

MOBILITY

December 2014



WORLDWIDE ERC
THE WORKFORCE MOBILITY ASSOCIATION



5 TIPS TO MAKE MOVING *A Sweet Dream*

COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR
TECH STAFF

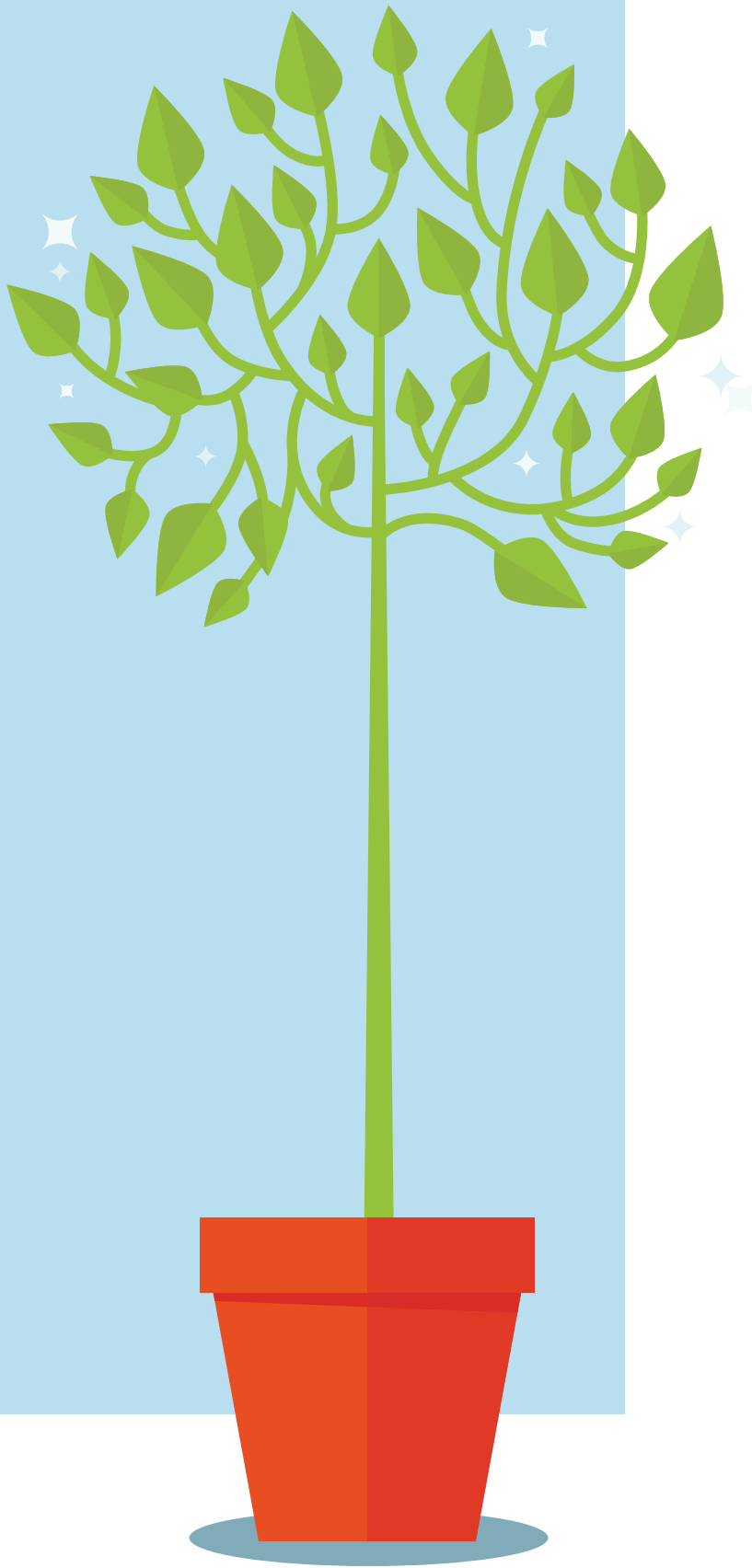
50TH ANNIVERSARY WRAP-UP
**PRESIDENTIAL
FIRSTS**

THE FOUNDATION FOR WORKFORCE MOBILITY'S
**SCHOLARSHIP
ESSAYS**

DEVELOPING *a Truly Strategic* GLOBAL MOBILITY MANAGER ROLE

By Sean Collins





Despite the many articles proclaiming the evolution of global mobility from an administrative function to a more strategic partnership, many mobility professionals still feel their roles are too transactional and they have not really achieved their full potential as a strategic partner to the human resources department and the business. In fact, according to the “2014 Global Mobility Survey Report” commissioned by the Santa Fe Group, 40 percent of global mobility professionals want strategic planning to be within their top five tasks, yet only 1 in 10 are actually managing this. The following ideas and tips can help mobility managers develop a truly strategic role and lead an enriching career in global mobility.

Freeing Up Time

Before we start, we need to figure out how we can free up our time to step back from our daily routine and focus on the higher-value strategic work. To do this, we will need to get rid of the repetitive transactional and administrative tasks as well as introduce process efficiencies so that we can accomplish more with our time. Here are a few ideas to help you achieve this:

- 1. Service Delivery Model.** Having an established and well-oiled service delivery model in place is essential to ensure the mobility manager is not spending unnecessary time on relocation aspects of employee moves. The fewer vendors

you manage, the better; therefore, it makes sense to select a relocation management company (RMC) that can handle as many of the transactional relocation aspects as possible. The larger the engagement with the RMC, the greater bargaining power you will have and the more resources they can dedicate to your account. For global engagements, the RMC should assign a global account director to lead a team of regional account managers, who in turn would manage in-country specialists. Standardized reporting and online tools can be set up so that the mobility manager has the required information available at all times, saving time in chasing down updates and information. An escalation process can also be set up whereby