FINDING A PEDIATRICIAN ABROAD / TAX-FREE DISASTER RELIEF / MARKET SUMMARY: SAN DIEGO / DESTINATION PROFILE: DUBAI

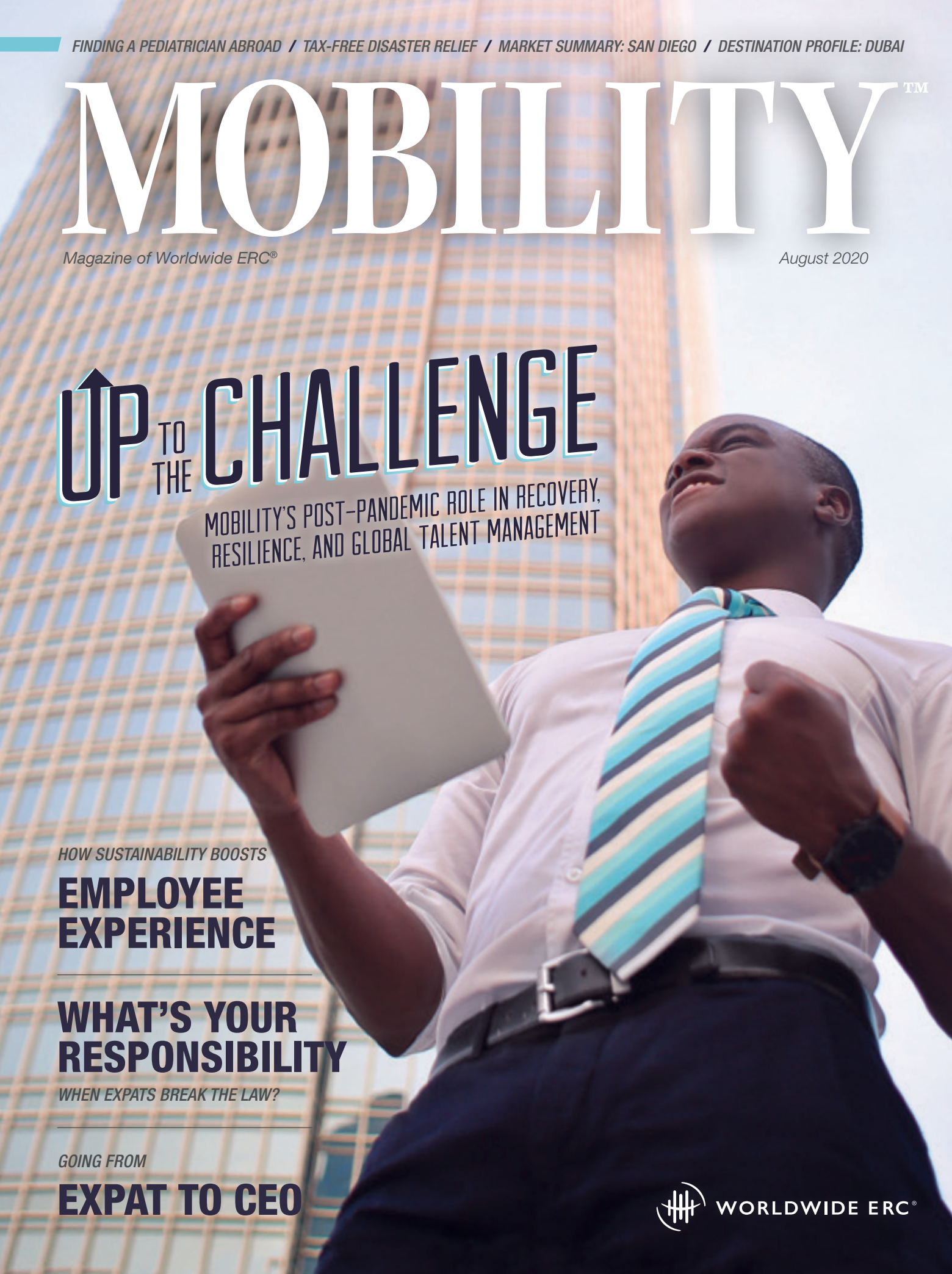
MOBILITY™

Magazine of Worldwide ERC®

August 2020

UP TO THE CHALLENGE

MOBILITY'S POST-PANDEMIC ROLE IN RECOVERY, RESILIENCE, AND GLOBAL TALENT MANAGEMENT



HOW SUSTAINABILITY BOOSTS

EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

WHAT'S YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

WHEN EXPATS BREAK THE LAW?

