



Smart moves

A new approach to
international assignments
and global mobility

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Global mobility for global businesses

Globalization and other key business trends are raising the bar on global mobility. As companies do more and more business across national borders, they need the ability to move their people around quickly and easily. They also need leaders and employees with global experience to help manage and run their broad, geographic operations.

Unfortunately, many companies are discovering that existing programs for handling international assignments don't address these emerging needs. Such programs have traditionally revolved around offering high-touch service for a small number of long-term relocations. But today, that narrow view of global mobility just isn't good enough.

Companies must adopt a new approach that makes global mobility a standard operating practice – one that is fast, flexible, efficient, and repeatable.

To address the challenges and achieve their strategic growth objectives, we believe companies must adopt a new approach that makes global mobility a standard operating practice – one that is fast, flexible, efficient, and repeatable.

Although an increasing number of companies have begun to recognize the need for improved global mobility, most still have a long way to go. In a recent survey of HR executives, 43% said they personally consider global mobility to be a key business competency; however, only 10% said their company currently shares that view.¹

It's time for companies to make a focused effort to enhance their global mobility capabilities. This book examines the growing need for improved global mobility and presents a practical approach to help make it happen.



Why global mobility? Why now?

The business world is changing and global mobility programs need to maintain pace. Traditionally, international assignments have been managed as a high-touch, low-volume activity. Every move receives special handling, and the main focus is on addressing the employee’s short-term needs (a relocation that is pleasant and hassle-free) without much thought to long-term employee development or the strategic needs of the business. In the future, this one-dimensional approach to global mobility simply won’t do.

The new requirements for global mobility are being driven by four types of challenges (Figure 1).

The new requirements for global mobility are being driven by four types of challenges: business environment, internal expectations, compliance environment, and talent environment.

Business environment. Globalization is driving the need for global mobility by increasing the number and variety of international assignments. In particular, emerging markets such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China are fueling the global mobility trend as companies in mature economies look abroad to achieve their aggressive growth objectives. Technology and workplace innovations are also a factor, making it possible for companies to overcome traditional barriers of time and space and providing new alternatives to long-term relocation.

Talent environment. Global talent trends such as baby boomer retirements, aging workforces, and declining interest in science and technology education are creating a chronic shortage of critical talent. To survive and thrive, companies must find ways to tap into the world’s talent wherever it happens to reside and deploy it wherever it’s needed. They also must use international assignments to cultivate leaders with global experience to help run their increasingly broad, geographic operations.

Figure 1. Four challenges driving new global mobility requirements



In a recent survey, HR executives said their global mobility staff spends most of its time on transaction issues such as compensation, benefits, and cost management.² Meanwhile, the need for talent management is virtually ignored. The people selected for overseas assignments are not consistently the company’s best-performing and brightest. And returning employees often lack a planned “landing pad” to ease their re-entry and harness the new skills and experience they have gained. In fact, many of these employees leave the company shortly after their assignment ends.

Internal expectations. To become a standard tool for competitiveness and growth, global mobility programs must do a better job of meeting the needs of the business; delivering **fast** service that can keep pace with the requirements of a rapidly changing market. Offering **flexible** options to fit a variety of situations. And applying **repeatable and efficient** methods that help deliver a positive result for every assignment.

Today, most programs revolve around the needs of the employee – not the needs of the business – with little regard for cost (see sidebar entitled “A cold, hard example about global mobility”). Every assignment is treated as a special case that requires significant manual effort and a long lead time. Meanwhile, the business rationale for an assignment is often not clearly defined, and there is generally no formal tracking mechanism to evaluate an assignment’s ROI impact on short-term business performance or long-term leadership development.

