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The process that accompanies international assignments can be highly administrative and focused less on the employee—and what matters most to them—than it should be. The typical assignee has to deal with a broad range of external service providers—focused on immigration, tax, and relocation (just think of all that’s involved with selling or renting one’s current home, finding a place to live, identifying schools, receiving cultural and language training, relocating pets—and much more). Employees also have to deal with internal functions, such as HR, payroll, and IT. To make matters more complicated, assignees often have to negotiate with each of those in their home country, as well as their host country (or countries). Employees can be inundated with hundreds of emails from dozens of organizations, creating unnecessary stress and making them wonder whether they should have taken the assignment in the first place.

The future of global mobility
A rewarding global experience—for employees and employers alike

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So how can organizations improve the experience and foster a sense of loyalty and engagement? We believe there’s a new approach emerging for global mobility programs that makes sense for employees and employers. Here’s what we see on the horizon, along with some suggestions for how you can adapt:

1. A human-centric approach to global mobility

Mobility programs are often designed to manage risk and cost at the expense of a good experience. But by putting humans in the middle and designing an intuitive experience, organizations can achieve better risk and cost management outcomes. Think about the personas you are designing for—the biggest players—your employees, the hiring managers, and the administrators of your mobility programs. Break it down into moments that matter (what is the most important thing for that person in that moment—the stress they feel, the challenges they’re navigating) and think about what can be done to alleviate the stresses and make the experience more intuitive and personalized.

2. Embed analytics into processes

Hiring managers in multinational businesses often make decisions without good information on the full range of talent options (deploy internationally, hire locally, etc.). By using data and leveraging digital talent sourcing solutions such as Deloitte’s Telescope, managers can make more informed decisions about the trade-offs in speed, cost, and quality for different talent options—and more often place the best employees in the global roles that make sense for them and the organization.

3. Less collecting, more connecting

Global mobility programs often rely on a network of vendors and internal process partners, communicating with employees across multiple systems. For mobile employees, this results in having to provide the same personal and family information to many different parties. We see organizations
Global mobility is more than just moving existing employees overseas. Gravitating toward an integrated ecosystem of vendors with consistent communications delivered across shared platforms—helping make the assignee experience much easier to navigate. These changes enable program administrators to bring a richer human focus to the challenge, helping employees navigate through the compounding stresses of changing jobs, understanding a new environment and culture, and disrupting family support structures.

4. Broad thinking
Global mobility is more than just moving existing employees overseas. Increasingly it’s about finding the world’s most talented workers and bringing them to new locations, including office headquarters or “campuses.” Many tech companies, for example, are re-evaluating their global talent supply chain and using mobility to hire the best talent for a role, then moving people into locations that offer in-person collaboration, access to networks, and resources. In those organizations in particular, global mobility and talent acquisition are becoming intertwined, integrated HR functions.

5. A focus on family
Family is a major consideration for employees considering a global assignment. In fact, there is a great deal of evidence that shows that personal considerations—such as finding schools for children, caring for aging parents, losing employment for a spouse or partner, even navigating fragmented family relationships—can derail a move. We anticipate organizations will create opportunities to give families more insight and foster an inclusive culture that supports everyone involved in a move.

6. More millennials on the move
Millennials have distinct needs; among them opportunities for advancement, a commitment to social impact, and a desire for new experiences. Global mobility opportunities can help attract and engage younger generations, promoting ownership of their career, offering change and flexibility in work, and providing an opportunity to make an impact. Organizations will need to think about designing overseas assignments—and flexible policies that accompany them—to meet the needs of this growing workforce.

7. International isn’t always long term—or predictable
Employees are increasingly driving their choices about where to live for the right outcomes for them, both personally and professionally. Some organizations are offering “remote years,” during which employees can experience multiple countries over a year. Still others are providing opportunities for long-term, extended business travel, while others offer employees the chance to work overseas via remote working teams. These new arrangements can enable employees to navigate a global organization in a way that feels less limiting and much more engaging. At the same time, employers need to bear in mind that with this diversity of moves comes more complex risk management across the payroll, tax, and immigration spaces.

8. Global mobility = global service
Working for organizations with a sense of purpose is important to employees. Deloitte’s 2017 Millennial Survey found that 76 percent of respondents regard businesses as a force for positive social impact. We’re seeing organizations encourage employees from different countries to collaborate on community-based assignments in emerging markets to help communities address critical needs. In addition, employees in more traditional overseas roles are seeking opportunities to develop new leadership skills while volunteering or giving back to their new home community.

9. Global mobility and cognitive
Chatbots are already here, and leading companies have incorporated them into global mobility offerings for employees. We envision this evolving rapidly, with organizations offering even more personalized support for employees on the move via virtual assistants who help them quickly and adeptly prepare for an assignment and repatriation, and virtual reality immersions that enable employees to “experience” aspects of their move (e.g., a new office and city) before it actually takes place.

10. Digital platforms can bring it all together
Technology is unleashing a transformational change in global mobility because of its ability to create efficiencies in what has been a very manual process. The information assignees need can be at their fingertips, 24/7. Digital platforms such as Deloitte’s ConnectMe can enable, at scale, the level of personalization that people have come to expect in their consumer experiences.