

HEALTH WEALTH CAREER

TWO MINUTES TO UNDERSTAND GLOBAL MOBILITY MANAGEMENT

A COMPILATION OF SHORT ARTICLES
COVERING:

Cost Cutting, Flexibility, Segmentation, Expatriate Gig
Workers, Diversity

OCTOBER 2018

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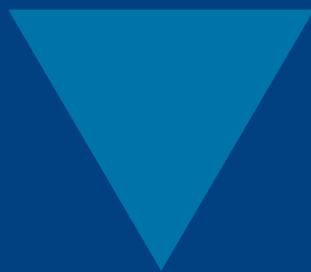


MAKE TOMORROW, TODAY

 MERCER

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INTRODUCTION

This compilation of short articles is designed to provide HR professionals managing international assignees with a summary of some of the current mobility issues and trends along with practical suggestions to address them. The first volume in this series covers:

Cost Cutting: Global Mobility is not spared by the ongoing corporate struggle to cut costs, and assignees are commonly perceived as expensive. Downturns in economic cycles and corporate reorganization regularly prompt top management to request overall cost reductions, a limit on the number of traditional assignees, or cuts in expatriation packages. Here are a few things to bear in mind when looking at mobility costs.

Policy Flexibility: The fast evolution of assignee demographics, assignment patterns, and technology is increasingly prompting mobility managers to address the question of flexibility in mobility programs and ponder the adoption of “cafeteria models” allowing assignees to select mobility package options. At the same time, many are concerned about compliance issues and have doubts about the practicalities of implementing a fully flexible approach. How flexible can a company be without jeopardizing the consistency of its mobility program?

Policy Segmentation: Over the past ten years, employers have been increasingly segmenting their mobility policy, not just by assignment duration (e.g. long-term versus short-term) but also by expatriate assignment purpose (e.g. strategic assignment versus developmental moves or moves requested by the employees themselves). Implementing a segmented mobility policy can increase the effectiveness of a mobility program but a segmentation approach needs to be aligned with business objectives and avoid unnecessary complexities. Here are tips to start you off on the right foot.

Expatriate Gig Workers: The gig economy will have a profound impact on the globally mobile workforce and companies need to prepare to manage a mixed assignee talent pool that will include a growing proportion of international mobile gig workers. Many of the future expatriates you will manage may not even be employed by your company. One of the key trends of the future of work is that organizations will not just have to build (train) or buy (hire) talent, they will need to learn how to effectively borrow talent. Here is what to bear in mind to anticipate this evolution.

Expatriate Gender Diversity Matters: While some companies are making progress, the percentage of women in the expatriate workforce globally is still a paltry 14%, with best performing industries and countries lingering in the 20–30% range. Parity is a long way off. Having international experience is a pre-condition to reaching top managerial levels within many multinational companies. Furthermore, international assignments allow employees to develop essential skills and build a network that can boost their career. It’s not just a mobility question: the low participation of women in the assignee talent pool can put a brake on gender equality at leadership levels. It’s a strategic talent issue. Global Mobility should be part of the solution and help women break the glass ceiling rather than be part of the problem.

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TWO MINUTES TO RETHINK GLOBAL MOBILITY COST CUTTING (AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT)

Global Mobility is not spared by the ongoing corporate struggle to cut costs, and assignees are commonly perceived as expensive. Downturns in economic cycles and corporate reorganization regularly prompt top management to request overall cost reductions, a limit on the number of traditional assignees, or cuts in expatriation packages. Here are a few things to bear in mind when looking at mobility costs.

BEFORE CUTTING COSTS TAKE TIME TO EXPLORE THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

Is the question purely about costs or rather about the perceived value of assignments compared to their associated (and highly visible) costs? How are costs split between the home and the host countries? Is the split unsustainable for some of the business units involved (especially host country operations)? What is the general level of understanding and acceptance of global mobility within the company?

If necessary, reframe the discussion and review the cost issue within the broader context of business value, processes, and talent mobility within the organization.

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ALL THE FACTS RIGHT: COST PROJECTIONS AND ASSIGNMENT TRACKING

Recent research has shown that although just over two-thirds of companies perform detailed cost projections, a worrying number of multinationals are still relying on rough calculations only or don't include tax and social security costs in their estimates. Conversely, according to the same survey, 57% of companies still don't track actual expenditure against forecasts. Furthermore, cost analyses should not just be based on current assignment patterns and also need to integrate potential future moves as well as assignments happening under the radar (i.e. not tracked centrally).

