

A photograph of three business women in an office setting. The woman in the center is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and is smiling while talking on a silver smartphone. To her left, another woman in a red top is looking down at something out of frame. To her right, a third woman in a light blue shirt is partially visible. The background is a blurred office environment.

Five top tips to uber mobility

There are few areas of business that remain untouched by the rapid changes that technology has brought in the past decade. What starts as a quirky new concept becomes mainstream within a short period of time.

Take Facebook for example. Ten years ago the site was developed as a way for students to meet each other on a college campus. It now has over one billion users worldwide.

With each new technology-driven concept, there seems to be the early adopters followed by everyone else.

Human resources, recruiting, business travel, corporate communications and so much more that we are familiar with in our day-to-day jobs, look and feel nothing like they did just a few years ago. And mobility is certainly seeing the impact of the new ways of doing things.

For reasons of necessity and opportunity every industry now finds itself in the technology business.

Jon Kelly, Vanity Fair, March 2016



Uber mobility: How technology is changing the global mobility landscape

“Uber mobility” reflects the reality of technology shifts on our industry and a focus on the next big thing. Companies want to offer more mobility to their younger employees, but at a lower cost than the traditional international assignments that still exist for strategic temporary roles.

Assignees and HR also want more information at their fingertips. Online solutions, apps and phone-based payment options are all moving from quirky to “normal” very quickly. Low cost, low touch and the automation of access to data are all driving uber mobility.

A few apps for the low-cost, low-touch assignment approach have come onto the market quickly, and are still working out their kinks. And, like many of the early technology-driven solutions for the mobility industry, the low profit margin that comes with a low-cost solution might not be sustainable yet.

This article highlights what mobility teams need to be aware of at this stage of the uber mobility evolution, and offers a few top tips. Twelve months from now, these may all seem “normal.”

1. Do It Yourself (DIY)

The assignee’s ability to plan their own move is part of the uber mobility experience. This is great for companies that want low-cost move options – setting aside a lump sum for at least part of planning the relocation and letting the employee manage it. It can also be great for the employee to have flexibility and choices.

At this early stage, one downside is that current technology was not made by mobility experts, but by technology experts. The technology is not interactive and doesn’t offer “opt out” points when the employee might need an expert to figure something out. Also, the employee doesn’t always know what they don’t know. These first generation apps were not designed for families so much as for the early-career unaccompanied younger assignee. The “live chat with an expert” option is coming but it’s not here yet.

Another downside is that, like most “disruptors,” the new technology on the market was designed for low-cost moves, but investors need to make a profit on their investment. Early adopters are finding that it isn’t low cost yet – but customers are hoping that it will be in the near future.

2. Duty of care/Risk and compliance

Whether it is Uber, GrabCab or Airbnb, they all influence how we expect to get information and make choices.

So, what happens when the employee chooses their flights, housing, drivers or moving company? How far do the company's "duty of care" responsibilities extend in terms of the safety and well-being of employees and their families moving around the world?

Natural and manmade disasters drive mobility teams to ask how much control they, and the company, are responsible for. New apps are being developed by organizations like International SOS, and Facebook now offers "I'm safe" features during tragic events. This still needs to evolve in our industry, and how much tracking of employees and vetting of housing choices, etc. is still to be determined. (An example of where technology is moving faster than corporate guidelines and parameters.) But it is clear that some security implications of employee choice in mobility are unknown to most companies at this stage.

Mobility teams should take a pro-active approach to emergency preparedness – instead of waiting for an emergency to occur. Steps that can be taken include reviewing and updating security policies and regularly communicating emergency guidelines to assignees.

3. Recruiting

Cost savings is always a "top ten" trend. More mobility for less, and the chance to have new career experiences within a global organization, are both great outcomes for low-cost, low-touch moves. These can be major influencers to millennials and recruiters.

In a typical millennial's career, two years is a long time to stay in one position, yet companies are flatter than ever before. Moving up the career ladder in a traditional way happens to fewer employees. Looking for a new opportunity in the same company, but in another part of the world, is increasingly becoming the norm.

Self-initiated moves are a trend we see growing. For business leaders, knowing that talent is increasingly mobile, and at a lower cost than the traditional assignment, is a very attractive prospect. Low-cost mobility options are great for recruiting and retaining talent.

4. Data analytics

Most mobility teams understand the power of data. Technology is allowing companies to capture more information about their employees: mobility spend, assignee demographics, exceptions, locations, immigration and tax compliance, etc. This allows for smarter mobility programs and a better ability to link with Diversity & Inclusion strategies, recruiters, talent planning and business partners. Mobility programs with good data can run more efficiently – and provide a better service.





5. What's next?

Rapid change and early iterations of technology solutions that will certainly evolve and improve in the near term, inspire us to consider where mobility solutions will be in, not ten years, but two, three or four years.

Virtual Reality (VR) and 3D technology will change familiarization trips, home finding, school tours and many other destination services solutions. For low-cost moves, the employee and partner won't always need to get on a plane to make decisions around a move.

We may also see some services emerge in between the no-touch/low-touch solution and the traditional high-touch approach. Improved versions of Skype, video technology and even mobility avatars (that can interact with the assignee to answer questions and address individual needs) are certainly near future solutions we should look out for.

This article was authored by Lisa Johnson of Crown World Mobility's Consulting Group. If you have any questions regarding this article, or would like to find out more about our other services, please contact Lisa at ljohnson@crowneww.com.

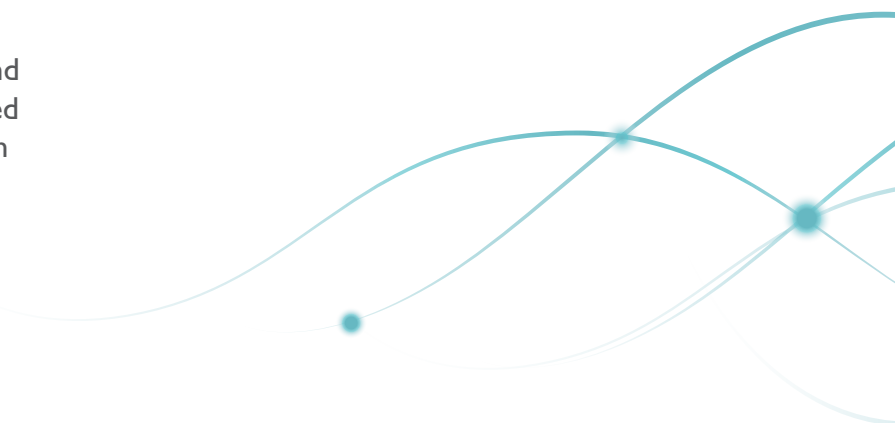
Conclusion

Rapid changes have meant that new technology may be moving faster than HR and mobility teams can keep up with. This is especially true in terms of getting the right balance and having the right guidelines in place to support DIY employee moves, while providing a "duty of care."

New flexibility, and the potential to provide more low-cost moves, gives mobility options to employees who want career changes and global adventure – and to business managers who seek the best talent wherever they are in the world. Smarter mobility obtained from better data is also making programs more efficient and better aligned with HR and business strategies.

Information at your fingertips, and online selection and purchasing are not fads – they are here to stay. And they're only going to get better. As these shifts occur we will continue to look at what it means for our industry and what mobility professionals need to be aware of to adapt and find the right balance.

Technology is changing life as we know it, and mobility is no exception.



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