholders.

Our interviews with executives showed that their own management back home in Trinidad remained woefully ignorant about the requirements of running businesses in Jamaica. The Jamaican economy, for example, has suffered from a lack of growth, foreign currency exchange shocks, high interest rates, and double-digit inflation in the 1990's. On the other hand, the Trinidadian economy has experienced stability and sustained growth during the same period.

Managing a company in the volatile Jamaican economy requires very different skills from managing a company in Trinidad, and many executives emphasized that it is much more difficult. For example, decisions that Jamaican executives made to buffer against economic and social shocks were seen as wasteful by the Trinidadians. The same applied to expenditures on items such as security and community projects. While Jamaican executives would readily appreciate these realities, their counterparts in Trinidad were at a loss to understand why these costs were being incurred.

In extreme cases, the results of this lack of preparation of executives, employees, and board members have ranged from strikes to drops in production to outright failures.

One prominent company folded in a matter of months after its Trinidadian executive returned home to work for a different (non-competing) company. The failure occurred after the board ignored specific recommendations from the departing executive. Within nine months of the Trinidadian executive leaving, five years of growing profits were reversed and almost one hundred employees lost their jobs.

## ***Cultural Strengths Turned into Weaknesses***

After interviewing the executives in the study and working with hundreds of Jamaican and Trinidadian employees, we are unclear about what, if anything, constitutes an objective cultural strength or weakness. Our research shows that some of the strengths that Trinidadian managers relied on when managing Trinidadians actually turned into weaknesses when utilised in Jamaica. Whether these characteristics are understood as strengths or weaknesses is beside the point, as the context in which the characteristic is employed makes all the difference.

We found a number of characteristics of Trinidadian managers that stood out in Jamaican companies. While these are very broad in nature and might not apply to every single Trinidadian manager, we found evidence for their existence in several interviews and case studies.

Specifically, our interviews identified the following Trinidadian characteristics:



**a) “Pecong<sup>iii</sup>”/“Fatigue”/Teasing**

The Trinidadian propensity for teasing and giving open criticism in jest, with the intent to make fun of someone, is sometimes seen by Jamaicans as disrespectful. This is especially so when it’s used in the workplace, and it’s magnified greatly when it occurs in open meetings.

In Jamaican workplaces, there is very little room for open criticism of colleagues and less allowance for making fun of others. When the “pecong” comes from upper management, employees give the criticism extra weight that Trinidadian managers wished it did not have.

Trying to add humour to it all only deepens the upset or perceived insult.

The employee’s response is often to keep the hurt private and not say anything, misleading the executive to think that all is well.

**b) Informality**

The Trinidadian tendency to be informal and to downplay differences in income, status, title, and trappings runs directly counter to the Jamaican tendency to contrast and maintain them. Jamaican managers and employees are very comfortable with these differences and will often insist that they be preserved and deepened.

For example, a Trinidadian executive was told by an employee that he should drive a better car and have a bigger office because he’s the “big man.” The Trinidadian executive’s response was one of embarrassment and irritation, as this was exactly the impression he was trying to avoid.

There is a clear preference for formal relationships in the workplace that retain the hierarchy. The average non-managerial Jamaican worker wants to be told what to do and does not expect to have a voice. In fact, some will resist taking responsibility and will resent executives who seem to be trying to avoid their duties by asking the workers to do their thinking for them.

Trinidadian executives are steeped in a collaborative method of management and chafe at these sentiments, and many wish that things were different. In Trinidad, the ethos is very much that “we are all one,” and efforts to emphasize differences and maintain hierarchy are publicly laughed at, put into song, or made the subject of “ole talk.”

To Trinidadian executives, their Jamaican colleagues spend too much money and time on maintaining perks, to the detriment of the companies they lead. Their preference is to be frugal and cost oriented, whereas Jamaican managers are much more concerned with status and its attendant symbols.

Not surprisingly, Trinidadian managers often fail to use, or even *refuse* to use, the power that Jamaican workers give them by virtue of their position. When Trinidadian executives disregard it, they lose an opportunity to work with employees in a mode that the employees recognise and value. Dismissing this patriarchal relationship out of hand is confusing to the employees.

The best executives recognise that this style is preferred and accept it as today’s reality—with a view to changing it to a style that they prefer and find more productive.

**c) Switching Work Relationships On and Off**

To Jamaicans, the Trinidadian ability to have a hard, loud, and even rough conversation in the workplace, followed by informal drinks and laughter ten minutes later, is nothing short of bizarre. It’s often viewed by Jamaicans as a sign of duplicity and leads to charges of “is so dem Tricki-dadians stay.” The Jamaican cannot understand how hard feelings and harsh language can be dropped “just like that.”