UNDERSTAND THE ISSUE IS NOT JUST ABOUT THE AMOUNTS PAID BUT ALSO THE DURATION OF PAYMENTS

Are you creating on-going cost commitments for the company by providing benefits and allowances that will be difficult to discontinue at the end of the assignments or by using compensation approaches that permanently inflate the base salary of mobile employees?



CHECK IF YOU ARE FORCED TO MAKE COSTLY EXCEPTIONS

Going to extremes (i.e. having very rigid policies, or on the contrary, highly flexible, negotiable ones) could trigger costly exceptions or ad-hoc deals. Even if you're doing things right policy wise, local implementation of these policies might be at fault and lead to negotiations and exceptions.

REMEMBER THAT LOST OPPORTUNITIES IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST COSTS

Losing key talent, having disengaged employees, failed assignments, and not using former assignees' skills upon repatriations are costs that might be difficult to quantify but that are impacting the business. These issues should be part of the overall cost discussion.

IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR COST CONTAINMENT

EXPAND YOUR TALENT POOL

Lack of choice is driving costs up. The cost of assignees may vary widely depending on their home country, current compensation package,

family status, and personal expectations. It's too late to complain about the costs once a candidate has already been selected. Planning for future assignments and expanding the mobile talent pool by identifying potential internal candidates and external hires help increase choice and keep costs down. Nurturing the wider talent ecosystem (for example returnees, spouses rejoining the workforce, as well as freelancers/ gig workers who could fill talent gaps) also helps expand the available talent pool.

ADOPT A BROADER DEFINITION OF MOBILITY TO HAVE MORE OPTIONS

Don't be constrained by the traditional definition of mobility (which is too often synonymous with long-term assignments) and look for an alternative: assess when other types of moves such as commuters, frequent business travelers, or even virtual assignments can replace traditional expatriate assignments. Remember that mobility is as much moving jobs to people as moving people to jobs and that you can sometimes also take relocation out of the equation by hiring foreigners locally.

SEGMENT YOUR POLICIES

Segmenting your policies is a good way to reconcile the cost control versus international expansion dilemma in a context of budget constraint by shifting budget from less essential moves to assignment that are critical to the business.



REVISE YOUR COMPENSATION APPROACHES

There is no perfect unique compensation solution that will allow companies to systematically decrease costs for all moves while still removing barriers to mobility for employees. However, having the right mix of approaches by taking into account the specificities of each type of moves can help drive costs down. Explore the use of local or local-plus approaches for some moves but remember that depending on the destination, a local-plus package can also be very costly.

MANAGING ASSIGNMENT ALLOWANCES

Make a distinction between core equalizations package items (e.g. cost-of-living allowances and tax equalization) and flexible items that could be decreased. Many companies find they don't need extra incentives for all types of moves and retain mobility premiums only for business critical moves or don't provide them at all. A number of organizations are trying to align housing allowances with local housing practices in non-hardship locations. Covering international school fees might be a requirement to facilitate family relocation but setting strict schooling guidelines and a fixed budget help control costs.

AVOID ON-GOING COST COMMITMENTS

Buy out assignees (i.e. pay a one-time lump-sum) to avoid paying benefits and allowances for years if the duration of the assignment is not clear or if you are planning to localize employees. Always bear in mind potential long-term consequences of compensation adjustments on the future cost of mobile employees before tampering with base salaries. Employees will resist future attempts to decrease what they perceived as core compensation – unlike relocation allowances, base salary increases are likely to be permanent.

CONTROL EXCEPTIONS

Create internal awareness about mobility policy exceptions and make sure a robust approval process is in place (if possible involving senior management). Clarify what is non-negotiable and keep exceptions in line with the core principles of the policies. If possible suggest using predefined alternatives (e.g. an existing assignment category in a segmented policy) as opposed to ad-hoc deals.





TWO MINUTES TO INTRODUCE MORE FLEXIBILITY IN YOUR TALENT MOBILITY PROGRAM

The fast evolution of assignee demographics, assignment patterns, and technology is increasingly prompting mobility managers to address the question of flexibility in mobility programs and ponder the adoption of “cafeteria models” allowing assignees to select mobility package options. At the same time, many are concerned about compliance issues and have doubts about the practicalities of implementing a fully flexible approach. How flexible can a company be without jeopardizing the consistency of its mobility program?.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR FLEXIBILITY

The expectations of a new generation of assignees and the rise of new types of mobility are increasing the pressure on companies to have more flexible approaches when managing international assignments.