the regional account managers or the global account director should be able to resolve the majority of service issues. Anything critical or needing an out-of-scope approval can be highlighted to the mobility manager (tip: set some KPIs around this). Likewise, an exception process can be set up with authority to approve exceptions under an agreed-upon threshold managed by the regional account managers or global account director, with monthly reporting to identify trends and recurring issues.

- 2. Mobility Manager Associate.** The next step is to look at what other administrative tasks of the mobility manager role can be outsourced. These can include cost estimate projections, offer-document creation, vendor initiations, payroll setup and ongoing audit, onboarding, general policy administration, and front-line questions from the assignee. In a larger mobility team, there may be the head count to employ staff to handle these aspects; however, as is often the case, these tasks fall to the mobility manager. One solution when a full-time head count is not available would be to hire a mobility manager assistant through a vendor head count to take on this role. This can likely be negotiated with the RMC, employed through the vendor but working on-site with the mobility manager, with access to internal systems to enable the relevant data processing.
- 3. Automate, Standardize, and Self-serve.** These are simple yet effective steps to free up time. Standard templates can be developed for email, forms, letters, and of course offer documents.

Any form of automation will save time, especially when IT tools do the work for you in populating data or initiating tasks. Sophisticated assignment management IT solutions are now available that can automate many of these processes, provide customized reporting, and create central repositories of key documents and data that can be accessed by members of the mobility team or authorized vendors. Self-service is the next step; it can be facilitated by building a library of self-service information for employees and HR to use. Ideally, this can be posted on a global mobility intranet site with separate areas for employees and HR to access. Q&A documents can serve as a first level for general questions on policy or the program. For HR, toolkits and information on the different tools and policies would be available to fit their needs, including a decision tree to help guide them to the appropriate mobility solution and policy.