Compliance environment. Accounting scandals and other corporate missteps have put businesses under greater scrutiny than at any time since the 1930s. New regulations are being introduced in rapid succession, and there is no relief in sight. Of course, the problem is exponentially worse for companies that operate across national borders and must, therefore, comply with a bewildering – and often conflicting – array of local, national, and international regulations. Moreover, the risks related to global compliance continue to mount. On a strategic level, companies continue to aggressively push for global growth. But on a tactical level, many are not devoting enough attention and resources to the details of local and international compliance. This dichotomy puts global companies and local regulators on a collision course.

A cold, hard example about global mobility

In 2006, a global organization with approximately 400 international deployments spent nearly U.S. \$100 million on global mobility. Traditional long-term assignments accounted for over 60% of this total, yet only represented 10% of the deployments. In addition, the organization had very little control over how deployment decisions were made.

The vast majority of assignments were to countries with large pools of qualified local talent – such as the U.S. and Australia – meaning that many of the moves may not have been necessary. Even worse, moves were often justified as “development opportunities,” yet fewer than half of the long-term expatriates were considered high-potential talent. In short, the organization was spending up to \$50 million on global deployments that were unnecessary or not aligned with longer term talent objectives.

These numbers made a strong case for change. The good news is that the company has already implemented a new mobility platform that provides structured decision-making around this important and significant investment. In addition to improved efficiency, flexibility, and bottom-line savings, the organization is seeing a greater return on every dollar it invests in global mobility.

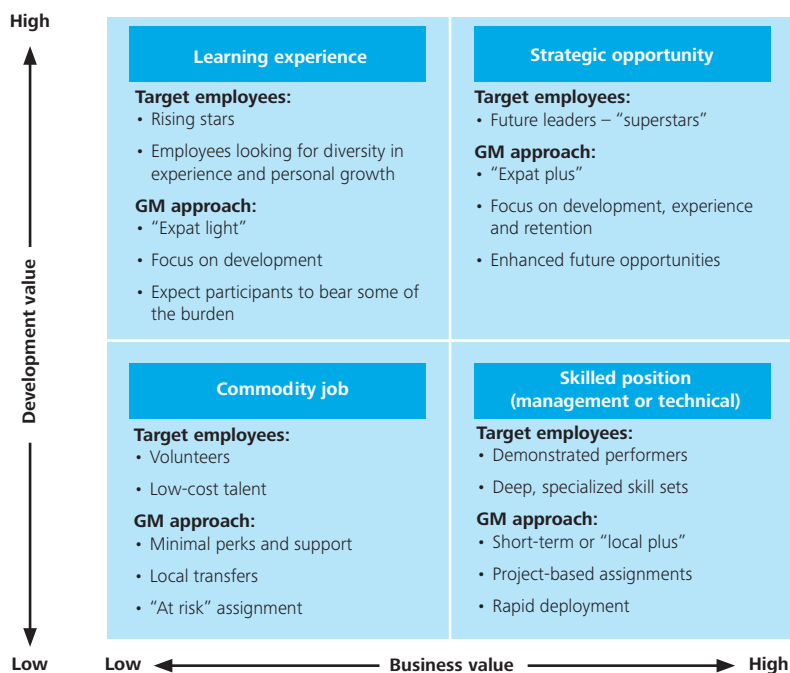
A new framework for global mobility

As global mobility grows in importance and complexity, companies need a framework to help them design a full range of programs and options – and to help the business choose the right fit for a particular situation. At the moment, many companies still apply a one-dimensional approach to every international assignment. And in the rare cases where the business is offered a variety of options, it often doesn't have an easy way to choose.

The global mobility framework is built around two key dimensions: *business value* and *development value* (Figure 2). It reflects the fact that different assignments can have different value for the business, as well as different value for helping employees develop new skills and capabilities (something in which the employee and business both have a vested interest). This multi-dimensional approach gives companies a wider range of options for deploying people globally.

Different assignments can have different value for the business, as well as different value for helping employees develop new skills and capabilities.