Flexibility can be an answer to different business issues:

- Specific local conditions can challenge global policies and threaten their consistency or give rise to exceptions.
- It helps in removing barriers to mobility and avoiding process rigidities that could delay or even prevent assignments.
- Flexibility could be a way to allocate budget efficiently and manage costs in general.
- It also leans towards more personalization by meeting the specific requirements needs of the different assignee groups. It can increase satisfaction and address the needs of a more diverse workforce.

DEFINING FLEXIBILITY

Different levels of flexibility can be considered:

Talent pool flexibility: Expanding the mobile talent pool and considering new types of candidates can facilitate assignments and help control costs. Will the organization rely on internal employees, or does external resourcing make more sense for any specific scenario?

Location and working arrangement flexibility: This involves taking into account the chosen employee’s home country, host country, and his or her work set up upon international relocation. For example, consider whether assignees will be working from an office or a home/remote location, or whether it will be a rotational assignment versus full-time work. Is it feasible to move jobs to people as opposed to people to jobs?

Policy flexibility: Policy flexibility could involve meeting minimum global guidelines and requirements, while also reflecting the needs and requirements of specific geographies or categories of employees. Increased flexibility can take the form of more segmented policies with different terms and conditions for different types of assignments (for example by differentiating between self-requested moves and business essential ones).

Package flexibility: package flexibility includes relying on flexible expat benefit options, having the possibility to reallocate allowances for new purposes, and implementing lump sums. It can also lead companies to offer assignees more choice in terms of mobility benefits (the “cafeteria” model) or allow employees to take cash amounts instead of benefits in kind.

THE LIMITS OF FLEXIBILITY

Excessive flexibility and an absence of clear guidelines could lead assignees to take risks in the host location (especially hardship locations). The absence of strict tax and immigration compliance monitoring as well as unsecured exchange of data between jurisdictions could also create problems for companies and individuals alike.

As a result, duty of care and compliance should be the top priorities in any company's global mobility flexible strategy. In many instances, organizations should look beyond the minimum legal requirements. Flexible policies should consider the bigger picture, provide a fair treatment to international assignees, and ensure that they are not being penalized or facing unreasonable costs, family issues, or other problems.

HR teams can also have concerns with flexibility related to work practices and career management. For example:

- Fair application of working conditions across all employees (46%)
- Ability to measure and reward contribution (36%)
- Career progression for flexible workers (32%)

Source: *Mercer's Global Talent Trends 2018 Study*

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF FLEXIBLE APPROACHES

Don't just follow current trends: introduce flexibility for a reason. What business problems are you trying to solve? Barriers to mobility linked to local regulations? Increasing the satisfaction of employees? Back the business case with factual evidence and develop performance indicators (e.g. employee satisfaction, time spent on managing specific tasks, employee retention and cost control) to measure the impact of increased flexibility. Set a limit to flexibility and define the minimum requirements that are non-negotiable and that the company must implement.

Categorize policy items: fixed/non-negotiable, flexible in terms of delivery but with a minimal coverage, and optional. Ensure that the minimum requirements are implemented in all policies covering the different types of assignment and communicated to local HR.

Define who should be the decision-maker for each item in the policy (the mobility team, local HR, or the assignee). Flexibility does not have the same implications for all assignments: consider limiting flexibility for moves to hardship locations and other types of moves (e.g. moves involving families). Make sure that employees can make informed choices through financial and tax education. Involve local HR teams and management in the process so that they understand the implications of duty of care.

Determine what legitimate safeguards against excessive flexibility should remain in place, what are practical barriers that may or may not be addressed given the current resources and false barriers that are due to current processes and practices that can be changed. Foster collaboration between teams to enable more flexibility (some decisions and processes in terms of compliance or types of moves might not fall under the purview of the mobility team alone).





TWO MINUTES TO UNDERSTAND TALENT MOBILITY POLICY SEGMENTATION

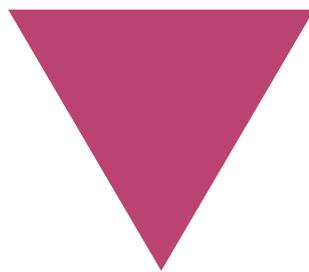
The expatriate mobility landscape is fast evolving and companies have found it increasingly difficult to have only one policy covering all assignees. Over the past ten years, employers have been increasingly segmenting their mobility policy, not just by assignment duration (e.g. long-term versus short-term) but also by expatriate assignment purpose (e.g. strategic assignment versus developmental moves or moves requested by the employees themselves).