- 4. Education—HR and Staffing.** The better educated HR and staffing are on the various mobility policies and how they apply to different talent segments, the less time you will need to spend consulting on individual cases. This is especially relevant if you are facing the same questions time and again from different members of HR across the region. Time spent upfront educating HR and staffing will ensure HR is better equipped to consult to the business and drive the right mobility decisions. On the back of this, you will need clear, robust policies that can be easily understood and referred to by both HR and business leaders. This should allow local HR to be able to understand when to apply local policies such as local plus or permanent transfers and when to loop in mobility for possible assignments.

Relationship-Building

Now that you have freed up some time, what's next? Essential to becoming a more strategic partner will be to build relationships with your key clients and stakeholders within HR and the business.


- 1. HR Leadership Teams.** The aim of a truly strategic regional global mobility manager should be to become an active and integral member of the regional HR leadership team. Set up regular one-on-ones with the key HR leads in the region,

providing updates on talent mobility within their region, as well as highlights/lowlights, best practices, and upcoming projects. Once a relationship is established, ask for an invitation to the leadership team, advising how you intend to add value. Start by providing an update from global mobility—especially if you have made program or policy changes—as well as an update on talent mobility activity into the region, backed up by metrics and data identifying trends and any external regulatory changes that may impact hiring or mobile talent, e.g., tax or immigration changes. Eventually you will be viewed as a truly strategic HR partner and invited to the table to help drive HR and business strategy,

- 2. Talent Management Community (TMC).** Get connected! Find out who in the organization looks after talent management, and if there is a talent management community, get connected into it. Once introduced, it will be imperative for both sides to educate each other. Present to the TMC on the global mobility function, including where you sit within the organization, structure of the team, and key focus areas, as well as the key strategy, vision, and core principles. Also, a brief overview of the framework and key drivers for talent movement will help the TMC visualize how they will be able to collaborate and what tools global mobility has to help them with their talent objectives. In return, the TMC can present to the global mobility team on their function and business objectives, prompting a dialogue on effective collaboration. Start building the relationship and determining the connection points. This may involve setting up a regular cadence of meetings, potentially timed around other rhythms of the business, such as people review, workforce planning, budgeting, etc. You will be able to determine the metrics and data-reporting that will help support the partnership and enable more informed talent and business decisions, as well as incorporating talent management best practices into the mobility process.

Business Partnering/ Building Business Acumen

In order to be a truly strategic partner, you will need to understand the business you are in. This will give you credibility in front of business leaders and help



**Time spent
upfront educating
HR and staffing
will ensure HR is
better equipped
to consult to the
business and drive
the right mobility
decisions.**

you understand how global mobility can play a part in meeting the goals and objectives of the company.

- Start partnering with business leads and line human resources business professionals (HRBPs) to understand business goals and provide input to business planning and strategy, especially where it involves tapping into global talent pools or using mobility as a talent development tool.
- Increase business acumen to understand all aspects of the business—take advantage of relationships with senior assignees who lead different business groups and arrange a meeting or a coffee to better understand their business and talent objectives. I have always found assignees willing to spend some time to explain their role and business. Take the opportunity to check in on their assignment and seek feedback on the program. Also, make the time to attend company briefings and all-hands presentations to get an idea of business performance and future direction. With more confidence and the ability to understand the business issues, you will be in a better position to put forward creative ideas and solutions to ensure the company is able to get the right talent to the right places in time to take advantage of business opportunities.



The aim of a truly strategic regional global mobility manager should be to become an active and integral member of the regional HR leadership team.

Training and Development

It is important to stay connected in the industry, as the mobility environment is always changing (tax and legal regulations, competitive labor market, compensation, etc.). Attend industry workshops and webinars for knowledge-building—many of them are free for HR professionals—and connect on social media to global mobility groups, e.g., through LinkedIn.

1. Investment in Training/Development.

Request a budget at the beginning of the year to attend selected mobility seminars, forums, and training programs. These are great opportunities to network with mobility peers, hear from industry leaders, and learn best practices in the industry. The Worldwide ERC® Global Mobility Specialist (GMS)® training modules also provide a great foundation for mobility professionals, including the new talent management designation, GMS-TSM.

