

Partner For Success: Extending Global Mobility Teams With Relocation Management Companies

Global mobility professionals are in an influential position in today's workforce, with the responsibility for a range of essential global assignments and critical business travel that supports a company's business strategy. Today's internal corporate mobility professional is a blend of HR expert, recruiter, immigration administrator, household goods moving consultant and project manager with a profound understanding about the entire mobility process. But more often, their capabilities and that of their mobility teams are stretched to provide far-reaching oversight, and charged with managing all opportunities of global business. Companies are hesitant to increase their internal mobility teams, and are aware that they need reliable partners to expand their global reach and bring capabilities that both align with and broaden their internal competencies.

A Redefined Role For Relocation Management Companies

Along with the increased demands on mobility teams, relocation service providers have been tasked with increasing responsibilities to support the needs of corporate clients and their relocating employees. In recent years, the tendency to outsource for additional relocation support has been on the rise. Many companies, such as SAP, are recognising the benefits of scalability, specialised expertise and global reach.

Furthermore, the flexible relocation outsourcing models have made this approach to meeting mobility needs increasingly accessible to companies...

- **Relocation Management Services:** this offering enables companies to outsource their entire end-to-end mobility process – including assignment management and required secondary services
- **Secondary Services:** opting to outsource select relocation services, such as visa and immigration, helps companies to incorporate specific resources and support they need
- **Household Goods Services:** any move requiring goods to be shipped will

involve a company outsourcing the household goods shipment – this can either be managed directly or through a move management service.

A Benchmark For Mobility Outsourcing

The mobility programme at SAP is active in the Americas, EMEA and APAC, including 2,000 international moves per year, plus international travel, resulting in on-going challenges related to global assignments, transfers, and related compliance requirements. Finding solutions for those challenges requires a strong partnership between the company and its RMC partner to ensure the partner functions as an extension of the internal global mobility team. They recognise that is not possible to accomplish internally without building a much larger team and incorporating on-site specialists.

Like many global businesses today, SAP's internal mobility team faces challenges to execute relocations in limited timeframes, large volumes and uncharted locations - it can be nearly impossible to accomplish the move without an RMC partnership that has deep and wide expertise with experience to ensure the correct actions are taken every step of the way. SAP shares mobility responsibilities with their RMC with the internal team being responsible initially and a seamless hand off to their RMC partner is required in order to determine the most suitable relocation package, address compliance issues and understand and obtain approval of costs.

Operate Globally By Providing Specialised Support Locally

There is a significant dilemma in the mobility arena for companies today: it is difficult to be both global and local, but business objectives demand it. It is a dilemma that will only grow more pronounced in coming years. With strict governance models in some areas around policy and benefits packages, companies are discovering the need to be more consistent and more aware of each region's workforce arrangements, which is increasingly more challenging.

For SAP, business travellers are an increasingly serious aspect of global mobility, particularly in the EMEA region, where countries are in close proximity to each other. While employees might not see this as a big issue, especially since in many cases they can travel with relative ease from one country or location to another, the company is still required to be vigilant about compliance for business travellers at all times. That means companies need to consider:

- Creating awareness throughout the company about compliance requirements and the impact of non-compliance
- Tracking employees and
- Ensuring all official documents are in place
- SAP has developed an IT solution to support and monitor all international travel movements of their employees.

For example, in the European market the laws change quickly creating additional challenges for companies that can be addressed through an RMC partner with a comprehensive network that can provide local expertise and policy tracking. Although it is not a large region geographically, with so many countries in such close proximity that have so many different laws, the complexity is high. Additionally, there can be countless country combinations, each with their own immigration and border requirements. Without local expertise and previously established relationships it can be a challenge for companies to know how to provide effective on-the-ground support for employees, such as when to sign commitments during the global mobility process or how to accelerate the speed of delivery of services.

A First-Class Employee Experience

Corporations also must address the needs and anticipations of their internal 'customers' – both assignees and travellers. The RMC can help educate the employee about the assignment, manage expectations, and also support the

company's message about the importance of making one's own investment in an assignment. RMC's provide a third-party resource to cater to employees during their moving experience while also serving as an advocate for the company to find solutions if any obstacles arise. It is equally important for a company to work with an RMC partner that can help ensure consistency in their employee relocation programme through process excellence, technology as well as communication and information exchange, regardless of the number of times the employee has moved or the location of the move.