Figure 2. Global mobility framework



- Assignments that have high business value and high development value are considered a **strategic opportunity**. These assignments have a significant and lasting impact on the company and should be reserved for a company's most valuable employees – the next generation of leaders. Global mobility programs for these types of assignments go beyond what is currently offered, not only providing participants with a satisfying international experience, but also actively working to maximize development and retention.

- At the other end of the spectrum, a **commodity job** is an assignment with both low business value and low development value. These assignments need to be done but don't have a lot of upside for the business or the employee. They are targeted at individuals who are interested in working abroad for personal reasons, but don't need or expect much in terms of business perks and support.

Between those two extremes are assignments that have high value on one dimension but not on the other.

- A **learning experience** has high development value but relatively low business value. It is most appropriately suited for rising stars: employees with long-term potential who are worth investing in, even if the immediate pay-off is relatively low. Global mobility programs for these types of assignments are a scaled-back version of the current "expat" model. Although assignees are well cared for, they are expected to shoulder part of the burden and costs as a personal investment in their own capabilities and value.

- The final type of assignment is the **skilled position**. These assignments have high business value but relatively low development value. Ideal candidates are demonstrated performers with highly specialized skills – people who are already performing at or near their full potential. The objective should be to fill these positions with local talent; but until that happens, the company must bear the burden of keeping these high-impact employees on assignment.

This multi-dimensional framework gives businesses a full range of global mobility options and provides a tool to help them choose the right type of assignment for a particular situation.

Option 1: Strategic opportunity

Global companies need leaders with global experience. Strategic opportunity assignments are a means for people to obtain that experience. Global mobility programs that support “strategic opportunities” are expensive but rightly so. After all, they focus on delivering high-quality business value and developing a company’s most promising talent – the next generation of leaders.

The good news is that for most companies their existing global mobility infrastructure probably provides a solid foundation for supporting this new type of assignment. They simply need to increase their emphasis on development and retention. With a strategic opportunity, the business is making a major long-term investment to develop its most valuable employees, and it needs to receive a strong return on that investment. Critical activities include:

- Defining a clear career path for every high-potential employee, with a strong understanding of how a particular overseas assignment will contribute to that person’s development
- Setting clear expectations about development goals, the repatriation process, and future jobs
- Monitoring the employee’s return date and lining up an appropriate position that puts the person back on the company’s fast track

These activities improve development and retention by creating a positive experience for the employee and by reducing the chances for misunderstandings when the assignment is complete.

Achieving expected results requires strong collaboration between the global mobility function and the talent management function, as well as with corporate headquarters and the business units. These groups have a keen interest in (1) connecting top talent with the right opportunities, (2) helping them get comfortable so they can have an effective experience, and (3) smoothly bringing them back to a position where their newly developed skills and experience can be used to their and the company’s advantage.

Keys to achieving expected results

Target the best-of-the-best performers. Focus on development and retention so the company gets a return on its major investment.

Example

A business is expanding its manufacturing operations in India and needs a general manager to plan and lead the effort. The talent management function collaborates with the global mobility function to identify candidates with the right skills who are looking for an overseas development opportunity. The global mobility group works closely with the selected individual to complete the move quickly and efficiently in compliance with local regulations. It also makes sure the appropriate talent management infrastructure is in place – including goals, development objectives, and a repatriation strategy – which helps to facilitate a positive experience. Two or three months before the assignee returns, the talent management function gets involved to line up an appropriate senior-level position that puts the individual’s new skills and experience to good use.

Option 2: Learning experience

These assignments primarily focus on long-term employee development, not short-term business performance. Employees are given an opportunity to develop new capabilities and global experience, which helps them increase their personal value and marketability.

Ideal candidates are high-potential employees who want to dramatically improve their skills and qualifications and are willing to make a personal investment to achieve their goals. These “ready and willing” participants should expect fewer relocation benefits than with a traditional foreign assignment or strategic opportunity. The global mobility function will help with the move, but the service levels and terms of the relocation package will be scaled down.