2. Benchmarking Forums. These typically exist in most major mobility locations and can be industry-specific—e.g., finance—or broad cross-industry. Find out from peers in your network whether one exists. If not, then create one with your peers in your city. Members can take turns hosting meetings—breakfast meetings work well—with the host driving the agenda. These benchmarking forums can be a great source of data and an

effective way to benchmark data quickly if you have a specific business issue.

3. Stretch Projects. A great way to broaden expertise and build relationships is with stretch projects. This can be with talent management, staffing, compensation and benefits, finance, etc. Examples could be improving the onboarding process for foreigners with staffing, designing a mobile talent dashboard with talent management, developing a localization framework with compensation and benefits, or a cost-containment exercise with finance.

4. Build Global, Not Just Regional Expertise.

Cross-share knowledge with the rest of the mobility team. Take turns to present on your region, e.g., challenges, best practices, regulatory updates, organization updates, etc. Offer to provide cover for colleagues in different regions to gain experience at managing mobility in a different geography and working across different cultures and stakeholders.

Management

As a regional global mobility manager, you will need to engage with your manager—tell your manager what skills and competencies you want to develop and relationships you wish to build, and work with him or her on a development plan. Ask what budget is available for employee training and development, and lock this in, so that there is no dispute later when you need to use the budget. It is important that the global mobility lead be supportive and invested in the development of his or her mobility managers to be able to evolve the role to a strategic level. Without this support and investment, the mobility role may be stuck in an administrative and transactional function.

For a global mobility lead to build a team of truly strategic regional global mobility managers, he or she will need a collaborative approach to management, encouraging the team to provide input in setting the direction of the mobility function. Seeking diverse opinions and relying on the regional, on-the-ground expertise and local relationships with the key HR and business stakeholders developed by the regional global mobility managers will ensure that the global mobility function is globally relevant and not HQ-centric, driven by the blinkered lens of a centralized few.

Jade Raymond, former managing director of Ubisoft Canada, epitomizes this management style, declaring the key components of her management success in a recent article in *Monocle* magazine: "Transparency and constant communication. The world is shifting from the broadcast model to the engagement model. This is how we need to manage successful teams, especially with the new generation of graduates. People want to be involved at every level."

Basics First

By following the steps outlined above, mobility managers will be able to evolve their role into becoming a more strategic partner to HR and the business and add greater value to the organization. However, bear in mind that to evolve a mobility program, you will first need a strong foundation in place, i.e., it will be difficult to engage in strategic discussions if the mobility service provided to clients is below par and most time is spent fighting fires with

clients. Therefore, get the basics in place first—robust policies, a solid service delivery model, and strong vendors—and then you will have the confidence to take the next steps and seek your rightful place at the strategic table.

Once you have the foundation in place, you can start leveraging your vendors to take on more of the administrative tasks, allowing more time to build the key relationships and business partnering. Talk to your manager about how you wish to evolve your role, or if you are a mobility lead, you can take the initiative to start taking these steps to progress the mobility function and ensure your managers stay engaged and lead challenging and rewarding careers. *M*

Sean Collins formerly managed Microsoft's mobility programs in APAC. He has since started Talent Mobility Asia, an independent mobility consulting firm based in Singapore. He can be contacted at seanc@talentmobilityasia.com.



SOLUTIONS THAT MOVE YOU FORWARD

Whether he's a recent college grad or she's your top executive, we treat all of your transferees like VIPs.

65 Offices in the U.S. and Canada 888-411-4282 WWW.FORWARDRELOCATION.COM

Domestic Moving | International Moving | Container | Van | LTL | Intermodal | Small Shipments
Expedited Shipping | Storage | Auto Shipping | 3rd Party Services



**FORWARD
RELOCATION**
Forward Thinking • Forward Moving