For Trinidadians, this ability is a sign of a good manager: able to leave the office behind and grab a drink and lime like everyone else, forgetting the working relationships back at the office.

This strength is perceived by Jamaicans as the very opposite.

**d) Focus on Business**

Trinidadian executives operating in Jamaica are very clear on their jobs: to return a profit to the shareholders. To the Jamaican worker, this single-minded focus is seen as a form of exploitation, manipulation, or worse.

In the Jamaican context, making a profit is important, but the company also exists to provide meaningful employment, serve the community, and contribute to the country. In the minds of employees, the company should engage in activities such as giving gifts to workers (e.g., bun and cheese at Easter), making contributions to the community (e.g., sponsored programmes for community children), and assisting in the development of the country (e.g., by being seen as a leader in national affairs). For Jamaicans, the company should expend time, effort, and money on these endeavors and be seen as making a visible contribution.

When workers perceive that the company does not care, the relationship between worker and executive is damaged. In fact, employees in Jamaica are ever vigilant for signs that the company does not care.

Our research shows that Trinidadian executives who see their only role as returning a profit to shareholders quickly run afoul of these expectations. While this single-minded focus would be a benefit back home, in Jamaica it's seen as selfish and greedy.

## WORKING WITH JAMAICAN BUSINESS CULTURE

In talking with successful Trinidadian executives, we found some common understandings about how best to engage the Jamaican worker.

### a) **Pride and Respect**

Pride plays an important role in the Jamaican workplace, and a variety of efforts to demonstrate and maintain respect for employees at all levels gained tremendous currency. Saying “Good morning,” showing deference, being authoritative in public, giving back to the community, enhancing the company brand—these kinds of activities were used by executives to enhance feelings of pride and respect. Managers reported that these two experiences were the most important to manage in the minds of workers.

### b) **Personal Loyalty**

Personal loyalty can be a problem when it displaces a commitment to the company’s goals. In Jamaican culture, “informers” or whistle-blowers are sometimes considered to be lower than murderers. Successful executives worked *with*, rather than *against*, this kind of loyalty by developing individual relationships with each staff member. We discovered that company loyalty ran a distant second to personal loyalty, hence the importance of creating one-on-one relationships.

### c) **Hands-on Management**

The average educational level in the Jamaican workplace is lower than it is in Trinidad and Barbados. This has profound ramifications for how workers are managed and influenced in Jamaica. Executives reported that Jamaican workers and managers required a greater degree of hands-on management than their counterparts in Trinidad. Effective managers were able to adjust their style of delegation accordingly, handing out smaller tasks and requiring frequent check-ins.

### d) **Cosmopolitan/North American Focus**

Jamaican employees are much more attuned to North America than they are to the rest of the Caribbean, and have a much more cosmopolitan or international frame of mind. Many have visited and studied in the USA and Canada, and they have relatives living there. Only a handful have any meaningful connection with the rest of the Caribbean. The result is that the Jamaican workforce is tuned into different standards, styles, and expectations than their Trinidadian counterparts.

This cosmopolitan frame of mind coupled with a naturally assertive attitude are positive attributes that successful executives used to stay on the cutting edge of technology developments in the world. Trinidadian executives said that there is a great deal of talent among Jamaicans waiting to be tapped by the right kind of organization and culture.

### e) **Emotional Maturity**

The emotional maturity of Jamaican workers is, on average, lower than that in Trinidad. This conclusion is based on our research and on comparisons between employee satisfaction surveys in both countries. Jamaican employees are less aware of dissonant feelings, less capable of articulating those feelings in a constructive manner, and relatively weak at understanding the feelings of others. The

result has been strikes, conflicts, and misunderstandings that have come as utter surprises to Trinidadian executives.

This difference requires the executive to develop skills to deal with higher levels of workplace volatility in Jamaican companies.

A useful proxy for the idea of worker emotional maturity is that of the emotional intelligence quotient, or EQ.<sup>iv</sup>

**f) Anti-Trinidadian Sentiment**

We specifically asked Trinidadian executives whether or not an anti-Trinidadian sentiment existed in Jamaica. Our findings show that there were infrequent anti-Trinidadian utterances and that they arose at times of difficulty. However, as a whole, Jamaicans demonstrated very few deeply held feelings of prejudice or dislike for Trinidadians—a finding that we cross-checked several times by interviewing employees of both nationalities in a variety of industries.

# ANALYSIS

## ***Phases of Adjustment for Executives***

Our analysis shows that Trinidadian executives coming to work in Jamaica progress through several distinct stages. The rate at which they progress depends on the individuals and the circumstances in which they find themselves.

