

Analytics In Motion: How Having A Solid Grip On Data Can Transform Global Mobility

In an era characterised by unprecedented connectivity, the dynamics of global mobility are rapidly evolving. Every move across borders generates an avalanche of data. This information holds the potential to unlock invaluable insights that are reshaping the way we understand, manage and optimise global mobility. Imagine harnessing the power of data analytics to predict move patterns, enhance the employee experience, and ensure seamless immigration processes. In this article, we delve into the transformative impact of data analytics on global mobility, exploring how it is empowering GM teams.

A Wide Variety Of Data

Each global mobility team sits on top of a ton of data, and the more mobile employees your team looks after, the more data there is at your fingertips: where they are, where they come from, where they are next going, when they started and finished their assignments, etc. The teams handle salaries in both countries, pension setups, bonuses – and of course, the assignment-specific benefits and allowances. You have access to the gender (im)balance, the family compositions, children's dates of birth, and what kind of pets they have. Nationalities, citizenships, passport numbers, visa expiry dates, how much their rent is and when it's up for renewal... the list goes on and on. However, unless you gather analytics, the relevance at a macro level could be lost: more data does not automatically equal better data, if you don't know how to use it to your advantage.

GM data is both qualitative and quantitative and goes beyond what any regular HR team normally has access to – and for good reason. While your employer doesn't usually need to know how many kids you have and how old they are, if you

are sending someone on assignment, it's crucial to have this information to make sure that they are appropriately taken into consideration when the package is drawn up.

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Nonetheless, not all teams are able to convert this privileged access to information to their benefit. A lot of larger programs use technology, but that alone doesn't mean they are utilising analytics. After all, the world's most popular assignment management system (AMS), still remains Microsoft Excel, despite all the appetite for and interest in AI. If your data is scattered around dozens of tabs in hundreds of spreadsheets, or if you're not taking advantage of the full analytics capabilities of the reporting suite of your AMS, it's no wonder that it isn't being harnessed to its maximum potential. When Covid hit and companies realised they had employees stranded in multiple countries without a clear overview of who was where and whether they needed assistance, this lack of oversight became evident. Knowing where your workforce is shouldn't be this difficult in this day and age; in fact, it should be considered essential.

Improved Cost Control

Everyone involved in global mobility knows mobile employees are more expensive than regular ones – the average assignment is 3-5 times more expensive than keeping that same employee in their home role in the home location. However, the overall cost can still come as a rather bleak surprise to the business, especially if cost estimates are not part of the assignment sign-off process.

Typically, a cost estimate will cover four components that make up the total cost of the package: salary, annual benefits, one-off relocation costs, and tax and social security liabilities. The salary component makes up a large portion of the total costs, and includes any additional allowances and pay adjustments, such as mobility premiums or bonus payments. The annual costs include the ongoing benefits provision (such as housing, school fees and a company car), whereas the one-time costs occur at the start or end of an assignment (things like a pre-posting medical, flights and shipping). Lastly, the tax and social security contributions are calculated on the total value, and they have the potential to make up a significant proportion of the overall move costs.

If you run cost estimates, and especially if you do so through an assignment management system, it is far easier to stay on top of what your globally mobile workforce is costing the organisation. It is also easy to start analysing the variety of cost areas that make up the total. For example, you can focus on costs for a particular region (How much do my UK outbounds cost? What about UK inbounds? Or Europe as a whole?), policy type (What is the difference between those on home-based packages in comparison to local ones?), or even drill down to the level of individual package components (How much are we paying for housing globally, regionally, per location?).

Methodically utilising cost estimates for your entire population also unlocks the potential for making a comparison between your actual costs and the forecasted ones. This is something that is commonly on the radar for global mobility teams; however, many struggle with the collation of the actual costs data, and thus give up on the exercise. The easiest way to compare your

invoiced amounts and the forecasted ones is to rely on a service provider that manages all payment data (or even the actual payments on your behalf!) integrated into your assignment management system. Alternatively, you could run the comparison before approving any invoice.

