

The Changing Role Of Global Mobility - Strategic Or Supporting Function?

International expansion and entry into new markets is on the business agenda for most companies. As business needs and expectations change, the role of the global mobility professional is also entering new territory.

A pulse survey was conducted by Deloitte to determine the extent of change in the role of global mobility professionals and the level of support that professionals are receiving to manage the change. This insight will draw on the results from this survey to explore the internal and external triggers for change, outline the key traits of a strategic mobility role, and share best practices on how mobility can partner with the business.

Over the past five years, the role of the global mobility professional has evolved and the extent of change is significant with 88% of respondents reporting a significant change in their role. The role of global mobility is evolving in response to a more complex and challenging environment; the number and types of global deployments has risen, in addition to business and talent objectives involving global mobility and the increased scrutiny on compliance. Growing investment in international expansion and changing business models has meant that global mobility is no longer expected to act as merely a support function. Instead, there is an increasing expectation for global mobility professionals to act as advisors and partners to the business to help manage their global workforce (see figure 1).

So what is driving the change? What does the new role of global mobility look like and how can professionals manage the changing expectations of their role?

What Is Driving The Change?

A combination of both external and internal triggers are driving the change in the role of global mobility professionals with key drivers varying by region. 80% of EMEA and US companies reported strategic business objectives involving global mobility as their key reason for change as seen in Figure 2. However, only 40% of APAC companies selected this internal trigger as a driver for change. For APAC companies the top driver for changes in the role of global mobility was entry into new markets.

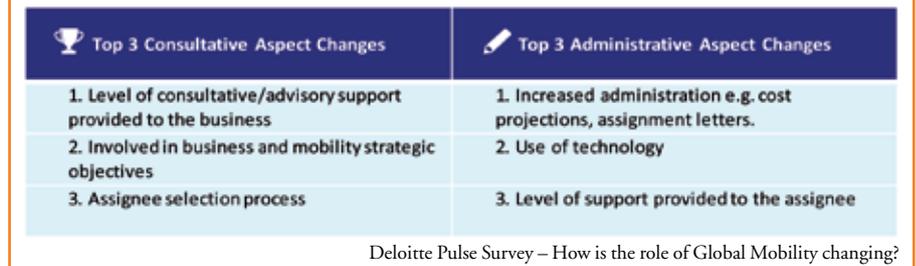
Figure 1: Strategic vs. supporting function



Figure 2: Key drivers for change in the role of global mobility



Figure 3: What aspects of the role have changed?



How Has The Role Changed?

Changes to the role and expectations of global mobility reveal the complex balancing act that mobility professionals now face. Over the last five years, the most considerable changes to the role of global mobility professionals have been an increase in advisory support and involvement in strategic objectives. Yet at the same time, global mobility is also expected to manage a heavy administrative workload which has also risen significantly in recent years (see Figure 3).

The increased scrutiny on compliance, the rising volume and complex types of

assignments, as well as the legacy of being a traditionally operational role, have contributed to the administrative burden for global mobility.

What Does Consultative Look Like?

So what does consultative mean for other organisations? Consultative was overwhelmingly defined by companies as meaning an advisor who has knowledge, solves problems and builds relationships (see Figure 4 on next page). Whilst this shows a shift away from global mobility's historical role as transactional/information

provider, less than a third of companies view mobility professionals as business partners. Again, regional differences were apparent with 53% of EMEA and US professionals viewing their role as a business partner with only 19% of APAC respondents choosing this definition.

We believe that consultative means developing key relationships and delivering measurable output that creates competitive advantage and helps the organisation to achieve their overall objectives; this is what leads to business partnership between global mobility and the wider organisation.

How Do You Measure Up?

Based on our experience with mobility professionals in a range of organisations, there are some common identifiable traits of a support role versus a strategic mobility role (as outlined in Figure 5).

What Are The Challenges?