GOING FROM

EXPAT TO CEO

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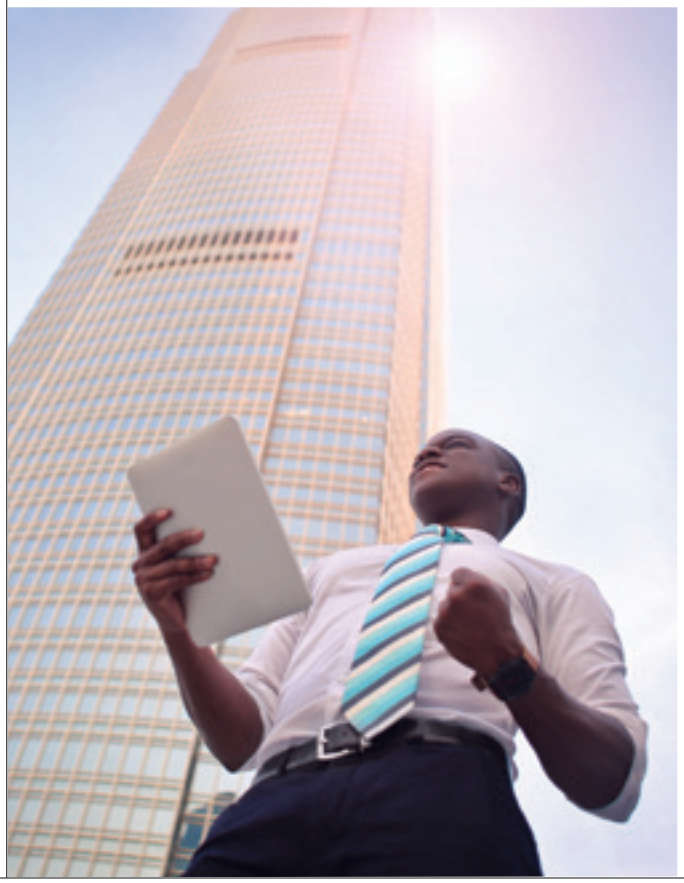
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ABOUT WORLDWIDE ERC®
Worldwide ERC® is the workforce mobility association for professionals who oversee, manage, or support U.S. domestic and international employee transfers. The organization was founded in 1964 to help members overcome the challenges of workforce mobility.

OUR PURPOSE
We empower mobile people through meaningful connections, unbiased information, inspired ideas, and solutions.

WORLDWIDE ERC®

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Global Workforce Symposium 2020
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worldwideerc.org/events-conferences

MAY 2021

Advance 2021
24–26 May
San Francisco
worldwideerc.org/events-conferences

OCTOBER 2021

Global Workforce Symposium 2021
20–22 October
Chicago
worldwideerc.org/events-conferences

READ ALL ABOUT IT!

About what? That's our question for you! Send your suggestions for topics you'd like to read about in *Mobility* to *mobility@worldwideerc.org*.

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The Coronavirus Paradox



Unexpected events often reinforce basic tenets that we already know. Certainly, none of us anticipated the magnitude of the economic upheaval and business disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the actions that governments, businesses, and individuals have taken to slow its spread. These actions are all rooted in the concept of social distancing. Paradoxically, the act of practicing social distancing has highlighted just how important community is.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers advice for how to deal with the stress created by the pandemic and emphasizes the importance of connecting with others. Psychologists around the world recognize community as a basic human need.

Not only do we need community for our mental and emotional well-being, but being part of a thriving network of individuals with shared interests is also a critical means of finding solutions and new paths forward through idea exchange, shared experiences, and simply creating safe opportunities for ideation and creative thinking.