Implementing a segmented mobility policy can increase the effectiveness of a mobility program but a segmentation approach needs to be aligned with business objectives and avoid unnecessary complexities. Here are tips to start off on the right foot.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR POLICY SEGMENTATION

The objectives of mobility policy segmentation are:

- Addressing the limitations of the one-size-fits-all types of policies.
- Reconciling talent management and reward / expatriate management: ensure that mobility policies and packages are better aligned with business objectives by determining the purpose of each assignment type and compensating them accordingly.
- Reconciling the cost control versus international expansion dilemma: increasingly employers face the challenge of having to contain expatriation costs while supporting the development of their global operations – in most cases by significantly increasing the number of international assignees. Companies need to find a way to channel their mobility budget from non-essential assignments to business critical ones.
- Presenting clear business cases / options to management to understand the cost and business implications of sending assignees.
- Managing effectively exceptions into a well-defined framework and process as opposed to ad hoc deals: the requirements of each assignee group is handled through assignment categories as opposed to one-to-one negotiation.



HOW TO SEGMENT A POLICY BY ASSIGNMENT PURPOSE

Not all assignments have the same value for the business and for the assignees themselves.

A first distinction can be made between assignments designed to fix business issues or address urgent skill gaps and those whose purpose is to develop high potential employees and future leaders.

A second distinction can be made between business essential moves and those requested by employees for personal and career objectives. Companies should invest more in the business essential moves while providing only basic relocation assistance for retention purpose to moves initiated by the employees.

Top level managers and global nomads with essential skills can have specific requirements and higher expectations than the average assignee. Furthermore, these VIP assignees are the ones who are most likely to request exceptions and who are the most likely to get them. For these reasons some companies create a category for these strategic assignees.

Other types of segmentation including geographic ones (regional versus global) as well as segmentation reflecting company-specific groups and organization setups are possible.

In practice, many international moves might have elements from different categories: e.g. an assignment to fix business issues might include elements of personal development and training. It's important to clarify the main objectives of the assignments and classify moves as developmental; for example, only if there is a structured training program in place and clear learning opportunities.

The segmentation has to be based on objective criteria and not personal preferences. Some assignees might consider themselves to be "highly strategic" (or international) but in reality they are not. That's why it is important to align segmentation with talent management and rely as much as possible on existing official talent categories within the organization to avoid individual negotiations. Mobility teams should rely on talent management teams to determine which people in the organization should populate their different segments.

EXAMPLE OF POLICY SEGMENTATION BY CATEGORY OF ASSIGNEE: THE FOUR-QUADRANT MODEL



ENABLING SEGMENTATION: INTRODUCING FLEXIBILITY INTO EXPATRIATE PACKAGES

Introducing a greater flexibility is possible by mixing different compensation approaches or by differentiating the content of the packages (allowances, premiums, and benefits) while retaining one main approach (e.g. the traditional balance sheet approach).

Companies are exploring various forms of local and local plus approaches. These approaches offer an alternative to the balance sheet approach for developmental moves and employee-requested moves.

At the allowance and benefit level, additional differentiation can be made. For example, incentives such as mobility premiums could be provided only to business essential moves. Similarly, the amount paid for allowances such as housing could be different depending on the type of move (i.e. having the company contribute to part of the costs for some moves instead of covering full housing cost). This differentiation should, however, be made bearing in mind the minimum requirements of all employees (minimum international standard) and the objective of removing barriers to mobility (i.e. not blocking the assignment).

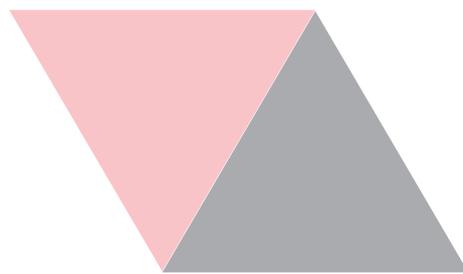
USING PERSONAS TO TEST SEGMENTATION AND PERSONALIZE COMMUNICATION

We are witnessing a growing appetite for greater reward personalization within companies. This move, in the directing of more personalization that goes beyond policy segmentation doesn't imply creating more policies or revert to ad-hoc negotiations. Using typical assignee personas (e.g. the middle level manager with a family, the young millennial on a first assignment, the top executive etc.) can be a way to test how segmented policies address the need of different employee groups, help define targeted clear value propositions, and design communications for each of these groups.