A “learning experience” is a strategic investment for both the employee and the company. Each is betting that the resulting personal development will significantly increase the employee’s value over the long haul. To help facilitate an acceptable return on this development investment, the global mobility function must work closely with the business and the talent management function, particularly in the areas of performance management and career development.

An employee’s earning potential is a direct function of his or her skills, capabilities, and experience – and international experience is one of the most effective ways for people to increase their value.

An active focus on talent management is especially important near the end of the assignment to effectively transition the employee’s newly acquired skills and experience in a manner that they aren’t lost or wasted. Employees returning from a learning experience might be expected to take the lead in finding a new position; however, the global mobility function can help by providing standard processes and tools that enable returning employees to rebrand and market themselves within the company.

Keys to achieving expected results

Target up-and-coming employees who are willing to invest in their own careers. Put their new skills and capabilities to work as soon as the assignment is complete.

Example

A rising star would like to get a global view of the organization and expresses an interest in going abroad to work with a variety of divisions and functions. The global mobility and talent management functions work with the business to find the right opportunity. At the end of the assignment, the employee returns to lead a large M&A project.



Option 3: Skilled position

This category centers around filling workforce gaps with deep, specialized talent for a limited period of time – similar to the way a company might use contractors to temporarily address gaps in their regular workforce. The difference is that these assignments use a company’s internal employees to fill workforce gaps in another country.

In the past, the global mobility function often didn’t have visibility to these kinds of situations. Assignments were handled ad hoc within the business with mixed results in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and compliance. However, as global businesses become more complex and specialized, these types of assignments are becoming increasingly common. This provides a significant opportunity for the global mobility organization to increase its contribution to the business, providing the company with greater flexibility to respond to critical opportunities and threats.

From the company’s perspective, the priorities for global mobility are clear: get the specialized talent where it needs to be – quickly and efficiently – while complying with the myriad of rules and regulations associated with an international assignment. From the employees’ perspective, the priorities are equally clear: execute a comfortable, stress-free move that lets them focus on the job at hand; then bring them home as quickly and painlessly as possible.

Keys to achieving expected results

Create a pool of specialists who can be deployed quickly and easily. Focus on speed, efficiency, and compliance.

Example

A company needs help establishing a new oil refinery in Saudi Arabia. The global mobility group finds an employee with deep experience in getting refineries up and running and relocates her to Saudi Arabia in less than six weeks. The work is completed within three months, at which point the employee returns to her previous position.

Option 4: Commodity job

Some employees have a strong desire to work abroad (as a matter of personal preference), even if the potential business value and development value are low. Of course, just because an employee wants to move to another country, it doesn’t mean there is necessarily an opportunity that makes sense. It is up to the employee, the employee’s manager, and the talent management function to find an assignment that fits.

Relocation benefits and support for a “commodity job” are generally minimal, with employees expected to handle most or all of their moving expenses. These assignments may produce ancillary benefits for the employee and company – such as personal development and cross-fertilization of talent – but these results are not deliberate or planned. Achieving expected results hinges on the global mobility function building the operating processes and infrastructure to drive required efficiency while facilitating compliance with applicable regulations.

Keys to achieving expected results

Employees volunteer for these assignments and receive minimal benefits. Global mobility programs focus on compliance and efficiency.

Example

An employee’s spouse has received an offer to work in another country. The employee wants to stay with the company but needs to relocate. The person applies for a job in the targeted country, interviews with the local hiring manager, receives an offer, and accepts the position. The global mobility group is notified and helps coordinate and administer the move but with no additional perks. The employee is responsible for all moving costs.

Changing how people think about global mobility

Ask people to name their most valuable asset and they will probably say it's their house. But in most cases, a person's most valuable asset is actually their future earning potential. For example, a person who can earn \$100,000 per year is like a \$1 million asset that generates a 10% annual return.