None of this is new—what *is* new is how we can maintain and make new connections in the current environment. To that end, Worldwide ERC® is working to foster a community that can help the industry not only recover from the current challenging business environment, but also embrace new ways of supporting talent mobility that will lay the foundation for a bright future post-pandemic.

We are working with members and industry experts to develop a framework for a safe and successful return to workforce mobility, which will help employers and their mobility partners thoroughly explore when and how to resume the movement of critical talent. It will walk companies through the workforce-planning, safety, duty-of-care, and compliance considerations that will form the foundation of safe and successful mobility.

We're also finding new ways to bring members together safely. These include periodic online town halls with lots of opportunity for questions and interactions. We have virtual communities that offer a platform for idea exchange. Even more exciting is the new approach we're taking to our Global Workforce Symposium. We've invested in technology that will create an experience as close to an in-person event as possible, complete with exhibits, informative education, and social networking opportunities. This event will be the most global we have ever had—both because it will be affordable and because it removes the constraints imposed by hotel space and the need to travel. We've even removed time as a barrier. The event will run from 28 October to 20 November—with sessions targeted by regions, industry segments, and topics—scheduled to include multiple time zones.

So, while I am eagerly awaiting the day when we can gather in groups for in-person, face-to-face community building, I'm also excited about the innovations that social distancing has demanded of us. When we emerge from the pandemic, we'll be an even stronger community—because of what we've learned from social distancing.

LYNN SHOTWELL, GMS
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Helping a Child Bond With a New Pediatrician Abroad

BY JOE CRONIN
PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL CITIZENS GROUP INC.

Send your article ideas, letters, and feedback to *mobility@worldwideerc.org*.

Few relationships are as important as the one between you, your child, and his or her pediatrician. Although you hopefully don't see each other *that* often, when you do, trust, communication, and comfort are paramount. Becoming acquainted with a new pediatrician can be challenging at any time, especially for young children. Add in the major change of moving overseas, and suddenly cultural, linguistic, and communication differences come into play. Here are some helpful tips to help children bond with their new pediatrician abroad.

- **Request a meet-and-greet.** A short meet-and-greet appointment should be sufficient to see whether you like the doctor and feel comfortable in the clinic. Also be sure to meet other team members—such as nurses, administrators, or physiotherapists—who may play an important role in your child's care.
- **Ask children what's important to them.** Even very young children can articulate what their favorite things are about their current doctor.
- **Don't wait until your child is ill to have your first visit.** If your child meets a new doctor while in the middle of a throat swab, you can consider the introduction a flop.
- **Does the pediatrician abroad speak your language?** If you have difficulties communicating, bring an interpreter along to your visits.
- **Prepare for workplace differences.** You may find your new pediatrician's office to be more formal or more casual than at home. While you want to be comfortable with the organization, try to be flexible, too.
- **Encourage your child to ask questions.** Make sure your child is comfortable speaking up about any concerns.
- **Anticipate cultural differences.** Many pediatricians may prefer to speak directly to parents, rather than the child. Understanding cultural communication styles can keep you from being discouraged with the doctor.

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In Case You Missed It (ICYMI)

The world continues to undergo change, but one thing remains constant—our dedication to the work we're putting in for our members. Throughout July, Worldwide ERC® engaged you through informative state-of-the-industry online town halls that provided the opportunity to hear about our new projects and plans and to ask us questions. We also conducted a practice-sharing session for corporate mobility practitioners in the EMEA region to learn, network, and engage with peers.

Mark your calendars! We've announced our plans to go virtual for this year's Global Workforce Symposium. The initial plan was to meet in Washington, D.C., but because of restrictions around large gatherings and our desire to keep you safe, we pivoted our strategy. Now, taking place 28 October to 20 November, our first-ever virtual GWS is a month-long event that will provide you with leading-edge educational tracks, social networking opportunities, and even a virtual exhibit hall. Plus, the month-long event removes the need to travel and will be scheduled to accommodate multiple time zones. This event is one you won't want to miss.