### **Phase 1: Overconfidence/Arrogance**

In this phase, the executive believes (perhaps subconsciously) that what works in Trinidad should work in Jamaica. His/her thinking is marked by the following kinds of thoughts:

- This is not much different from Trinidad.
- Our parent company has been very successful.
- Jamaicans have made a mess of it.
- We can fix it.
- We got a warm welcome, and they're friendly people.
- I'm unaware of any Trinidadian shortcomings.
- I'm focused on making a profit.

### **Phase 2: Ignoring the Signs**

The confidence continues in spite of subtle (or overt) cues that something is amiss. The executive makes light of these cues and sees them as small incidents rather than tips of an iceberg:

- These happenings don't mean much.
- We are different/unique than other companies.
- People like me—and Trinidadians as people.
- Small things are happening, but we can manage them.

### **Phase 3: Shock/Awe**

Seemingly out of the blue, an employee-created catastrophe strikes. The following thoughts dominate the mind of the executive:

- Big things are going wrong.
- They are protesting an "injustice."
- These people are backward.
- What is wrong with them?
- I feel betrayed.
- I'm baffled, and I can't understand where this is coming from.
- How could they just take industrial action like that?
- How can they say such [anti-Trinidadian] things?
- Why me? Poor me. What did I do wrong?

### **Phase 4: Overcompensation**

When the executives detect that their methods have been failing or making things worse, they try to fix the situation by befriending employees and not holding them to account:

- I'm trying hard to be liked.
- I'm too hard on people.

- I need to try to be more accepting and tolerant.
- I can't let things blow up again.
- I'm trying to figure out what went wrong.

### **Phase 5: Failure**

When the overcompensation only makes things worse, an executive can be faced with the stark reality that his/her career is at stake and the answers are few:

- Nothing is working (culturally).
- I should just go home.
- I blame Jamaicans and their work culture for this.
- I need to get out.
- The stress is killing me.

At this point, one of two things happens: either the executive gives up or the executive finds ways to adapt to the culture.

### **Phase 6a: Cynicism and Resignation**

The executive either gives up and leaves—or gives up and stays in the job (which is worse.) If there is a unionised workforce, the union gains power:

- I quit./I feel trapped.
- I hate these workers.
- I see them as the enemy.
- We need to create some fear to get things done around here.
- We only have poor results.

OR

### **Phase 6b: Resolution**

The executive finds a way to resolve issues through a change in behaviour. They may experience a sense of accomplishment, and others may notice the following attributes:

- Openness, honesty, authenticity.
- Respect as a value, and practices that demonstrate it.
- Humble leadership.
- Deep roots in the surrounding community.
- Country/community focus.
- Renegotiating the relationship with the board.

## ***Levels of “Reception” Skills for Executives***

During the analysis of the data we collected, we were able to articulate a group of key reception skills, which could be viewed as four variations of what are normally called “listening” skills. We found dramatic cases where some executives had developed these skills and other cases where the skills were sorely missing.

### **Level 1: Individual**

In addition to traditional one-on-one listening skills, at this level we also include an ability to be able to tune into unspoken sentiments and feelings. Executives can be taught to pick up on subtle external as well as internal cues.

### **Level 2: Group**

When working in group settings, an executive can learn how to be effective in managing and/or facilitating effective meetings and conversations. Being able to “paint” a vision and enlist small and large groups to accomplish that vision is a critical component of this skill.

### **Level 3: Company**

Executives can be taught how to hear, sense, and feel the mood of workers and how that mood changes over time. This is important in designing different interventions, conversations, and meetings to deal with issues that could easily escalate into industrial action, sabotage, or even threats.

### **Level 4: Markets**

The company’s brand position in the marketplace can be determined by market research, costing a great deal of time and money. But good executives are able to see leading indicators that predict what is going to happen to the brand. Developing an ability to see the future of the brand, based on subtle signs, can come from experience or proper training, enhanced by developing the appropriate interactive market channels.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The success of a Trinidadian executive who moves to Jamaica to manage a company might be measured, in part, by the number of rude surprises that occur. A fully trained executive would have the reception skills to see the subtle signals that warn of upcoming trouble, and he/she would intervene appropriately.

For this objective to be accomplished, there is much that needs to be done before the Trinidadian executive gets on the first plane—and more that needs to happen once he or she arrives.

### 1. Clearly define the cultural goals related to the Jamaican company

The parent company must decide and make clear what its long-term goals are for the new company. This should be expressed in cultural as well as financial terms. Is the Jamaican company to share a common culture with the parent company? Is there a group culture defined in which the Jamaican company should be included? Is the corporate culture to be left entirely in the hands of the local company? What assistance will be provided to the new company to transition from an old culture to a new culture?