An employee's earning potential is a direct function of his or her skills, capabilities, and experience – and international experience is one of the most effective ways for people to increase their value. Yet most people still view an overseas assignment as a “sacrifice” and expect to be compensated for their trouble. This mentality might have made sense in the past, but in today's increasingly global business environment, it just doesn't fit.

For global mobility to thrive, people need to recognize that international assignments don't just create value for the business but for the employees themselves. As such, employees should view a foreign assignment as an opportunity to be embraced, not a hardship that requires compensation. Moreover, the specific assignments should be seen for what they really are: a privilege reserved for a company's most valuable employees and a key entry point to the fast track.

Helping employees recognize the benefits of working abroad opens up a whole new range of options – options where the company and employee share the cost (and benefits) of an international assignment.

Developing global talent

Achieving the highest development value of an international assignment doesn't happen automatically. It requires a deliberate and conscious effort to tailor a company's talent management programs, strategies, and practices to the different needs of each participant.

The key to achieving expected results is taking a holistic approach that spans the entire assignment lifecycle (Figure 3).

The starting point is to help employees develop a clear career path. This should happen well in advance of any foreign assignment.

Once an appropriate assignment has been found, the company must help the employee understand the objectives of the assignment and develop a strong support system if they don't already have one in place. That means helping the employee create new connections in the host organization, while maintaining strong connections back home; providing customized mentoring services to help the employee be effective while on assignment; making sure the employee's family is comfortable in the new environment; and, as the end of the assignment draws near, helping the employee find an appropriate position that takes advantage of newly acquired skills and experience.

Figure 3. International assignment lifecycle



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Business benefits of effective global mobility

Traditionally, global mobility programs have sought to create a positive experience for assignees and their families. This new, more comprehensive approach that we are describing continues to support that goal, while also reflecting the changing needs of the business. This can result in a wide range of benefits:

- **Reduces costs.** Delivers the appropriate level of benefits and support for each assignment. Uses methods and tools that are efficient and repeatable. Improves visibility to costs.
- **Develops talent.** Makes talent development a top priority. Helps develop leaders with global experience.
- **Fits the needs of the business.** Offers flexible options to address a wide range of needs.
- **Improves ROI.** Places returning employees into positions that capitalize on their new skills and experience, improving retention and business value.
- **Reduces the risk of non-compliance.** Facilitates a rigorous and consistent approach to complying with rules and regulations at every level.
- **Supports global growth.** Gets the right resources in place, quickly and efficiently. Handles a high volume of global mobility assignments.

Creating a positive experience for assignees and their families while also reflecting the changing needs of the business can result in a wide range of benefits.



Compliance and global mobility

Moving people across national borders raises a vast array of compliance issues that can have significant consequences from bad publicity to monetary penalties to jail terms.

Compliance issues related to global mobility are not just theoretical – they are very real. In some cases, companies have been prohibited from importing workers into a country, effectively crippling their local operations. In other cases, companies in regulated industries such as financial services and pharmaceuticals have found themselves completely barred from operating within a particular nation’s borders.

In the wake of Sarbanes-Oxley (and similar legislation outside of the United States), companies are expected to be “whiter than white” when it comes to compliance. Compliance requirements are broad and diverse, ranging from **individual corporate policies** to **local employment laws** to **regional requirements** for data privacy and right to work. Audit and control requirements are also a significant compliance issue. Even the hint of a problem in any of these areas can send investors running for the exits.

More and more companies are adopting a “zero defect” mentality for compliance.

That is why more and more companies are adopting a “zero defect” mentality for compliance. Of course, achieving the goal of zero defects can be a huge challenge, particularly for large, global companies that operate in hundreds of countries – each with its own laws and regulatory requirements.

To overcome these challenges, companies must face the full spectrum of compliance requirements head on. Keys to achieving this objective include (1) providing the entire company with clear governance and direction on compliance issues, (2) understanding the data, process, controls, and technology that will be required, and (3) deploying a service delivery model that is specifically designed to support effective compliance.