THE LIMITS OF SEGMENTATION

Too much segmentation could kill segmentation. Bear in mind the following pitfalls before trying to go too far with your new segmented policies:

- Don't segment for the wrong reason. Segmentation can help with cost control but don't use segmentation purely for cost reasons. Reducing packages for an assignee category makes sense only if there are other incentives for these assignees; development moves could justify a lower package if there is a real career incentive to go on these assignments. Look beyond titles and jobs names, having different groups within the organization doesn't mean that they all need to be treated differently.



- Keep it simple. It is tempting to go overboard with segmentation and multiply the number of categories. This can quickly become unmanageable. Using a decision tree helps organizations to determine the best approach. If there are ambiguities about categories or attempt from assignees or managers to negotiate categories, this could be a sign that the decision process is not clear or too complex.
- Experience shows that some categories are more relevant than others. Many companies have found that they have a need to differentiate between assignments for development purposes and the more traditional ones designed to fix business issues. On the contrary, when using the four quadrant models, some companies struggle with the distinction between standard assignments for technical experts and strategic ones. The difficulty is to separate the two types and also to make a differentiation between packages, i.e. if a company already provides a comprehensive mobility packages using on home-based approach for technical experts, is there a need to provide a higher package for strategic moves? If not, is it really useful to make a differentiation between the two categories?

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF SEGMENTED POLICIES

There are several things you should do to help ensure the success of the new segmented policy:

Don't underestimate the impact of your company's unique culture, history, and employee perception and mentality and avoid trying to replicate what others are doing. While the four quadrant model has been frequently used, many companies are using only three of two of the categories.

Prioritize the change areas and phase implementation. It could take between four and five months to define the concepts and prepare the policy, another six months to start to implement it, and 18 months for it to be fully operational. So when you embark on a segmentation strategy, manage people's expectations by making it clear that it won't happen straight away.

Gain support from the talent management team and seek approval of key principles by top management early in the process.

Set a clear transition plan and process; the new policy would be applied to new assignees. Buy out (compensate) some assignees if they are resisting change.

Establish a steering committee to manage the policy, track exceptions, and settle contentious issues. The danger of segmentation is that even if you gain approval for the core principles, after one or two years you could still have to start "negotiations" and the policy could start falling apart. Strong governance guards against this danger.





TWO MINUTES TO UNDERSTAND AND PREPARE FOR THE RISE OF EXPATRIATE GIG WORKERS

The gig economy will have a profound impact on the globally mobile workforce and companies need to prepare to manage a mixed assignee talent pool that will include a growing proportion of international mobile gig workers. Many of the future expatriates you will manage may not even be employed by your company. One of the key trends of the future of work is that organizations will not just have to build (train) or buy (hire) talent, they will need to learn how to effectively borrow talent. Here is what to bear in mind to anticipate this evolution.

WHO ARE EXPATRIATE GIG WORKERS?

The term “gig worker” covers very different types of employees. One group includes highly skilled and mobile professionals willing to market themselves globally. Other types are managers with extensive international experience, consultants, designers, and IT professionals, among others. These constitute an increasing portion of the gig economy and the future expatriate workforce. At a more local level, and at the opposite end of the skill spectrum, the gig economy is about temporary workers trying to boost their incomes with part-time work or who are simply unable to find full-time employment.

Gig workers may have different contractual models: freelancers and contractors who remain independent from the company or workers employed by the company for a short duration.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

On paper, the gig economy model, in which workers take on temporary work to perform specific tasks or projects, looks like a win-win for the company and for the employees. From a company perspective the gig model offers more flexibility, reduced fixed costs, and the capacity to react much faster to market changes. It is also an opportunity to tap into a new international talent pool (experts who might not wish to join the company on a permanent long-term contract) and access expertise on demand.

From the employee perspective, the gig model can offer more flexibility, a better life balance, and more autonomy. The rise of the gig economy coincides with a change of generation: millennials, who are much more likely than their predecessors to join the gig economy and thrive in flexible work environment. Technology developments are allowing workers to market themselves globally and are reinforcing the trend.