A true cutting-edge company may go as far as retiring its old corporate culture when a new company is acquired. A cross-company team that includes representatives from the new company may work to define a new group culture.

### 2. Define a leadership transition plan

Decide whether or not the Jamaican company is to ultimately have local leadership—and why. This leadership strategy must be closely tied to decisions about the corporate culture.

### 3. Develop a cadre of Caribbean executives and managers

Find executives and managers across the company who are willing to relocate across the region. Train them in all the necessary elements, to enable them to manage in any country, by engaging in the following actions:

- Teach them how to prepare their families for their role as Caribbean executives and managers.
- Develop their reception skills at all four levels.
- Help them to understand their own style of coping under stress and the transition process they are likely to experience.
- Assist them in becoming skillfully reflective.
- Give them specific tips on working in particular regional cultures.
- Create opportunities for them to work in cross-regional teams, projects, and forums.
- Coach them in how to ask for assistance and how to create mentors.
- Give them state-of-the-art persuasion skills.
- Teach them how to cope in and adapt to different cultures.

With the right training, the company can develop a cadre of managers that are prepared to play a role in implementing whatever culture that company is interested in creating.

### 4. Give executives a broad set of objectives to accomplish

Define hard as well as soft goals for the Jamaican company—where the board would like the Jamaican company to be in five, ten, and thirty years. Demonstrate that the executive's job is to develop a long-term success path for the company, not just to achieve short-term financial results. For interim



managers, it should be clear that while their time in the country might be short, they are creating a foundation for profits that will last several years. This is very different from some interim managers we met, whose main jobs were to oversee the transition and ensure an uninterrupted flow of profits to the bottom line.

One company we studied tried quite hard to demonstrate that nothing would be changing. The end result was that employees began to wonder why the company had bothered with the acquisition if nothing was to change.

## **5. Create an intense introduction to Jamaican work culture**

Conduct a training course (located in Jamaica) to introduce the executive to the Jamaican work culture. Include self-study, experiential exercises as well as opportunities to reflect, to help executives create their own learning plan to get through the all-important first year, and to transition through the different phases.

## **6. Condition the receiving company**

Prepare the employees in the new company to receive the new executive. Provide information on the company's policies on transfers as well as an understanding of the personal transition the employees are about to undergo.

## **7. Allow sufficient absorption time**

Create enough unstructured time for the executives at the start of the transition to allow space for the inevitable culture shock. While the new executives may understand the job function, they will not readily know what to expect in terms of the cultural differences they will face.

## **8. Give families special assistance**

Families coming to Jamaica for work purposes face numerous issues related to crime, education, the spouse's career, inflation, and general culture adjustment. These practical aspects of the transfer must be addressed by the company, as they all have an impact on the executive's job performance. The entire family might benefit from counseling or coaching from an expert who can help them make the transition.

## **9. Debrief extensively**

Once executives have returned to Trinidad after working in Jamaica, use their experiences to help develop and refine the approach to preparing future executives.

## SUMMARY

The strategies that we have recommended would help to remove much of the stress and confusion that Trinidadian executives experience as they work in Jamaica. However, at the end of the day, there is always the chance that an executive might not have what it takes to be successful—for any number of reasons. There are enough differences between the two countries to reliably predict that an incoming Trinidadian executive will experience culture shock.

Most companies have not begun to deal with this shock, and our hope is that our research will help them reduce the cost that is currently being incurred—in tangible and human capital. At this moment, Trinidadian executives in Jamaica are fighting on their own to succeed in a very different and difficult environment.<sup>v</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> The white paper “Filling the Gap: The Caribbean Acquisition Project, Phase 1: Jamaica” is available as a free download by sending an email to [fwc-fillthegap@aweber.com](mailto:fwc-fillthegap@aweber.com). Please be sure to respond to the confirmation email that is sent immediately.

<sup>ii</sup> The book *Why Workers Won’t Work* by Michael Carter has been summarized in a Framework 2-page white paper, available from [www.downloads.framework.com](http://www.downloads.framework.com)

<sup>iii</sup> Pecong is an often used Trinidadian word denoting a kind of playful, public teasing that can be presented in conversation or in song.

<sup>iv</sup> The term EQ is defined extensively by Daniel Goldman in his book “Emotional Quotient: Why it Can Matter More than IQ.”

<sup>v</sup> We welcome further discussion on the ideas in this paper in our company blog, which can be reached at <http://tinyurl.com/y33nkz>. If you received a copy of this report second-hand, join our mailing list for future information on this topic by sending email to [fwc-triniexec@aweber.com](mailto:fwc-triniexec@aweber.com). You will automatically receive a copy of this report, once you have confirmed your subscription.



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Hollywood, FL 33021  
954-323-2552  
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