Tax and global mobility

Tax is typically the single biggest expense associated with international assignments. Companies and employees may be subject to taxation in several different countries, including the employee's host country, home country, and any country the employee travels to for work-related activities. Moreover, these tax obligations often continue long after an assignment is complete – driven by equity awards and other forms of deferred compensation.

The costs and complexity of international tax can be a huge impediment to global mobility. The good news is that while these factors cannot be completely eliminated, they can usually be managed to a point where they are not deal breakers.

Effective tax planning for global mobility can save a company millions of dollars a year. Consider, for example, the tax costs associated with providing housing for an expatriate family of four in Japan. Annual rent in Tokyo can easily cost as much as \$175,000, which would normally produce a tax obligation to the Japanese government of \$120,000. However, through a planning technique available under Japanese law, it is possible for a company to impose a **de minimus** "legal rent" that would reduce its tax burden to as little as \$9,000 a year, generating an annual tax savings of \$111,000 for that one assignment alone.

Improved tax planning for global mobility can help a company strategically relocate its people without being overly constrained by the cost and complexity of international tax. And from a strategic perspective, that operational flexibility can be even more valuable than the actual cost savings.

Effective tax planning for global mobility can save a company millions of dollars a year.



Total rewards and global mobility

Traditional global mobility programs often feature lavish expatriate compensation and benefit plans, coupled with expensive allowances for things such as housing, schooling, and home visits. Another major expense that is less visible is the cost of providing retirement benefits for expatriates working in a variety of countries under different social security regimes and retirement plans. The typical response to these challenges is to spend, spend, spend...and then deal with consequences later. Of course, the net result is that even short-term transfers can be extraordinarily complex and expensive.

Thankfully, many companies are discovering that a holistic approach to total rewards and global mobility can be both more satisfying for the employee and more cost effective for the business. The appropriate approach varies from company to company, depending on the nature and volume of the required moves, the company's financial and human resource objectives, and its tolerance for risk. However, there are a number of key principles that apply to almost every situation:

- **Avoid a one-dimensional approach to compensation and benefits.** Not every cross-border move warrants equal treatment. For example, an unmarried junior engineer going on a short-term assignment to open a new plant has different needs than a senior executive with a family who is relocating for five years. Applying a variety of approaches is not only cheaper, it just makes more sense for today's varying requirements.

- **Don't over-compensate.** In many situations, a foreign assignment is a win-win for both the company and the employee. Companies should recognize the personal and development value of each assignment, rather than trying to make every employee financially "whole."
- **Align rewards with talent management.** Fair and competitive compensation programs are critical to motivation and retention, but they need to align with the company's global talent needs and talent management programs.
- **Be creative.** The usual way of doing things isn't consistently the better way, particularly for something as complex as global mobility. For example, it might be better to design a special retirement program for globally mobile employees, rather than bending over backwards to keep everyone enrolled in their standard programs back home.
- **Surpass expectations.** When it comes to total rewards and global mobility, there are no secrets. International airport lounges are filled with executives complaining or boasting about their relocation packages. The preferred way to tackle the problem is to set fair and reasonable expectations – and then surpass them.

In the past, compensation and benefits were an important but extremely expensive part of the global mobility equation. Today, forward-thinking organizations are adopting a holistic approach to rewards and global mobility that is more effective – and more efficient – at meeting the cross-border needs of a business and its employees.

Companies are discovering that a holistic approach to total rewards and global mobility can be both more satisfying for the employee and more cost-effective for the business.

Technology and global mobility

Technology can help a company dramatically improve its global mobility capabilities. However, technology should never be the primary focus; it is simply an enabler.

When used appropriately, global mobility systems can help a company stay abreast of the global talent pipeline, identify and address compliance issues, track and gather cost data and other critical information, and efficiently deliver compensation and benefits to employees working abroad.

