

Creating The Business Case For Global Mobility: Seize The Opportunity

There are many ways to look at mobility and sometimes it takes a shift of perspective to become inspired. A new perspective that I will explain in this article will support mobility functions to position themselves in a more effective and efficient way towards the larger HR community and the business. The current context of HR challenges is creating an opportunity that should be seized.

From my frequent talks with Mobility Heads, I understand that their aim is often to become more strategic, to be taken more seriously by the business and to obtain a seat at the table. There is often a feeling that the complexity of mobility – if HR was Athletics, mobility would be the Decathlon – is not understood and neither appreciated by HR and the business. Too often I am witnessing that mobility functions are still seen to be purely administrative and even overlooked in large scale HR transformations.

A lot has been written and done about mobility becoming more strategic in the past decades, by aligning with company objectives and HR strategies, listening to stakeholders and liaising with other HR functions such as talent management and workforce planning besides other initiatives.

I was inspired to gain a new perspective when I was asked to present on behalf of a mobility team to their whole HR team (25 people), with the aim to show the complexity and strategic relevance of mobility. Whilst I speak predominantly to mobility audiences, it required a new angle to capture the interest of the various HR functions. In preparing for the session it became clear that I first need to educate them a bit about mobility and so I presented the primary reasons, why there is mobility in the first place.

Primary Reasons For Mobility

- Leadership Development
- Resourcing/skills shortages
- Training and development
- Creating a global mindset.

My next step was to look the biggest

challenges that HR faces currently and to make clear that mobility – as a function that is part of HR – is also delivering a strategic contribution to these challenges. And when looking at the current and future HR challenges it became very clear to me how conducive the current context and future outlook is for mobility to present a more solid business case.

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By looking at the key HR challenges, we will be able to identify also secondary reasons, beyond the ones above, why mobility has the right to be an integral part of an HR Strategy.

Attract And Retain

The Conference Board found in their 2018 *C-Suite Challenge* that 'Attract and Retain' are the primary business issue in Asia Pacific and the Americas, and the second issue in Europe after Technology. This informs us that leadership sees the importance to be an employer that manages to attract and retain the right talent like almost never before.

HR Technology & Data

The technology market for HR is growing rapidly, aimed at offering more efficient processes and better user experiences besides new functionalities. Data analytics is also a growing and related field that promises to create better answers for the questions HR has.

Next Gen/Changing Workforce Needs

Multiple surveys, discussions and anecdotal evidence is gathering that Next Gen expects to go on an international assignment earlier in their career, and that they are even more willing to gather international experience than other generations.

Employee Experience

Employee experience is already the top focus of multiple companies, and a buzzword in 2018. It is needed to attract and retain talent, but also to create engagement and drive performance. The employee experience will change in a similar way that Customer Experience changed our lives.

Workforce Shortages For Skilled Labour

Korn Ferry's *Global Talent Crunch* study from 2018 shows the emerging threat of global talent shortages for skilled workers. They even speak of a looming crisis when by 2030 the demand for skilled workers will outstrip supply.

Now back to mobility, what does mobility have to do with all that? If it is not yet evident, here are a few arguments that show how mobility is a strategic pillar for HR to overcome these challenges.

- There is an increasing amount of mobility technology available on the market, that enables better employee experiences and helps to streamline processes and compliance efforts. Data analytics can also support mobility in making better decisions
- In order to attract and retain Next Gen Talent, mobility needs to be offered at all career stages
- The most impactful experience during an employee journey from hire to retire, is the moment when an employee and their families are sent on assignment.
- Mobility functions are already supporting the hiring of foreign talent to fill positions where they cannot find adequate talent on the local market. With the expected talent crunch this practice will only intensify in organisations.

This perspective enables a new understanding for mobility by HR, because it shows on one hand how mobility supports the challenges that HR is facing and on the other how there are truly more than just the primary reasons that justify the existence of mobility.

Anecdotal Evidence

I learned about a telephone call that a Head of Mobility of a large multinational

in Germany received this year, which was received through the switchboard:
 Future Talent: *Hi, name is Oliver Smith, are you the Head of Mobility?*
 Head of Mobility: *Yes, that is correct.*
 Future Talent: *I am student who graduates later this year and I wanted to ask if you have policies in place that allow new recruits to go on an assignment within their first year on the job?*
 Head of Mobility: *...moment of silence...*
 Future Talent: *Because if you don't, I will not even apply for a job with you...*
 A cynic would say that the war for talent is over and that talent won!

Bottom Line

In summary, talent mobility will only become more important in the future, with a higher demand from the Next Gen to be sent around the world and higher expectations for a good employee experience, and finally the importance that leadership attributes to attract & retain, and the need for companies to overcome talent shortages for skilled talent by sourcing it globally.

With these arguments, mobility should be able to build better business cases for further investment in mobility and for the inclusion of mobility as a strategic pillar of HR.



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7th annual international conference
Duty of Care Conference
 Protecting Travelling Workers and Expats Abroad
 1-2 May 2019, Hillierium Gloucester Hotel, London.

A key theme of the 2019 conference will be behavioural risk. When people move out of their regular settings, their behaviour is likely to change.

The process through which business travellers evaluate their own vulnerability and adapt their behaviour is a complex area. Employers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their travellers are fully aware of the risks posed by travel, to a given location but if an employee has a lack of willingness to exercise caution or complacency over the risks, their likelihood of being involved in a health and safety incident rises significantly.

How can companies influence their employees precautionary behaviour when they travel abroad for work? Will raising your traveller's perception of personal risk enhance their precautionary behaviour? Understanding the psychology of travel risk perception and how this might result in behavioural change will assist employers in preparing guidelines and material which stand a better chance of resonating with their workforce. What is your employee's general predisposition towards risk and how much does this manifest in their assessment of travel risks and behavioural response? Does high risk perception always lead to behavioural change? The costs related to employees who encounter health and safety problems overseas is very high, not to mention the fallout from any resulting lawsuits which may follow.

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