We continue to provide important updates on international government affairs, such as U.S. President Donald Trump's immigration proclamation and its effect on mobility and businesses. We provided news on travel restrictions from around the world as countries weigh their reopening options. We talked about U.S. Supreme Court rulings that will play a role in immigration, the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Trade Agreement that went into effect, as well as tax and IRS updates. Our advocacy efforts on behalf on workforce mobility continue through correspondence in support of the Mobile Workforce State Income Tax Simplification Act—as well as a letter jointly signed by Worldwide ERC® President and CEO Lynn Shotwell and Charles L. White, president, International Association of Movers, requesting that seasonal workers on H-2B visas continue to be permitted to enter the country to assist moving companies within the Defense Personal Property Program.

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON SOCIAL? FOLLOW US! @WORLDWIDEERC

LinkedIn – Our efforts to inform you about the impact of the U.S. presidential proclamation on immigration extended to LinkedIn. We also shared informative content through articles on a new California bill aimed at tax fraud, the future of work as leaders shift their strategy to focus on remote work and wellness, and the growing importance of learning and development (L&D) in employee growth and adapting to change in a crisis.

Twitter – With everything changing as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many employers are revising and reviewing their mobility policies. We posted news on our valuable new benchmarking tool, which aggregates data from 1,000 mobility policies, applicable to more than 50,000 employees and 10 policy types. Ask for a demo today! For more information, see *worldwideerc.org/tools*.

Facebook – We hope you saw our post about our upcoming webinars. Check out the calendar of events on *worldwideerc.org/events*, as new webinars are added frequently. We also invited you to sign up for our e-newsletter to receive news and updates at your own pace—daily, weekly, or monthly. Just visit *worldwideerc.org*, and tell us your preferences.

Worldwide ERC® Front Page



WORLDWIDE ERC® LAUNCHES UPDATED ONLINE DIRECTORY

Mobility programs seeking talent mobility partners and talent mobility partners who want to showcase their brands and help differentiate their companies now have a new digital tool: Worldwide ERC®'s reinvented online Global Workforce Services Directory.

Every month, more than 21,000 visitors access *worldwideerc.org*. The new print-on-demand resource can allow companies to reach those visitors through customized directory profile pages that align with their business strategies.

Mobility companies can select either a basic or advanced profile page, each available with updated benefits. All profiles will include a designated contact, filters that call attention to a listing when a potential customer conducts a search, and all Worldwide ERC® designations.

A basic profile page is included with Worldwide ERC® membership and now features:

- A custom URL for targeted marketing.
- Company logo.
- A brief, 200-character company description.
- Industry affiliations and appraisal designations.
- A "Contact Us" button that launches a user-friendly form to collect key contact information from prospective clients.

Companies may also purchase an advanced profile page that, in addition to the above, now features:

- A 600-character company description.
- A VIP quote or client testimonial, with photo.
- Sponsored content posted to a company page and on the directory homepage.
- Up to two social media icons.
- An action pane for coupons, video, or Twitter or Instagram feed.