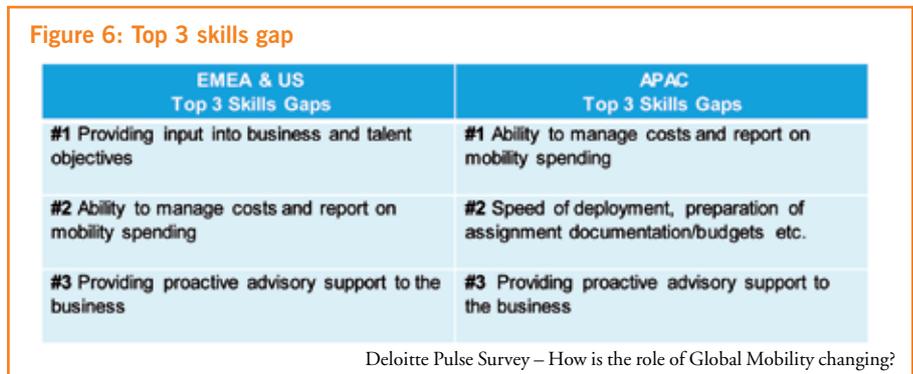
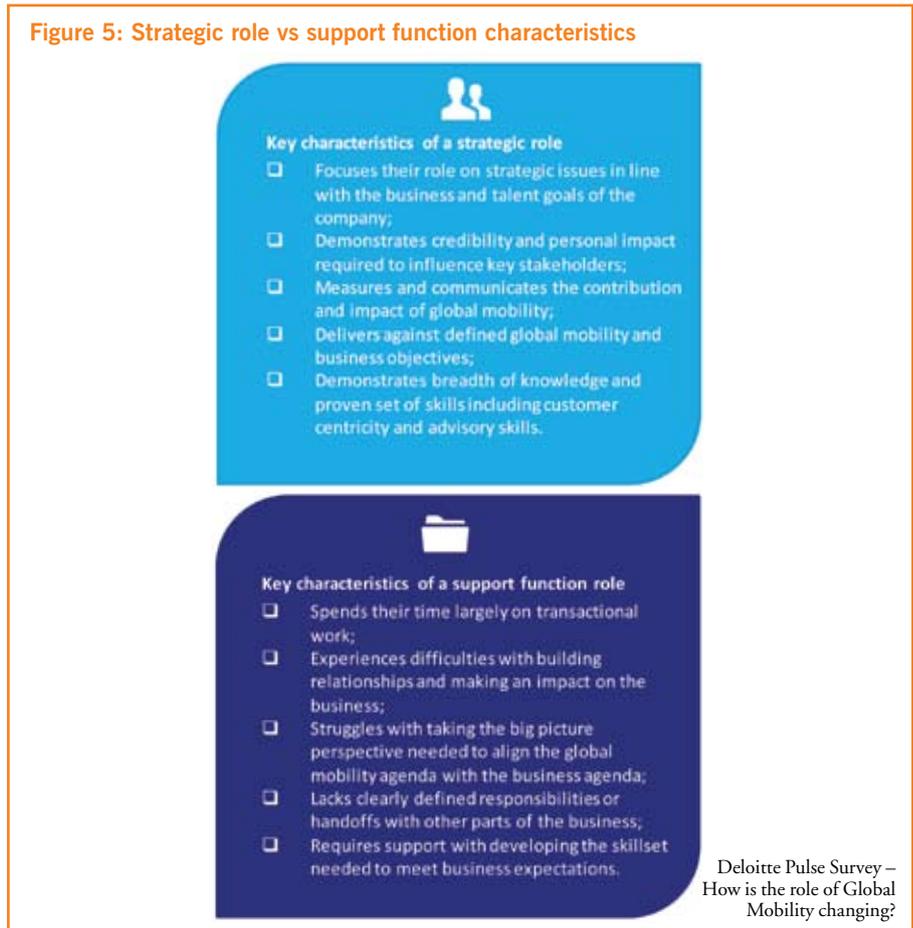
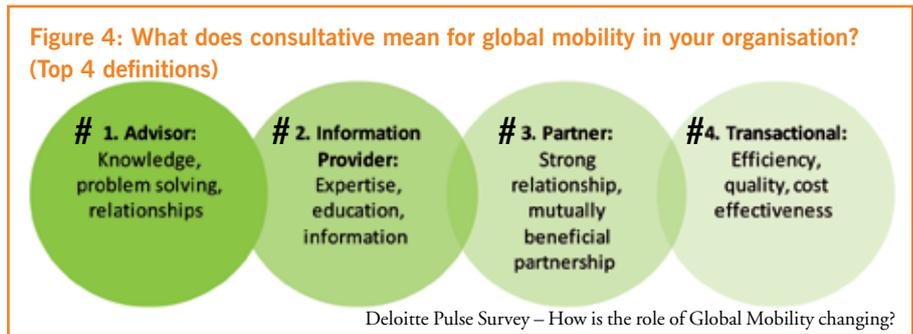
The Impact On Global Mobility's Brand And Value Proposition

Along with changes to the global mobility professional's role, the perception of global mobility's brand and value proposition has similarly evolved. Given the increasingly strategic remit of global mobility, there has been a largely positive change to global mobility's brand. 74% of surveyed companies indicated a positive change in the brand of mobility within their organisation.

Despite the positive uplift in how mobility's brand is perceived, recent research shows there is still room for considerable improvement. When looking at the overall perception of global mobility programmes, 63% of companies rated their programme as adequate at best, with only 8% of companies rating their global mobility practice as best-in-class. These results illustrate the challenges that mobility professionals experience in keeping pace with the rate of change in their role and branding. Looking more closely at the aspects of the role that have changed, it is evident that rising administration is limiting the ability of global mobility to provide strategic input, and as a result, has contributed to the transactional brand of mobility.