Technology initiatives to support global mobility are subject to the same principles as any effective HR system deployment.

Global mobility is a service with a well-defined set of customers, roles and responsibilities, and tools. As such, technology initiatives to support global mobility are subject to the same principles as any effective HR system deployment:

- **Use globally consistent systems and processes.** Whenever possible, use a global HR system, a single global intranet, and well integrated web tools. Try to avoid customizing standard applications. Off-the-shelf, “vanilla” systems are much easier to support and maintain.

- **Focus on quality and customer satisfaction.** Focusing on service quality is more likely to produce rich, employee-facing solutions and high-quality processes.
- **Strike a balance between service and self-service.** Design and implement a balanced support model that encourages employees to be as self-reliant as possible.
- **Follow the crowd.** Try to use industry-standard systems and tools for service delivery whenever possible. Sometimes, it just doesn't pay to be different.
- **Choose the right metrics.** Global mobility systems should be measured using a broad set of business metrics, including: quality (as measured by defects per million), costs, employee satisfaction, critical incidents, number of support calls, throughput times, and use of self-service tools.



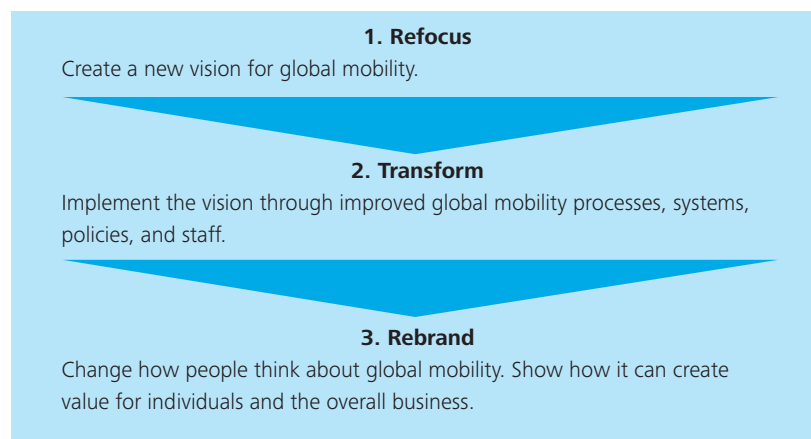
Taking action

Companies around the world are beginning to recognize the importance of effective global mobility capabilities; however, most still have a long way to go. In fact, a recent survey of HR leaders showed that only 10% believe their companies are currently using global mobility to build or maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace.³

From our experience, the main problem is that most global mobility programs continue to revolve around the traditional one-size-fits-all approach, and lack the focus, structure, and capabilities to address the full range of global mobility needs.

Developing global mobility capabilities that meet the requirements of today's increasingly global businesses is a three-step process.

1. Refocus 2. Transform 3. Rebrand (The three-step process for developing global mobility capabilities.)



Step 1: Refocus

Create a new vision for global mobility

Global companies need global mobility programs that are fast, flexible, repeatable, and efficient. Here's a way to develop a new approach to global mobility.

- Identify the needs of global mobility customers (employees, business units, corporate).
- Understand business-unit strategies and talent needs.
- Collect data to understand the current status of your global mobility programs.
- Develop a global mobility vision and strategy that supports the company's business and HR strategies. Gain support and buy-in from leadership.
- Align all aspects of global mobility – such as selection, performance measurement, and repatriation – with the company's global business and talent strategies.
- Increase the emphasis on talent development.
- Develop a model for the deployment of global mobility services. This might include outsourcing selected activities.

This new vision for global mobility helps position a company for long-term growth and profitable results in an increasingly global market.

Quick wins

When improving their long-term global mobility capabilities, companies must also find ways to address their immediate global mobility needs – particularly in emerging markets. Possible short-term solutions include: job rotations, virtual positions, international commuting, and project-based assignments. In addition, companies may have opportunities to move work to their employees, instead of moving their employees to the work. Short-term global mobility solutions that demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness can be integrated into the long-term strategy.