Identifying solutions comes from having the experience, planning, expertise as well as the right insights to make an informed decision. Many companies see outsourcing as a 'best of both worlds' situation, because it allows the company to maintain a capable internal mobility team and create business strategy. While the strong RMC partnership companies develop means that they maintain control over the end-to-end process and have more resources through the RMC's knowledge, such as have a way to collect and parse analytics, and network which they can leverage to manage challenges and heighten their success.

The flow of communication is another reason that companies find outsourcing fits their business needs: It improves the overall experience for all employees touched by global mobility, and assignees prefer the single point of contact, so that they need only share their personal information one time, and the information is made accessible as needed for other providers, without disturbing the assignee again for the same data. RMC partners can also offer added value for moves involving executive-level employees to ensure the needs of the individual and their family are met throughout the process.

It is not uncommon for "ad hoc" issues to arise that must be addressed, these may be better handled through an outsourced partner instead of taking time from an internal team. An uncommon problem may need to be solved or missing documents may need to be located quickly that requires the RMC partner to take the lead while also ensuring the employee feels entirely in control. Such assistance helps a company focus on the big picture, stay more strategic, while also giving them the comfort and confidence to know that important issues like compliance

requirements - as well as smaller, logistical ones - are being professionally and meticulously addressed.

An Investment In Mobility

One of the most significant characteristics of enduring, successful organisations is their ability to transform as rapidly as their environment. In the global arena, this means incorporating new ways of recruiting, managing, moving, integrating talent, and helping employees deliver an optimal performance. Investing in mobility enables companies to achieve their business objectives by ensuring the right employees are located in the right place at the right time. RMC partners can offer value with added efficiencies both inside and outside of companies by ensuring the mobility function has a seat at the planning table to demonstrate through insight and data how important it is for mobility to be included in the company's strategy from the ground up.

The ability to scale the mobility programme is a must-have for global companies; both for the current environment and the future, and an exceptional outsourcing partner can adapt and grow with a company's needs and requirements. With the volume of mobility needs increasing year-over-year at a rate of 30-40%, SAP is challenged with handling the expanding volume with the same size team and needing resources across regions. Effective and innovative technology, accurate estimating tools, and accurately tracking and reporting through an RMC partner, provides absolute access to mobility programme data that enables companies to continually fine-tune processes, improve programme management and identify greater cost-efficiencies. Most importantly, it can enable companies to keep delivering a high-quality mobility experience for employees.

When considering a partnership with a relocation management company there are many questions that should be asked and answered. An RMC partner should be capable of helping you achieve...

- **Scalability** - Partnering with an RMC can provide needed mobility resources without having to build internal capabilities, which can require a significant investment and be difficult to deploy across fluctuating volumes and geographies
- **Efficiencies** - Access to mobility experts and resources will enable you to recognise opportunities for efficiencies

in areas such as mobility spend, timelines, vendor management and policy administration

- **Global Reach** - Deliver consistent, quality mobility experiences to your relocating employees with on-the-ground mobility expertise across the globe.

As companies enter emerging or developed markets for the first time, or expand their global business in an area, they need to be able to project costs and assess talent requirements and provide consistent, high-quality assignment and travel experiences to their employees. They must support their mobile workforces globally in a way that retains their talent, fulfills the company's current objectives, and positions effectively for future goals. For many companies, that can only be accomplished with an RMC that understands their culture and business so well the capabilities are a seamless and powerful extension of their own team.



Tanya Thouw is Head of Global Mobility for SAP and oversees international HR and mobility, and is responsible for all global assignments (short, long-term and permanent moves), transfers, international business travel, and related compliance issues. Prior to this, Tanya was a Consultant for the SAP HCM solution and responsible for the implementation of Payroll, Pension and the Management of Global Employee solutions of SAP. Tanya has a law degree from the University of Heidelberg, Germany.



Steve Marshall, Managing Director Europe joined SIRVA in early 2012, bringing with him over 20 years of relocation industry experience. He has held a variety of leadership roles in the European, Middle Eastern, and African (EMEA) market, as well as having the personal experience of completing a two-year assignment in Paris, France. Steve began his career as Operations Director, he has also served as President of EMEA, Managing Director of EMEA at relocation and moving Services Company and prior to this, he was a European Sales Leader at a mobility management company. These combined experiences have given Steve a unique insight into the relocation industry, and its component parts, enabling him to structure internal teams and design innovative mobility solutions to meet the unique needs for every customer.