Key Challenges

Mobility professionals are experiencing some key challenges when providing consultative services to the business. The negative impact of administrative duties on the mobility brand and the lack of



organisational support is restricting the full potential of mobility professionals to contribute to their organisation. The top barriers to providing consultative services to the organisation are closely aligned with the changes to the role of global mobility.

The top challenges facing a global mobility professional are:

- = #1 Lack of time due to administrative duties
- = #1 Company culture or structure
- = #2 Mobility brand viewed only as transactional within the business

- #3 Lack of training
- #4 Less developed skills within the mobility team - *However within EMEA this was the #1 challenge*

Skills Gap

The skills gap between the mobility professional and the requirement of the business also varies by region. Whilst the #1 skills gap for EMEA and US professionals was their ability to provide input into business objectives, for APAC companies the outstanding skills gap was their ability to manage and report on mobility costs and spending (see Figure 6). Providing proactive advisory support was another common barrier shared across all regions.

What Support Is Being Provided?

Despite the skills gap and requirement for strategic input from global mobility, 40% of mobility professionals do not receive any training to support their role. Of the companies that do support their global mobility professionals with training, there is a wide variety in the type of training offered. Global mobility professionals typically receive 1-2 types of training from their companies, indicating a gap in providing more holistic support for mobility.

The range of training provided for GM professionals includes:

- Global mobility fundamental training
- Coaching / mentoring
- Training related to the strategic objectives of the business
- Effective leadership training
- Communications / presentation training
- Consultative skills training
- Relationship building.

How To Achieve Business Partnership

Practical Steps To Close The Gap

Many organisations struggle with turning the theoretical concept of business partnering into a practical role. Not only do mobility professionals need to be equipped with the skillset and knowhow to be true partners to the business, they also need to be positioned in, and supported by, the appropriate service delivery model. Underpinning all this should be an organisational culture which is supportive of global mobility as both a strategic enabler and business partner. In our experience, there are several key success factors to achieving partnership with the business:

- **Training** - In order to manage the change in the role of the mobility professional and

address any skillset gap, training should be provided to equip professionals with the consultative and customer centric skillset required by the business (see case study). Developing internal skillsets through training is a relatively 'quick win' in closing the expectations gap.

- **Reduce The Administrative Workload** - Decreasing the amount of administration in the role allows the mobility professional to focus on proactively partnering with the business. Consider ways to decrease the level of administration either through automation, optimisation of processes, shared service centres, outsourcing or internal reallocation of roles.
- **Review And Define The Service Delivery Model** - Revisiting the service delivery model and reviewing key roles and responsibilities has a high impact on the ability of global mobility to act as business partners. It is critical there is an appropriate structure in place to ensure that the right people are performing the right roles. This includes determining which roles should be acting in an advisory capacity versus operational capacity and whether formalised business partner roles are required.
- **Branding And Value Proposition** - When business partnership is implemented correctly, this role can help enhance global mobility's credibility and influence within the organisation thereby improving the brand of mobility. By focusing on building a strategic mobility brand and value proposition, mobility professionals

can shift the perception of mobility from support role to trusted advisor.

- **Measure Mobility Effectiveness** - Global mobility business partners should be able to articulate the value that they bring to the business. Best practice companies develop mobility metrics to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of their global mobility function and programme. This provides a facts-based means of demonstrating the contribution that mobility is making to the overall organisation.
- **Organisational Support** - Lastly, the burden should not be shouldered by the mobility professional alone. Although the focus is often on how the mobility professional should change, the support provided by the organisation to allow this role to function strategically is just as crucial to achieving business partnership.

In short, there has been a positive trend in the strategic input and brand of global mobility over recent years despite the changing and increasingly complex environment. Although global mobility professionals are increasingly acting in an advisory role, business partnership is still a considerable gap for the majority of companies. Global mobility professionals are facing key challenges in their role and they will need to have the appropriate structure, branding and organisational support in place in order to become effective business partners. Only when business partnership is implemented successfully can global mobility reach its full potential as a key contributor to the overall success of their organisation's business and talent goals.

CASE STUDY

Enhancing Global Mobility Customer Service and Business Partnering

The challenge:

The client, a multinational oil and gas company, was looking to identify ways to provide advisory support to the business and achieve their business partnering goals.

The approach:

Customised training workshops were facilitated by Deloitte using Business Chemistry methodology. These workshops were used to successfully help the international mobility team to identify their key stakeholder relationships, define the expected client interactions of each role and outline ways to provide more consultative services to their customers and better partner with the business.

The outcome:

- Common understanding of effective customer service and consultative support
- Value-driven teams that create meaningful interactions with the client's stakeholders
- Tools and resources for the team to use on an on-going basis and monitor stakeholder service effectiveness



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