The capacity to attract and retain this new type of flexible and mobile talent will become more important for companies and will force HR and mobility managers to review their policies, compensation models, and processes. Highly qualified internationally mobile gig workers can be in high demand. Attracting them and retaining them for future gigs can be a difficult and costly exercise. The rise of expatriate gig workers also raise a host of compliance questions and potential duty of care issues.



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN MANAGING EXPATRIATE GIG WORKERS

Mobility policies need to be adapted for gig workers. Managing an international gig worker is less about moving someone from one country to another and more about dealing with the consequence of a move that already happened. Highly skilled international gig workers are more likely to be either locally hired foreigners or on virtual assignments, rather than fitting in the traditional long-term assignment model.

Adapting remuneration packages. In a gig economy, organizations are increasingly paying for skills rather than for jobs as such. This implies understanding the relevance of the skills of potential candidates and their experience (skill depth). Furthermore, remuneration of gig workers is impacted by the duration of the tasks performed, the business requirements (and urgency), and the global competitive environment (skill supply).

Remuneration options to consider include various forms of lump-sum payments to reflect the preference of gig workers for cash amount over benefits in kind. If benefits are provided, the question of portability (i.e. transferability) of these benefits will be essential for gig workers.

The basic relocation package itself might be irrelevant as international gig workers might already be in the host location or prefer to make their own arrangements. The per diem approach commonly used for short-term assignment can be tailored for gig workers on project assignments. For longer projects, different forms of local plus packages include a competitive local salary, various incentives, and whenever possible, portable benefits could be provided. The rise of the gig workers will reinforce the trend to adopt more flexible approaches and processes.

Reconsidering career incentives. The sum of all gigs doesn't always constitute a career. HR teams are not equipped to follow the careers and evaluate the performance of this new category of professionals. This raises questions about the

relevance and consistency of performance review and career management processes. One of the main goals of gig workers is not to be promoted within the organization but to increase their employability and capacity to win additional gigs.

Training considerations and future skill development needs to be taken into account. Replacing developmental moves with project-based assignments done by gig workers and more generally a greater reliance on gig workers, as opposed to building up the internal workforce, could lead to a less skilled talent pool in the long run. This is one of the paradoxes of the global gig economy: it allows companies to tap into new talent pools without helping replenish them.

Engagement and communication. Companies need to avoid having a fragmented workforce with employees on one side and the gig workers on the other side. How does one motivate a gig worker to go the extra mile, convey the official messages, and uphold the values of the company? Gig worker engagement is important because a company's reputation influences its attractiveness to top gig worker talent. Whenever possible, incentivize top talent to perform recurring gigs for the company with the objective to position it as an employer of choice for gig workers.

Compliance and liability: the risks of venturing into gray areas. The concept of a gig worker is not always well-defined and encompasses different realities that means that company risks operating in gray areas. Legal definitions and contractual agreements vary by country. If the contractual obligations have not been clearly defined or if the local employment law is subject to interpretation (due to rapid changes and new questions brought up by the gig economy), companies could find themselves facing legal complications. Do not automatically assume that gig workers are independent from the company or the company has no liability and duty of care towards them.



TWO MINUTES TO UNDERSTAND WHY EXPATRIATE GENDER DIVERSITY MATTERS (AND DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT)

IT'S TIME TO ACCELERATE

While some companies are making progress, the percentage of women in the expatriate workforce globally is still a paltry 14%, with best performing industries and countries lingering in the 20–30% range. Parity is a long way off. Having international experience is a pre-condition to reaching top managerial levels within many multinational companies. Furthermore, international assignments allow employees to develop essential skills and build a network that can boost their career. It's not just a mobility question: the low participation of women in the assignee talent pool can put a brake on gender equality at leadership levels. It's a strategic talent issue. Global Mobility should be part of the solution and help women break the glass ceiling rather than be part of the problem.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

There are unconscious biases in management and HR thinking that can influence the assignee selection process. Female mobility candidates could be discriminated, but also disqualify themselves, due to lack of perceived support for themselves and their families. The real degree of hardship for women in each location should be assessed objectively. Issues should be discussed when the talent pool is being created, not later in the selection process.



HOW TO MAKE PROGRESS?

CREATE AWARENESS AND REVIEW POLICIES FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

Bring the discussion about gender parity to the front and discuss how to move away from the traditional long-term male expatriate model.