Being able to run this level of cost reporting and analysis is a significant enabler to becoming more strategic. Business is driven by numbers, and if you can deliver valuable insight in order to unlock better business decisions, your role as an advisor to the business is going to be priceless. Who wouldn't want to be part of the planning process, rather than the admin team that implements what others have decided behind closed doors?

Easier Compliance Adherence

In the ever-evolving compliance landscape where authorities around the world are looking for ways to increase their revenue, two critical pillars stand out: tax and immigration. When individuals cross borders, the complexities of tax regulations and immigration requirements can pose formidable challenges. However, utilising data analytics within your global mobility program offers a great solution, harmonising your processes and making it harder to find yourself noncompliant.

Everyone moving to another state or country triggers tax implications. Each jurisdiction wants to maximise their taxable income, and in recent years we have seen more and more countries enforce earlier liability cutoffs for people crossing borders. How can data analytics help? Tracking people and days spent in the country becomes a much easier task if you are using technology. You can set it up to pre-emptively flag likely problem cases or be notified when tax is about to be triggered and take appropriate action at that point, rather than after a limit has been breached. Additionally, tracking international remote work requests is another way to improve compliance and collate data trends. For example, you could analyse whether the number of requests has remained at the same level as in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, or how long they are on average, and use the findings to drive your policy.

Moving talent around the world is closely intertwined with immigration, and meeting the regulatory requirements is crucial to ensuring your employees can continue to live and work in the host location. Data-driven systems facilitate meticulous record-keeping, ensuring that documentation requirements are met for each relocation. Saving everything systematically means that when you're asked to produce any documents, it's quick and easy to access the paperwork. Data analytics can also help streamline the visa

and work permit renewal process, because all the information – including expiry dates – is stored centrally. This means automatic notifications can be sent out when it's time for a renewal process to kick off, saving you from manual tracking.

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Actionable Insight To Drive Decision-Making

Data analytics plays a pivotal role in measuring, understanding and optimising key performance indicators – and I don't just mean individual employee performance, but how well your program overall is performing over time. How satisfied are your employees, and are they progressing to more senior roles after coming back? Perhaps you had a location that was a bit of a hotspot for failed assignments, but by analysing the driving factors behind the reasons people wanted to go back home or left their jobs, you spotted the issue and adjusted your policy, and since the change, failures there are not trending any higher than in other locations.

When used well, GM teams can harness data to identify trends, support decision-making and drive efficiencies. You can transform raw data into actionable insights; for example, if a manufacturing company is planning to open a new factory in a new country, assessing your talent pool based on previous success rates could help you decide who would make up the best team to set it up and running, or how much you could save by hiring a team locally or choosing a commuting arrangement rather than sending someone there for two years accompanied by their family.

We all know that going through a major policy change is a stressful, time-consuming process, but we also know how frustrating it is to keep making the same exceptions repeatedly. Data analytics enables you to identify what is working and what needs tweaking. This process of continuous improvement ensures your program keeps up with a world that's constantly evolving, not only in terms of remaining compliant but also meeting the expectations of your employees. Keeping your program fit for purpose means you stay ahead of the curve and gain competitive advantage.

Unlock Your Full Potential

In conclusion, data analytics is a catalyst for transformation for all of us in global mobility. By leveraging data-driven insights, global mobility teams can enhance efficiencies, improve compliance and raise their strategic decision-making profile. Embracing data analytics ensures that global mobility programs remain adaptable and effective in a rapidly changing world.

By working smarter with the trove of data they hold, global mobility teams can anticipate challenges, adapt to new trends and gain a competitive edge. Staying ahead of the curve not only ensures compliance, but also meets the evolving expectations of a mobile workforce. The power of data analytics is not only in its ability to interpret the past, but in its capacity to shape a dynamic and successful future.



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