



Big global mobility trends to watch in 2020

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As we kick off a new decade, the business world is truly facing a new reality. Our annual list of industry trends often starts with identifying macro world trends that influence micro business trends, helping us better understand the context for shifts in global mobility.

In the past 12 months there have been significant changes that make this macro-to-micro view more compelling than previous years: a combination of shifting political priorities; a breakdown of what had seemed like strong geopolitical agreements; a rising global concern about the effects of climate change; and a generational shift that is influencing workplace values.

As we enter 2020, the lines between business and politics are more blurred than ever before. Responsibilities that used to be seen as primarily political are now being taken on, and even championed by, the global business community. “Globally Responsible Leadership” is not a new concept; however, it is now much less on the fringes of business and more of a corporate requirement.

One of our favorite places to draw inspiration at the start of each year is the World Economic Forum (WEF), where business leaders, politicians, innovators, billionaires, academicians and even 17-year-old disruptors come together in Davos, Switzerland. Every January they exchange ideas, raise concerns, form agreements and offer potential solutions for today’s urgent global issues. This year’s

WEF theme was “Stakeholders for a Cohesive and Sustainable World.”

2020 is being heralded as a time to reimagine scorecards and for companies to serve a broader definition of stakeholders – customers, employees, communities as well as shareholders. We are facing a moment where global leadership and corporations have added social, cultural and environmental responsibilities to their mandates. And the reality is, employees (and potential employees) really like it.

With this backdrop, let’s take a look at seven trends to watch and explore the ways in which today’s blurred lines of responsibility, and greater demands from customers and employees, influence our industry’s priorities.



1.
**Sustainability
priorities**



2.
**Employee duty of care
and mental health**



3.
**Global mobility
communities**



4.
**Happy attrition
and other post-
assignment strategies**



5.
The big EX!



6.
**Mobility links to
diverse leadership**



7.
**Domestic mobility
maturing in new locations**

Sustainability priorities

As we come out of the hottest decade on record across the globe and see more mainstream acceptance for urgent action on climate change, companies and their employees are stepping up and finding ways to reduce and improve their environmental impacts. For global mobility, like many industries that require travel, packing, shipping and more, it is impossible to not have an impact on the environment. But it's time to start talking about ways to reduce or counterbalance the negative impact of our industry.

Global mobility teams from companies with CEOs who are already committed to corporate sustainability have begun looking for ways to

add this priority to their mobility strategies. For those companies with mature corporate-wide sustainability programs, the global mobility team can establish goals to align with the organization's larger sustainability dashboard.

When we talk about global mobility sustainability, it is about creating meaningful reductions and making smarter choices at any level: individual, team, company and industry. It can also be about encouraging our supply chains and business partners to strive for more sustainable goals. Since this is an emerging concept, the most important aspect for 2020 is to start talking about it, ask questions, and share ideas across the industry.

How experts define corporate leadership

Integrated sustainability values and having sustainability as part of the core business model are seen as key drivers of sustainability leadership



Considerations for global mobility strategy:

- Provide guidelines for relocating employees and transferees prior to moving that highlight sustainable ways to reduce waste during a move. This will help them make personal choices with positive consequences, such as identifying ways to donate personal goods that will not be packed and don't make sense to store, including canned food, excess furniture, excess clothing, appliances, cars, etc.
- Provide more forms and paperwork online to reduce assignment-related paper consumption.
- Offer virtual solutions, such as virtual home-finding trips in cases where eliminating the trip does not compromise decision-making or family preparedness.
- Move towards crate recycling and use of biodegradable bubble wrap for shipping.
- Add electric cars and trucks to transportation fleets.
- Add statements to policy where possible that encourage green options for employee benefits and give visibility to your organization's focus on sustainability; for example, most long-term assignment policies that address host country transportation and additional language can be amended to encourage adopting environmentally friendly transportation options.
- Encourage global mobility team members and relocating employees to use public transport where possible.
- Introduce relocating employees and transferees to local recycling customs in their new location as part of settling-in services; discourage single-use plastic bags in any country.
- Create workspaces that are LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).
- Establish KPIs for partners and suppliers that have sustainability goals. Even if the goal is a first step to start working together to ideate meaningful negative impact reductions or changes to the environment.
- To offset the environmental impact, plant a tree for every relocating employee and relocation you authorize this year.
- If you are ready to get started, add global mobility sustainability to your next team meeting discussion, conference agenda and RFP.



Supporting Move for Hunger

Move for Hunger is a non-profit organization that works with relocation companies, collecting non-perishable food items and delivering it to food banks across North America. Our offices in North America have been working with Move for Hunger since 2010 and during that time have raised money and collected food to help families who are food poor.