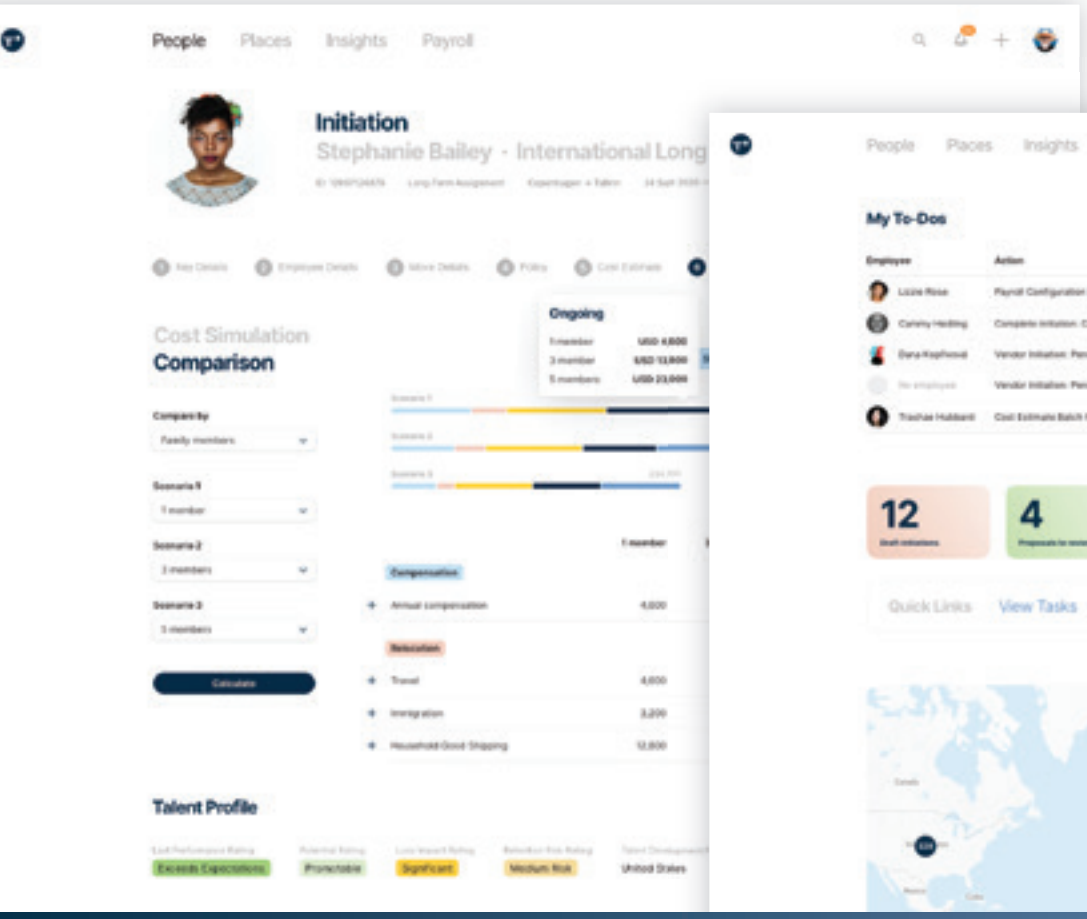
Companies may also purchase the option to be featured on the directory homepage or within specific search results.

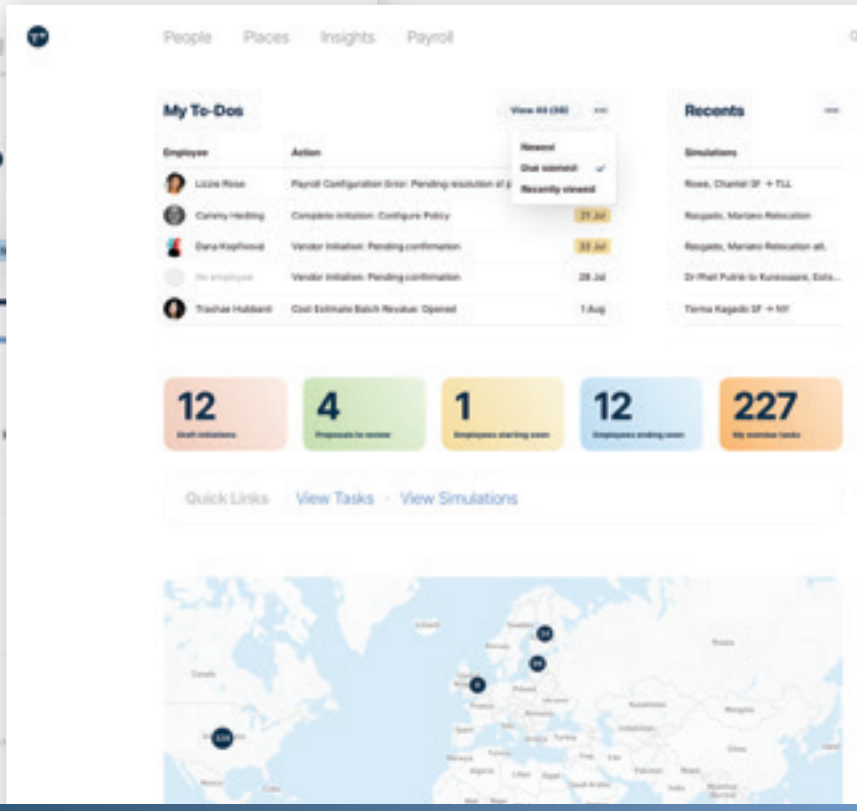
To learn more, email *customersuccess@worldwideerc.org*. To access the Global Workforce Services Directory, visit *worldwideerc.org/directory*.