REVIEW BENEFITS AND ALLOWANCES WITH DIVERSITY IN MIND

Without completely changing your policies, make sure that they include specific measures such as day care or spousal support to facilitate global mobility of women. Alternatively, provide the flexibility to re-purpose existing allowances or lump-sums that can be used to address the needs of female assignees or minorities.

ENSURE PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION: COMMUNICATION, COACHING, AND MENTORING

All too often employees and their spouses are not aware of the support offered by the company. Talk openly about diversity in your policies and encourage internal discussion on this topic. Communicate about role models and success stories.

WORK CLOSER WITH DIVERSITY TEAMS

Make sure that the mobility team is in contact with the diversity team and can provide input on mobility issues. Gender parity and diversity are important topics for companies. It's an opportunity for mobility teams to play a strategic role and help solve a major talent management issue.

MEASURE SUCCESS

Use workforce progression analyses to measure the career progression of female assignees, employee attitude surveys to capture female assignee feedback, as well as other indicators such as pay progression analyses that could indicate that there are gender gap issues in general.

UNDERSTANDING CAREER ACCELERATORS AND THEIR LINKS TO MOBILITY

Some of the key factors that are important to accelerate expatriates' careers include having:

- The right job: The way to the top within a company is not always a direct one and employees will have different positions throughout their career that will prepare them for top management. However, not all positions are equal when it comes to boosting employees' careers. The types of positions that are real career accelerators depend on the company and industry sector. In some organizations, having experience in finance might be important to reach top management. In other companies, being country manager might be a precondition to make it to the top. Global mobility plays a role by allowing high potential employees to access these jobs globally.



- The right skills: The required skillset depends on each company but is likely to be a mix of technical and managerial competencies (international management) as well as soft skills including intercultural skills and people management skills. In terms of knowledge, understanding current or future key markets for the company and staying up to speed with new trends are career accelerators.
- The right network: a corporate career is at best about team work and at worst a political game – in any case, the cliché about who you know being as important as what you know is often true. Proximity to top management, the opportunity to exchange and learn from the company’s top designers, best trained engineers, top performing managers, and more generally the ability to network with those who can be qualified as the “top influencers” within the company is a differentiator. The location of employees (at HQ, in a major regional hub or on the contrary in a small remote operation) influences their ability to build an efficient network.

MAPPING CORPORATE CAREER ACCELERATORS WITH ASSIGNMENT DESTINATIONS

Not all destinations provide the same opportunities to accelerate careers. Mapping the assignments destinations of the company in terms of career accelerators, and monitoring the diversity of the assignee population relocated there, could provide invaluable insight. This type of exercise might lead companies to realize that some employee categories are under-represented in locations that are key markets for the company. Employees without experience in these markets might have more limited career perspectives.

For example, if China represents the most important export market for a company and experience in that country is essential for future managers but only 10% of the assignees relocated there are women, this might provide an indication why women are less likely to reach the top within that company. This could also indicate that there are problems with specific destinations. On the contrary, if findings indicate that the percentage of women or minorities is fairly similar in most destinations but insufficient in number that might point in the direction of problems in terms of mobile talent pipeline and expatriation in general rather than destination-specific issues.

Once the career accelerators and their links to mobility are understood, the next steps are about implanting effective diversity enablers in mobility policies and practices.



WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GLOBAL MOBILITY MANAGEMENT?

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GET A CONSULTATION ABOUT YOUR SPECIFIC NEEDS AND ISSUES

Mercer can assist with all aspect of global mobility compensation from compensation policies to practical solutions to calculate expatriates packages. We understand that your needs are very individual. Let us know about your specific issues and objectives. We are committed to providing tailored solutions regardless of the home and host location or the type of assignment involved, i.e., long-term, short-term, strategic or developmental.

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Mercer offers a range of training modules for HR professionals who need to understand basic and advanced concepts and issues around pay, benefits and program administration. Course modules can be attended as stand-alone training events, but have been designed with a career-building development pathway in mind.

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Mercer benchmarking surveys help you ensure your global mobility is competitive and aligned with business strategy.

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The Alternative International Assignments Policies and Practices (AIA) Survey is a deep-dive into policies and practices, and examines trends for the following types of international assignments: Developmental/training, Short-term, Commuter, and Permanent moves.

An in-depth look at policies and practices for host-based compensation approaches, the Local Plus Survey expand on our recent research into alternative assignment types.

For further information, please contact your local
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