

Workforce Mobility Experts Share Their 2018 Findings

As companies look to increase retention and court new talent, they are eager to offer more employee-focused policies. This includes many aspects of business such as company culture, flexible work schedules, mentorship and career pathing, and even global mobility programmes.

Crown World Mobility (CWM) recently hosted a webinar covering our 2018 Global Mobility Survey findings. The survey was open to global mobility and human resources professionals, providing key insights into the global mobility topics of flexibility and choice, employee-initiated assignments and self-managed moves. The data gathered from participants was anonymous and provided a valuable look at today's global mobility landscape.

Respondents of the survey covered a wide range of mobility professionals and programme sizes reflecting those managing fewer than 50 moves a year to those managing over 5,000 moves a year. Only 25% of respondents felt their programmes were "innovative" or "leading edge," while 50% of respondents noted that their programmes and policies were traditional but working toward being more flexible and innovative. Survey findings indicated that mobility programmes are driven equally by an employee manager, human resources contact or global mobility team. There isn't one standard role that handles employee moves.

Policy Flexibility And Choice

Why are flexibility and choice so important when it comes to global mobility programmes? It all comes down to being employee-focused. With personalisation as a key to employee wants and retention, it only makes sense that this would be the case for mobility policy as well. When asked if their programmes were flexible in allowing for this personalisation, 66% of survey respondents said that they did have a flexible programme or were planning to add one in the next year.

Simply put, flexible programmes give managers and employees more options. They allow for segmented and targeted approaches to employee moves, and this can help meet the needs of both the employee and the business. The downfall in a flexible programme is inconsistency. Application of the flex programme may be applied based on current budgets or other business factors, meaning that the flex programme isn't always

applied evenly throughout the company. That can mean that some employee needs are met, while others aren't.

"Flexible policy needs a higher skillset of consulting than standard policy to ensure stakeholders understand choices and apply accordingly". – Participant Quote.

The role of manager, human resources contact or global mobility team in a flex programme environment would need to transform into more of an advisory and consulting role. This would allow employees the freedom of flexibility and choice within a designated framework of making sure all items are completed and the move is smooth and efficient.

Employee-Initiated Assignments And Transfers

Employee-initiated moves are on the rise. These moves also offer a lot of flexibility and choice for employees, but can be challenging to manage from the company perspective. 56% of respondents noted that their company offered a specific employee-initiated move policy. These programmes can often be lower in cost, so employee expectations need to be appropriately managed.

"Our employee-initiated moves offer lean services and, as a result, the expectation from the employee needs to be managed well". – Participant Quote.

Low-cost move policies and plans require a creative approach when naming the policy which manages the expectations of the employee. Many employees like these programmes because it allows them to move and explore a new area, either domestically or internationally, and they also offer some level of flexibility and choice. However, they are usually funded at a lower level than other assignments or transfers. Creative names that can help set expectations for this type of move programme are "Backpack Move", "Adventure Move" or "Self-Initiated Move".

Self-Managed Move Policy

The self-managed move usually comes in two different types, the lump sum and the managed lump sum. The lump sum move is a flat cash allowance for employee moves. This means the employee must get themselves from point A to point B within that allowance. This includes travel, immigration paperwork processing costs, shipping of items and any other expenses that are associated with the move. Employees are

able to keep any remaining funds, but if they spend over the amount provided the employee is responsible for those additional costs. 68% of respondents said that this type of move accounts for less than 25% of their total employee moves.

The managed lump sum is a budget that can be used based on employee choices, where some items are already set aside (such as immigration paperwork fees or other specific steps and costs) and the employee can then choose the rest. Employees are not able to keep any leftover funds with this type of move. 67% of respondents said that this type of move accounts for less than 25% of their total employee moves.

While this is the case now, it looks like lump sum and managed lump sum cash allowances are on the rise. Since millennials are becoming a major part of the global mobility landscape, their values are being put front and centre. Millennials value flexibility and choice (DIY), and are often early-career, low-cost moves. Additionally, there was a recent change in 2018 US tax law which eliminated historical tax benefits for companies covering relocation costs. This may cause a change in the way companies manage moves since there is no longer a tax benefit for them to absorb additional costs, possibly moving companies to providing a flat cash allotment. Finally, technology has made it infinitely easier for employees to manage cash moves and be organised and informed on their options.

"Depending on the level, some are willing to do the heavy lifting and move themselves. Most like it. Executives are not willing to do any of that". – Participant Quote.

Self-managed moves are simple to explain, reduce administrative effort and give employees the DIY options they value. These types of moves work best for individuals who are single or have small households, are younger employees that enjoy moving and are lower-level or recent college graduates. The biggest concern noted regarding self-managed moves is the possible negative experience for the employee. These types of moves can be challenging and messy, and, without the knowledge held by management, human resource contacts or a global mobility team to lean upon, it could result in a poor experience for the employee. Other concerns respondents noted about self-managed moves were safety and security of employees and their belongings,

impact on job productivity, company liability and tracking the employee's whereabouts.

Communication Of Policy And Programme Information

The global mobility world is at a turning point for how policies should be developed and communicated. Mobility is not often at the forefront of changes being made at the companywide-level, but it should be as employees themselves note that mobility, flexibility and choice are essential. 50% of survey respondents admitted that their companies had not made policies more user-friendly. Why is that? Only 61% of respondents that reported their programme was "innovative" even have their policy guidelines online for employees to review. 83% of "innovative" companies still lean on email for mobility communication with employees and only 15% offer an application (app) to help employees with their moves. There is a lot of opportunity here to simplify and streamline policies while offering more truly innovate ways to communicate and help manage employee mobility.

Pack It Up

It's time for mobility teams to make their policies and practices more appealing to employees and more user-friendly for all involved. These top 10 insights from the 2018

Global Mobility Survey could be helpful in outlining next steps:

- 1) Flexibility in policy to meet business and budgets needs to be the norm
- 2) Flexibility requires global mobility to be more consultative
- 3) Inconsistency is the biggest drawback to a flex programme
- 4) Employee choice policy is still emerging and developing
- 5) Employee-initiated moves are on the rise
- 6) Self-managed moves are described as challenging, messy, flexible and independent
- 7) Negative employee experience is the biggest concern for self-managed lump sum moves
- 8) Technology focus should be bigger for managed lump sum approach than lump sum
- 9) Global mobility policy format has not changed for most companies, while employee needs and preferences have
- 10) Programme communication needs to catch up, embracing more truly innovative paths.

As companies look to the future of their mobility programmes, they should take a look not only at the level of flexibility and choice offered to employees, but also at the way policies are communicated and programmes are managed. Technology and

innovation should be embraced, allowing for an easier experience both from the point of view of the company and the employee. As self-managed moves become the norm, these flexible and innovative management tools will be vital to the success of any mobility programme.

Visit www.crownworldmobility.com for further information.



LISA JOHNSON

Lisa Johnson is the Global Practice Leader for Crown World Mobility's Consulting Services. She

leads Crown's global consulting strategy, including program and policy design and supporting clients' mobility goals and she is a member of Crown Worldwide's D&I stakeholder group. Lisa is responsible for Crown's Perspectives article and webinar series, its research initiatives, and is a frequent presenter on the latest issues impacting our industry. Lisa is an innovator in Talent Mobility strategies. Born in Japan, she has lived and worked in Europe and Latin America and is currently based in Brooklyn, New York.

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