Donated since 2010

814,953 lbs. / 679,127 meals

Employee duty of care and mental health

Duty of care is not making its first appearance on our trends list. Part of the reason for its recurrence and importance is that relocating employee duty of care is varied and includes a wide range of issues.

A big part of mobility duty of care lies in preparing business travelers, relocating employees and their families for the unexpected – from illness, accidents, personal and family security, political upheaval and terrorism, to immigration changes that could impact their assignment, etc. Preparing employees to understand the financial implications of their move, the tax consequences, cultural differences and new languages are also duty of care considerations. It is important to regularly review and update your company's duty of care strategy. Often it is an emergency that reminds us of how important it is to have a plan and support in place.

This year we are adding an emphasis on mental health support to the discussion. Even when a person is highly motivated, the experience of moving inevitably causes stress and anxiety as people leave family and friends behind. They often feel pressured to hit the ground running in a new and perhaps highly visible role. Anyone who has worked across cultures will have experienced some level of working with colleagues who have different expectations around manager-subordinate relationships, giving/receiving feedback, accountability and even humor. A highly successful employee in their home country may feel less successful while on assignment.

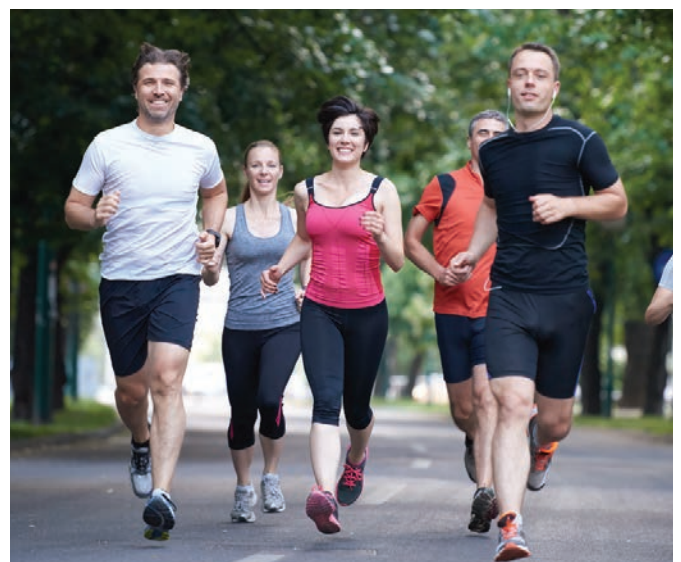
For employees with family members, it is often the accompanying partner who has the hardest time with adjustment, since they will need to initiate their activities and relationships in the new location without the familiarity of their job. Adding to this, dual-career couples are more the norm and frequently the accompanying partner has left a career for the move. Unlike your employee, the accompanying partner won't automatically have a job to go to each day or a group of colleagues to interact with.

So where does mental health fit into the duty of care discussion?

It continues to be a challenging issue in the workplace due to the stigma that exists around talking about mental health issues at work, and the fact that it can be invisible if you aren't looking for it.

A good pre-departure training program will include information for all relocating employees and transferees about expat depression, work-related stress and ways to find support. Educating HR team members and managers who receive employees about the signs of depression, and the stress that can come with an international move, is also a step in the right direction. International healthcare providers are also a good resource for confidential employee assistance programs.

An important first step to address mental health issues in your global mobility program is to help remove the stigma. Promoting employee well-being strategies can also promote mental health in the workplace. Many companies are putting an emphasis on well-being programs that include exercise, nutrition and mindfulness along with updated definitions of work-life balance.





Global mobility communities

Today, more than 40 percent of the world's population uses social media to share information and connect. Linked to this is a growing trend around participating in online communities. Communities are made up of people with common interests coming together to share information and exchange ideas. They can be public or private, and more corporations are latching on to this trend.

We see a growing trend in the availability of community platforms that will benefit diverse employee populations in meeting and sharing experiences with people in similar situations, or in establishing communities and connections in assignment locations. Less represented mobile populations, like female employees, male accompanying partners, members of the LGBT

community, employees from the same home location or the same ethnic background may benefit from establishing this type of shared connection.

Where we see bigger growth and opportunity is for communities within Global Mobility teams. Communities are strengthening Global Mobility teams (and their internal or external partners) in sharing best practices and getting input on a challenge without waiting for the next meeting. These platforms are definitely strengthening communication for dispersed teams. Companies that use Yammer, Workplace from Facebook and more are leveraging them for these purposes. We expect to see this trend becoming the norm and seen more across the industry as rapidly changing technology offers even better options.



