

The Evolving Role Of Global Mobility

Through our organisation we facilitate briefings, training courses and networking events for in-house Global Mobility professionals.

As an indirect result of our work, we are able to identify trends and patterns emerging, which suggest changes are ahead for the role of Global Mobility functions. So, how is the world of Global Mobility evolving?

Short-term Business Visitors are increasingly coming under the remit of the Global Mobility function. Given the complexity of the tax and immigration compliance required for this category of employee, in many cases it just makes sense that Global Mobility oversee this.

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Many Global Mobility teams, especially in the financial services sector, have put together business cases to obtain additional headcount to manage STBVs effectively. Global Mobility have the relationship with the tax providers and the tax authorities and are technically aware of the questions to ask travellers to ensure that the tax and payroll obligations are met, and that any permanent establishment risks are mitigated. For organisations with smaller populations and who do not have a dedicated Global Mobility managers, managing STBVs is fast becoming one area of the business that is being out-sourced.

Similarly, the tax and immigration compliance for employees who regularly perform their home country role in an alternative location (Commuters) is now frequently considered to be a normal part of a Global Mobility manager's role. We are hearing about more and more companies creating formal Commuter policies and following rigorous governance process to ensure that all commuter arrangements are strictly business critical. Due to the complex tax reporting required and associated professional fees for getting this right, those with a stronghold on their costs are limiting the use of Commuter policies to employees who have a strong business case for the arrangement rather than just accommodating personal requests.

You may have already been aware of STBVs and Commuters being tacked onto the role of Global Mobility but more recently, Security has been added as a new facet of Global Mobility. Due to recent terrorist events, our Global Heads of Mobility network discussed this at length at their most recent meeting. The question on the table was:

Should Global Mobility be responsible for reporting on the security of assignees, even when an event happens outside of office hours?

The immediate response was of course, "yes - if we can". There is recognition that Global Mobility hold the relationship with specialist evacuation partners and where at all possible, will help facilitate the roll out of technology solutions to help track assignees. However, after much discussion it was also recognised that in the event of a traumatic experience during leisure time it is unlikely an individual's first priority will be to report their safety to their employer. It is more likely that they will be letting their family know first that they are safe. So, how useful is a system which relies on a user reporting their safety whilst in a dangerous or traumatic situation? The data will only ever be partially complete.

We delved into this topic a little deeper at our recent Club 100 Network huddle (for organisations managing assignee populations of less than 100) and invited expert Mark Wolsey, PwC Head of Security Consulting along to provide us with some thoughts on how we can keep our assignees safe whilst on assignment.

Mark advised us that a new directive

came out in September 2016 - PAS3001: 2016 code of practice - The travelling for work responsibilities of an organisation for health, safety and security. These guidelines advise what should be done legally by employers and also what is good practice. Companies have a duty of care and legal responsibility to ensure that their employees are safe and Mark explained the importance of having someone qualified in your organisation to prepare, train and brief assignees.

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Organisations are adopting various approaches. Some are using external vendors such as ISOS, integrated with travel booking technology. Others are using social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp groups to contact individuals in an emergency situation.

One big take-away is that forging stronger working relationships with your internal travel team and linking travel booking through your TMC (Travel Management Company) to the reimbursement of assignment expenses is very effective. Those who do not book through their company's approved TMC will not get expenses reimbursed so this will ultimately change behaviour and make it easier for Companies to track their people and keep them safe. Having a strong relationship with the internal travel team

also enables you to streamline processes and manage temporary accommodation costs more effectively.

Due to the new directive and the frequency of terrorist events, the role of Global Mobility teams is evolving to include the co-ordination of specialist security advice for assignees. There are limitations on how we can track individuals during their leisure time, but every effort should be made to provide them with the information they need to prepare for potential security issues.

Finally, at our summer network huddles we asked those attending to provide us with a summary of any interesting projects that they were working on and the responses from those attending really highlighted how much the role of Global Mobility continues to evolve. Global Mobility are getting involved in:

- Global workforce planning
- Gender pay gap reporting and how this impacts assignees working outside of the UK
- Designing a programme to embed a recent merger and to provide international opportunities to all level of employees for short bursts of time. (e.g. 6 weeks at a time)
- Managing change in a Japanese organisation
- Assignee pay structures and how data analytics can identify barriers to mobility.

Conclusion

The highlights shared above are a snapshot of how we are seeing the role of Global Mobility evolving. Global Mobility is no longer just designing policies, organising relocation, administering payroll and settling assignees and families into their new locations. It covers a whole plethora of other complicated and interesting areas. We love the variety of the ever-changing role and it makes for lively discussion at our forums.

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EMMA HOLDER

Emma specialises in organisation effectiveness and expatriate management and has spent 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. If you'd like to find out more about how you can get involved in the Expat Academy email emma@expat-academy.com

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