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ATLAS WORLD GROUP INTERNATIONAL ADDS SPIRIT MOVERS TO AGENT PARTNER PROGRAM

Atlas World Group International, a subsidiary of Atlas World Group Inc., has added Sarasota, Florida–based Spirit Movers to its Agent Partner Program. As a strategic partner in the program, which collaborates with Atlas Van Lines moving agents, AWGI will establish a sales and customer service center within Spirit Movers' headquarters in the Tampa Bay region to strengthen its global mobility offering for the region's residents and businesses.

"Taking this next step with AWGI will help us create new lines of business in the international relocation arena while we continue to serve our domestic customers' moving and storage needs," says Mike Johnson, CEO and president of Spirit Movers.

As an agent partner, Spirit Movers will be armed with the full support and expertise of AWGI to service international shipments and storage needs for new and existing customers. In addition to its creation of an international moving location serving the Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Sarasota markets, AWGI will work alongside Spirit Movers to execute team trainings and coordinate territory marketing, lead generation, and sales support in the region.

"With a new regional storefront operated by Spirit Movers, we will have a team of skilled experts in international moving and related relocation services," says Jim Gaw, president of AWGI. "We're thrilled to grow our structure and overall business with the help of such a reputable industry organization as Spirit Movers. Together, we'll be able to provide international relocation expertise and high-quality services to international clients and customers in the greater Tampa Bay region."

OWL.RENTALS TRANSFORMS TEMPORARY HOUSING PROCUREMENT WEB PORTAL

OWL.Rentals has launched an updated online portal that allows various corporate housing providers to bid on temporary-housing opportunities to fill their vacant rentals all over the world.

OWL was originally conceptualized by Alex Shahabe, alongside team member Deanne Driver, who began developing the site in 2016. Four years later, and after receiving positive feedback from the industry, Shahabe and Driver began working on a new concept that they say pushes corporate housing to the next level of efficiency.

"Over the last few years, we'd heard the same pain points in the industry. The technology was disconnected and began hindering us, not helping us," says Deanne Driver, OWL product development manager. "Our focus became completely restructuring the site to make it available for everyone to use."

OWL has transitioned to a collaborative web portal where all temporary-housing providers can join, source, and receive requests in one centralized location.

"It is an exciting, new way to find available options for temporary housing," Shahabe says of the online marketplace. "But it is not only an efficient way to fill vacant rentals. Due to the industry impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, this portal can serve as a way that all temporary-housing companies can help one another."

Shahabe is no stranger to the corporate housing industry. He is also the founder and president of San Diego–based corporate housing company PC Housing. In the past, he says, sourcing for opportunities without core inventory could often be a time-consuming and inefficient process for temporary-housing professionals. The OWL web portal streamlines that by providing centralized sourcing to ease the administrative effort and increase efficiencies involved with the process.

OWL features an intuitive interface and is also mobile-friendly. It is open to all temporary-housing providers, who can register and create an online profile for their firm. Within 15 minutes, companies are able to receive housing requests and source inventory from their peers.

SUDDATH LAUNCHES NEWLY REDESIGNED WEBSITE

Suddath has launched its global website, *suddath.com*, newly redesigned to optimize the user experience through intuitive navigation and site structure; content including videos, case studies, blogs, tips, and reviews; enhanced functionality; a new design; and improved site speed. The site also enables fast and easy customer engagement through streamlined forms, easy-to-find contact information, and interactive chat functionality.

"The new *suddath.com* reflects our goal to be the easiest moving and logistics company to work with," says Silvio Cavaceppi, senior vice president

of marketing for Suddath. "The site was designed with the customer in mind, incorporating user feedback and customer insights. It is now easier than ever for visitors to interact with the site, whether that's for exploring our services, finding branch and location information, getting a quote, searching career or driver opportunities, or just learning more about our company.