Step 2: Transform

Establish new global mobility capabilities to support the vision

For many companies, this new approach to global mobility will require new systems, policies, and processes. It may also require global mobility staff with different training and experience.

Here are some ways to achieve the required capabilities:

- Establish standard worldwide policies for global mobility.
- Develop consistent systems, processes, and tools.
- Create a Center of Excellence for global mobility.
- Outsource non-core activities that can be delivered more efficiently by a third party to allow the global mobility staff to focus on the things that really matter.
- Train staff to focus on customer service, not just process administration.
- Provide planning tools to help the business understand and manage assignment costs.
- Create reports and analyses to monitor the development and business value of global mobility assignments.

These capabilities provide the critical infrastructure to support a company's long-term global mobility strategy.

Step 3: Rebrand

Spread the word about what global mobility can do

Global mobility programs can only add value to the business if employees and business leaders know about them – and put them to use.

Here are some ways to change how people look at global mobility.

- Actively communicate the global mobility value proposition to each customer group. For employees, focus on personal development – not lavish benefits and cushy assignments. For the business units and corporate, reposition global mobility as a flexible, business-oriented solution – not a narrow approach that only caters to the needs of the employee.
- Help business leaders understand the interplay between the global mobility function and the HR function so they can use global mobility services more effectively.
- Make global mobility an integral part of the business and HR strategy. Incorporate global mobility into key HR and business initiatives.

Improving the global mobility “brand” can help create a virtuous cycle that drives up demand for global mobility services while attracting better talent into the program.

Do your global mobility capabilities measure up?

Here's a quick comparison to help determine where your global mobility capabilities currently stand.

Old way	New way
One-size-fits-all approach.	Flexible approach that offers a full range of options, from commodity jobs to strategic opportunities.
Low volume of assignments, each requiring special handling.	Efficient and repeatable methods and tools that can handle a high volume of assignments.
Process is slow and inefficient, making it hard to respond to new opportunities.	Supports global growth by getting the right resources in place fast.
Emphasizes the employee's short-term needs.	Addresses the short- and long-term needs of the employee and business.
Focuses on relocation administration (transactions, compensation, benefits, etc.).	Focuses on talent development. Helps develop leaders with global experience.
Selected employees not consistently an effective fit.	Different options for different types of employees. Specific opportunities reserved for employees with high-quality potential.
Once assigned, employees are on their own. Many leave shortly after returning from assignment.	Assignments are managed throughout their lifecycle. Returning employees are placed in positions that capitalize on their new skills and experience – improving retention and business value.
Ad hoc approach to compliance exposes company to significant risk.	Consistent and rigorous approach to compliance reduces risk.

Smart moves

Now is the time for action.

In today's increasingly global marketplace, companies can't afford to treat global mobility as a niche activity that requires special handling. They need to develop standard global mobility capabilities that are fast, cost-efficient, effective, and repeatable. They also need to use international assignments as a way to develop their next generation of leaders.

The traditional one-size-fits-all approach to global mobility is no longer good enough. Global businesses need a full range of options to address a variety of situations, from strategic assignments to commodity jobs – and everything in between.

An effective global mobility program must offer services and options that fit the needs of the business and its employees, delivering high value at a low cost. At the same time, it must address critical issues such as regulatory compliance and tax, which can prevent a business from using global mobility to its advantage.

Going forward, global business will be the primary source of growth for many companies. Organizations will source talent from all over the world. And international assignments will be business as usual.

To achieve desired results in this new environment, companies will need to dramatically improve their global mobility capabilities. Now is the time for action.

Endnotes

¹ "Global Mobility: A Pivotal Talent and Bottom-Line Issue for Growing Companies," Deloitte, 2007.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*



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Global Mobility and Talent series

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