

The Future Of Modern Mobility

Talent Mobility Is In The Grip Of Radical Change...

Many of the new approaches to modern global mobility have added more complexity to the mix. A marked shift in mobility patterns is resulting in more flexible opportunities but in new and different forms, including the lack of relocation as well as the emerging concept of a borderless workforce.

“The business world is in the midst of fundamental change and in 2020 and beyond the agility of organisations to manage their global talent efficiently will mark the difference between success and failure” (PwC, 2012).

A recently published PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) report, Talent Mobility 2020 and Beyond (PwC, 2012) paints a picture of a business world that is far removed from that of today. It highlights that talent and mobility strategies will need to progress significantly to keep pace with a rapidly changing globally connected business world and that further increases in employees working outside their home location are to be expected. The report states that the issue of modern mobility, whilst now becoming a firm fixture on boardroom agendas, is also causing some major headaches.

The key global issues highlighted in the 2012 PwC report include significant population change and shift, an ageing workforce and the impending retirement of the baby boomer generation, which is set to pose serious challenges for most developed countries and some emerging markets. By 2015 one third of China's population will be over the age of 50, whilst in India 50% of the population is under the age of 30.

Globally there are currently 3 generations in the workplace, each with different values, expectations and needs. Each reflect one of the three different eras of international assignments:

- Baby Boomers (born post World War II between 1946 to 1963) – During the 20 year period between 1970 and 1990 Western multinationals drive international assignments from West to East. The typical pattern of two to five year postings prevail, incentivised with attractive expatriate packages and with a return to the HQ or home location at the end of the post. This ‘Baby Boomer’

generation are now starting to face impending retirement

- Generation X'ers (born between 1963 to 1982) – Between 1990 and 2010 different mobility packages evolve as a result of rapid technological innovation and emerging markets worldwide. The era of companies working 24/7 evolves. Flow of talent is still predominantly from West to East and traditional expat package programmes prevail but globalisation and the emerging BRIC markets impact on global talent mobility patterns resulting in the emergence of the mobile worker, virtual working and short-term commuter postings
- Millennials (Gen Y'ers born between 1982 to 2002) – The explosive growth in emerging markets in the last 15 years with global and technological limitations diminishing paints a much bigger picture of global mobility in 2020 and beyond. A world with no borders or boundaries, other than political and legal restrictions and frameworks, increases the need for fluid movement of talent globally to meet the business needs. A marked shift in workforce and mobility patterns with new forms of domestic and global mobility emerging in response to business demand and employee preference.

THE CHALLENGES OF MODERN MOBILITY

So what are the modern mobility challenges that organisations and talent managers now face?

Global Business Challenges – the CEO headache

The CEO has a growing problem of meeting fluid business needs that focus on the priority of talent acquisition and retention. What keeps the CEO up at night is how to get the right people and skills in the right place at the right time. As a result leading companies are looking to align Global Mobility Programmes with Business Planning, Talent Management and Retention.

Modern Mobility – the HR headache

Global business and modern mobility needs

are forcing HR to focus on 3 complex issues: supporting mobility decisions, managing programme costs and ensuring compliance requirements are met. And there is also the need to develop well-rounded leaders for the future who have international experience and competencies.

As highlighted in the PwC report, diverse mobility solutions are already developing according to the latest business needs and they include:

- Short-term assignments - less than 12 months with generally lower mobility costs
- Project based assignments - temporary or frequent assignee visits
- Commuting and extended business travel – assignees work in a location without relocating
- Intra-country mobility – the transfer of skilled workers from one country region to another
- Rotational employee programme – the development of high potential employees
- Reverse transfers – talent from emerging markets are moved into developed markets to gain experience and skills
- Global nomads – experienced specialists constantly on the move to meet business needs with no expectations to return to the home country
- One-way relocation – permanent relocation of key managers and their families
- Contingent labour – specialists deployed at short notice to meet an immediate business need
- Virtual Mobility (mobility without moves) – the use of technology to communicate globally across time zones.

The impact of modern mobility

And as these more efficient, short-term and cost-effective alternatives to traditional global mobility are implemented in response to the business need to move talent quickly, a new pattern of mobility is emerging – the traditional ‘duration based’ assignee role is gradually being superseded by the ‘purpose based’ mobile worker and there is now also an emphasis on the lack of relocation.