"With our new flexible website platform in place, we can adjust quickly to changing customer needs. We will continue to track site analytics and listen to customer feedback to keep our content fresh and deliver a superior user experience for all our visitors."

RELOCATION MANAGERS' SURVEY RECOGNIZES COMPANIES

The *16th Annual Relocation Managers' Survey* on international mobility conducted by Trippel Survey & Research LLC has recognized several mobility companies.

Altair Global has been ranked No. 1 in highest average score for overall satisfaction for the second year in a row. It also ranked No. 1 for highest average score for quality of service and people.

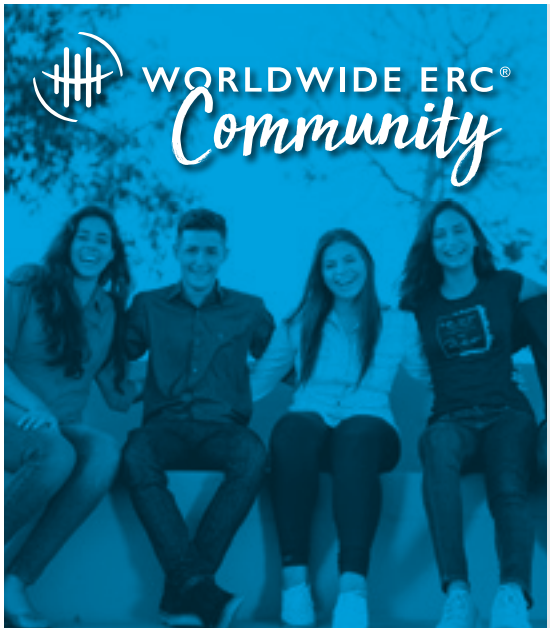
Arpin International Group has earned the No. 1 ranking in supplier satisfaction among the largest suppliers of global household goods shipment services. Arpin International Group earned the highest overall satisfaction score among the nation's largest carriers with an average overall satisfaction score of 8.41 out of 10—a full 0.2 points above the industry average of 8.21.

Nomad Temporary Housing achieved the highest average score among U.S. temporary housing companies, after ranking No. 1 in highest average score or tops in net satisfaction six previous times.

Plus Relocation recorded a 55% net satisfaction rating, tying for first place among the 23 relocation management companies included in the survey and ahead of the industrywide average of 39%. Plus also received the highest average score in local supplier management and led all larger relocation companies in highest average score for quality of people and service delivery. Plus was also among the industry leaders in breadth of service and technology.

The *16th Annual Relocation Managers' Survey* was conducted during March 2020. Its purpose is to collect and report objective, unbiased information and insight on expatriate programs and level of satisfaction with companies in a wide range of international mobility service industries. This year's survey participation rate was up 7% over 2019, with 208 survey responses from international managers.

The full report may be purchased from Trippel Survey & Research. *M*



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Dave Marron



Lee Spirer

Executive Spotlight

NUCOMPASS MOBILITY APPOINTS DAVE MARRON AS CEO

At NuCompass Mobility Services Inc., co-owner Dave Marron has been named CEO following a yearlong transition, replacing Frank Patitucci, co-owner, who will continue as chairman.

Marron has more than a decade of executive experience at NuCompass. He has served as senior vice president of client relationships, vice president of sales and marketing, and vice president of global business development. Prior to joining NuCompass, Marron served as CEO of two real estate technology companies and held sales executive roles in financial services.

"I'm passionate about NuCompass' focus on being the partner that companies can rely on to meet all of their talent mobility needs, especially during uncertain times," Marron says. "I'm inspired by our teams' consistent ability to make a difference in the lives of people moving from one job location to another."

Patitucci says, "Dave was one of the major architects of our current strategic plan and has introduced new management tools and technology to more effectively implement that plan. I am very confident that he will continue this kind of leadership in his new role as CEO."

During the COVID-19 crisis, the company used its advanced technology to allow all of its employees at every level, around the world, to work remotely and continue to meet the needs of corporate clients and their relocating employees.