Happy attrition and other post-assignment strategies

We used to primarily talk about repatriation when discussing the phase that comes at the end of an assignment; of course, repatriation still exists and it remains an important part of most global mobility programs. But we have also seen an increase in alternatives to repatriation, such as:

- Consecutive assignments
- Localization into the assignment location
- Finding a new role in a location that was not the one they started in

Lately we have our eye on something new that we are calling “Happy Attrition.” Companies may not mind – and even expect – some employees to move on at the end of their assignments. Turnover is not always bad, is it? While this is not for everyone, agile companies that are focused on innovation and don’t just manage change but embrace it, are better prepared for some of the natural attrition that comes at the end of international assignments.



The big EX!

Last year we highlighted that the employee experience (EX) is driving improvements across the board – for customers, for employees, for everyone. The industry now looks at the way EX is being adopted as part of global mobility programs (A-EX, as in the Assignee Experience; GM-EX, for Global Mobility Experience, etc.).

New demands and customer behaviors might create dissatisfaction if your program is still using Excel spread sheets, asking employees to fill out the same forms over and over, policies that are 35 pages long, no onboarding or end of assignment plan, etc. The good news is that these demands are also pushing our global mobility programs and our industry to improve at a faster pace.

One of the best examples of recent improvements in GM-EX is seen in the technology now available to support decision-making ease, and the use of lump

sum and flexible policy approaches. Until recently, the biggest concerns for flexible and DIY moves have been related to the employee productivity dip due to time demands and an almost certain negative impact on the employee's experience. As a result, there are a growing number of tools available to improve the experience.

Today, when companies offer flexible choices like cash allowances or benefit options based on employee priorities, the technology is provided to make these approaches user-friendly. Benefits with options are easy to assess and manage. At a time when ordering a cab, booking a flight, watching a movie or making a payment can all be done remotely, the availability of more standard technology to manage flexible policy options is a big step.

Mobility links to diverse leadership

Does your organization value or require international experience to move up and into senior leadership roles? If the answer is yes, it is time to seriously look at who is getting the international opportunities and how global mobility programs can support your organization's D&I strategies.

Does your company measure any D&I aspects of the global mobility population? In 2019 we surveyed 100 global companies and found that 79 percent of companies value or require international experience in order to move ahead. And this was even more so when filling senior leadership roles. If relocating employee populations are not diverse, how will the makeup of our future leaders change?

The survey also revealed that only 29 percent of global mobility strategies have any formal links to organizations' D&I strategies.

Employees see the link between global experience and their ability to rise in companies. They also see who is getting those opportunities and who is not. If D&I elements are not an integral part of the global mobility strategy, employees can see that and may make decisions about their future employment prospects before the company gets around to making the changes that promote inclusivity.

Survey participants were asked for examples of ways their companies give visibility to D&I goals in mobility:



32%

Photos on our company's website, Intranet and marketing materials



20%

Information available on our global mobility Intranet to address some of our diverse employee populations and their needs



21%

Unconscious bias training is offered for managers and HR involved in the selection process for international relocations or assignments



21%

We measure the diversity of our relocating employee population and share that information in our company



16%

Profiles of our diverse relocating population (videos, case studies, etc.)



8%

D&I logos appear on our global mobility team's signatures



Domestic mobility maturing in new locations

Domestic relocation as part of a corporate mobility program has evolved primarily in the U.S., Canada, the U.K. and Australia. Part of this history is derived from countries with a longstanding cultural openness to migration, and laws and regulations that allowed it. This isn't to say that other countries do not have domestic corporate relocation; however, because it is typically on a smaller scale, the policies and approaches are less commonly tracked. And what is offered for these moves can be ad hoc without norms or policy guidelines.

We've been tracking companies that are incorporating domestic mobility under the global mobility umbrella, which has increased in recent years, albeit at a slow pace. As companies centralize their programs they show more interest in managing elements such as:

- Standardizing employee support
- Providing a consistent employee experience
- Tracking cost
- Leveraging supplier relationships
- Implementing global HR and/or mobility technology resources

As the war for talent remains strong, companies want more recruiting tools that also show their values around supporting EX and doing the right thing. When it comes to relocation, improvising can add to cost or create recruiting barriers and onboarding flops when support is disorganized or too limited. This year we are watching as more global companies look to establish competitive policies and practices for domestic relocation in emerging countries.



Facing a new reality

Now is a good time to reflect on current ways of working and consider improvements for the months ahead. 2020 is also an opportunity to reenergize ourselves and our teams with new ideas. This year we have reflected on how some familiar topics, like duty of care, are evolving and we are excited to add new ideas and challenges, like sustainability and employee mental health, to the conversation. Our annual list of trends to watch is developed to inspire innovative thinking and steps – large and small – to move our industry forward in a fast-changing world.



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