But what does this mean for CEO's and HR professionals? There is already awareness of the need for more diverse

selection criteria, more attention to risk and compliance and a keener eye on costs and ROI. But what else do businesses and HR departments need to also consider? What might be the wider, and as yet unknown, impact of these different mobility solutions on individuals and organisations?

The question of the impact of prolonged global mobility has preoccupied Families in Global Transition, (FIGT) a US based, non-profit global mobility support organisation for over 10 years. During this time FIGT has been studying a particular demographic of the baby boomer and Gen X population, often referred to by sociologists as Third Culture Kids (TCK's) or Global Nomads, to better understand how prolonged cross-cultural immersion and the necessary adaptation might impact an individual's psychological and developmental profile.

The definition of a Third Culture Kid is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her formative developmental years (between 11 and 18 years old) living outside their parents' culture(s) usually for the purposes of the parents' work. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures that the family has been immersed in, while not having full ownership of any.

Looking into the psychological profiles of TCK's and global nomads we already know that their cross-cultural lifestyles, whilst making them excellent global leaders, can also lead to complex issues of identity and belonging at different times during their lives. It is now important to map this cultural-marginality issue across the Millennial generation to look for similarities and differences.

In this era of modern mobility is it now time to widen this important research agenda to explore what happens when these millennial individuals enter and mature in the workplace. How does rapid deployment impact on an individual's sense of home and belonging?

What we already know about the Millennial worker

Millennials will form the majority of the workforce by 2020 and their expectations are reflective of the changing economic, technological and increasingly globalised environment that they are immersed in. They expect to have several different employers during their career and many expect an overseas assignment during the early part of their career as part of their

learning and development. They also expect fast career progression and are more focused on interest and opportunity rather than monetary awards. Home countries are starting to become less relevant to Millennials.

What we don't know

What we don't know and what now needs to be explored is what the personal and psychological impact might be over time for this millennial globally mobile population as a result of their experience of short-term and frequent international mobility. What issues might they face as a result of their rapid transition experiences? How does the experience of short-term mobility impact on their ability to integrate and adapt; on their sense of identity; on how they build and sustain relationships and on their work/life balance?

From a cross-cultural perspective does a borderless world mean that we will come to be at home everywhere? Will it mean the end of global difference as internationalism replaces local values, customs and commerce? And how might the experience of short-term mobility, frequent transitions and the lack of immersion and integration impact on the significance of where home might be - on one's sense of belonging?

Also what traits and talents do companies need to look for in employees who are expected to undergo rapid deployment? And how do they engage and retain this talent over time?

The FIGT UK Research Agenda

Our newly launched FIGT UK affiliate in Oxford is keen to explore these important questions and to push this modern mobility research agenda forward in the UK.

Our research agenda at FIGT UK is to link existing data on the TCK profile with researchers and practitioners across different disciplines to create new research streams relevant to 21st century global relocation and these modern mobility migration issues.

The aim is to compare and contrast different mobility experiences as identified in the PwC report and to look for common themes within them. It's important to establish whether old models of "normal" development and identity still stand or whether we need new concepts and constructs for defining culture and belonging in the world of modern mobility.

Research will help organisations better manage and support the era of modern

mobility but it's important to remember also that the issue of cross-cultural adaptation is a Western concept evolving from more than one hundred years of multinational expansion. We also need to be mindful that there are now younger multinationals emerging from the Far Eastern and Southern cultures that might take a very different approach to the management of global mobility. Integrating research with these organisations will be a challenge going forward but is also necessary to establish a truly global perspective on the future of modern mobility.

To access the report: 'Talent Mobility 2020 and Beyond – the future of mobility in a globally connected world', PwC, 2012.

www.pwc.com/gx/en/managing-tomorrows-people/future-of-work/global-mobility-map.jhtml.



FIGT UK is an Oxford based affiliate of Families in Global Transition (FIGT) - a US based cross-cultural and global mobility support organisation.

The mission of FIGT UK is to focus on 4 key areas of global mobility - education, networking, research and support.

The FIGT UK affiliate is co-chaired by executive coaching consultant Wendy Wilson and Claire Snowdon, Director and Founder of Expat Know How, a relocation training and support company. FIGT UK, Oxford.

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FREE SEMINAR

Third Culture Kids - Raising Portable Children

at The 2013 Corporate Relocation Conference & Exhibition on Monday 4th February at Hotel Russell, Russell Square, Bloomsbury, London.

To register your free place please email helen@internationalhradviser.com