

The Power of Benchmarking

Expat Academy is a membership organisation for in-house Global Mobility professionals and one of the most valuable membership benefits we provide is our unique benchmarking service. If an Expat Academy member needs to find out how other Global Mobility Professionals approach a certain situation, then they send their question to us and we ask our network of members on their behalf. We consolidate all responses and distribute the answers back to the network for everyone to learn from. The whole process is anonymised giving each respondent the confidence that their involvement does not violate any anti-trust laws.

If you're still wondering about the value of benchmarking perhaps the following definition may persuade you:

Benchmarking is "A measurement of the quality of an organisation's policies, products, programmes, strategies, etc., and their comparison with standard measurements, or similar measurements of its peers.

The objectives of benchmarking are:

1. To determine what and where improvements are called for
2. To analyse how other organisations achieve their high performance levels
3. To use this information to improve performance.¹

The Expat Academy team are literally walking encyclopaedias of knowledge. We hear what is on the minds of hundreds of Global Mobility professionals every week and we pull it all together into a vault of information, available at your fingertips via the Expat Academy App.

In the spirit of sharing, this article highlights some of our latest benchmarking questions with a summary of the responses.

Unmarried Couples Going To Indonesia

Have any companies sent an expat to Indonesia on assignment who has an unmarried partner who has accompanied them? If so, did they encounter any problems with continually using the single entry visa route (as non-married cannot have a dependent visa)? We are concerned there is a risk with a long-term stay using single entry visas.

Those who responded to this question were equally concerned so we called in one of our expert Network Sponsors, Emigra, who advised:

Unmarried partners are not eligible for a Dependent status in Indonesia and as such the only option in such cases, is for the applicant to secure a "Socio Cultural Visa/ Visitor Visa".

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This visa is initially issued for a period of 2 months and can be further extended in Indonesia twice for a further period of two months per extension – i.e. on a single Visa the applicant can remain in Indonesia for a maximum of 6 months. Post this, the applicant will need to exit Indonesia and secure a fresh Visa for any additional visits - there is no cooling period, however, the applicant will need to provide all supporting details including flight tickets and hotel confirmations as needed.

Whilst this is not an ideal situation, based on the immigration regulations this is the only viable/compliant option available. As a result of this legal restriction, companies do not tend to use long-term stays in these circumstances.

International Store Openings In The Retail Sector

Do any retailers send store staff abroad to assist with new store openings?

Most of the respondents to this question rarely send retail staff overseas to help with new store openings. For those who do, these tend to be more senior level employees such as store directors/managers and unit managers and the trip tends to be very short in duration.

Global Mobility Considerations For A Global HR System

We currently have a number of HR systems and are looking to move to one global HR system. I have a few requirements we need from a Mobility perspective to be considered as part of the new HR system. I would be interested in hearing from anyone who works for a company that has a global HR system, or is implementing one, as to the key requirements that are included to support mobile employees and link core HR data to Mobility.

The responses to this question were comprehensive and so very helpful. Many tips came out from the answers including:

- Understand how an international assignee will work in the system in terms of their profile. Will it be one profile that moves from home to host, does this impact anything like annual salary review, pension etc. which will depend on what data in the HR system is integrated to other systems etc?
- Limit the number of home languages, as any customised labels for data fields will need specific translation
- Agree a position on exchange rates for HQ currency reporting
- Ensure any outputs from the system by way of contractual positions are also in hard copy where legislation requires it, rather than a system generated statement
- Consider how multiple payrolls will work
- Have a consistent agreed approach in all countries to capture employee data. For example, use the same field in the system to store start date, and/or continuous service date if transferred from another location and prior service is still honoured. This will feed in to future entitlements of benefits etc.
- If you want to link your mobility programme to performance and potential criteria within your talent management systems, this info will need to be available at a global level to review for example, your top 50 performers.

Assignment Buddies

Does your firm use assignment buddies to help the assignee settle in to the new location?

Interestingly, many of the respondents to this question try to encourage connections in the home and the host location and consider the time spent by buddies as “work” rather than “goodwill”. However, none have a formal buddying programme in place.

Conclusion

Benchmarking enables you to learn quickly from others and gain comfort that your ideas and approach are not widely out of step with current market practice. Of course, it can't be relied upon in isolation. Challenging preconceived ideas is also a key skill of the seasoned Global Mobility professional, which is where the dialogue at our Network Huddles complements the information gained through benchmarking beautifully.

If you'd like to find out more about how you can get involved email emma@expat-academy.com or visit our website www.expat-academy.com

Reference

1 <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/benchmarking.html>



EMMA HOLDER

Emma specialises in organisation effectiveness and expatriate management and has spent over 20 years working in Global Mobility as both a specialist consultant and in-house corporate manager. Emma started her career in International Tax at Arthur Andersen, moved into International HR with PwC and then moved in-house to work for Goldman Sachs and Diageo plc. Emma is a Director at Expat Academy Ltd and has overall responsibility for technical training and consultancy. She facilitates many cross-industry Global Mobility forums and is at the cutting edge of the latest trends and news in the Global Mobility Industry.

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