"We have a worldwide network of vetted and reliable service providers that we've partnered with for decades," Marron says. "During times like these, we draw on those relationships on behalf of our corporate clients. We want to help our clients come out of this crisis with their mobility programs intact and be better prepared to meet the challenges of the future."

Even though it is a challenging time to transition to a new role, Marron is looking forward to serving as CEO. "I'm honored to lead our dedicated team of highly capable professionals," he says. "Together, our skills, our technology, and our decades of experience allow us to proactively help our clients succeed in their talent management efforts."

LEE SPIRER NAMED CEO OF CIBT GLOBAL INC.

CIBT Global Inc. has appointed Lee Spirer as chief executive officer, succeeding John Donoghue, president and CEO, who has become chair of the company's board of directors.

Spirer joins CIBT from Navigant Consulting Inc., where he served most recently as executive vice president and chief growth and transformation officer. Prior to that, he served as the company's chief operating officer, overseeing the operating businesses, business development, strategy, acquisitions and innovation, advanced technology, and India operations.

During his time at Navigant, Spirer established the company as a leading management consulting services provider across multiple verticals, expanded into technology-enabled managed services, and played a crucial role in Navigant's successful sale to Veritas Capital–backed Guidehouse. Previously, Spirer also held senior management roles at Kroll, Dun & Bradstreet, and IBM.

"I am excited to have the opportunity to join the accomplished CIBT team," says Spirer. "CIBT has tremendous growth potential and will continue to deliver best-in-class client and customer experience, while also expanding its market leadership across global corporate services."

"After working closely with our board over the last several months to identify the right individual to lead our business for the next stage of our evolution, I am delighted to welcome Lee Spirer to the CIBT family as our next chief executive officer," says Donoghue. "Lee's breadth of experience in leading and growing business services platforms into world-class enterprises positions him well for his new role at the company, and I look forward to continuing to work with CIBT as chairman to help support the company's next phase of growth."

"On behalf of the board of directors of CIBT, I want to sincerely thank John Donoghue for his distinguished service to the company as CEO and also welcome Lee Spirer to CIBT," says Jonathan Ward, operating partner of Kohlberg, which acquired CIBT in 2017.

JOHNSON STORAGE & MOVING CO. NAMES DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

Luke Humphreys has been appointed director of international operations for Johnson Storage & Moving Co.

Humphreys has worked in the mobility industry for more than 26 years. Most recently, for the past decade he was the vice president of transportation for Graebel Movers International Inc., managing a group of coordinators that handled more than 10,000 shipments annually worldwide. Prior to that, he held various industry roles, from branch manager to commercial sales.

EDWARD MARX JR. RECEIVES SOUTHWEST MOVERS ASSOCIATION AWARD

Edward Marx Jr., president of New World Van Lines of Texas, is the recipient of the Southwest Movers Association (SMA) 2020 Heritage Award. Established in 1988, this annual award recognizes leaders in the moving industry and the association.

Marx has been very active in the association, as chairman in 2008 and as an ongoing supporter of the SMA Foundation Scholarship Program.

Heritage Award nominations are made by the SMA Heritage Committee and other association members, with the final selection made by three previous award recipients.

Under Marx's direction and leadership, New World Van Lines of Texas was incorporated in 1987 and became a vital Southwest operations base, instrumental to the growth and success of New World Van Lines Inc. "It is very gratifying that Ed's lifetime of service to SMA, the moving industry, and to our family company are recognized by this honor," says New World President David Marx.

Ed Marx is part of the third generation of the Marx family to own and lead New World, with three of his children each having more than 15 years with New World.

In September, the SMA will hold its annual conference and formally recognize Marx as the 2020 award recipient.

PEGGY SMITH JOINS CAPRELO AS CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER

Peggy Smith, SCRP, SGMS-T, has joined CapRelo as chief strategy officer. Smith will be instrumental in developing the company's existing and future strategies, identifying business development targets and new markets, and futureproofing the business.

"I'm pleased to add my insight and experience to the very talented CapRelo team," Smith says. "The company is uniquely positioned to address this never-before-seen business environment and just as qualified to leverage disruption opportunities and move forward effectively into the next iteration of mobility management."

Previously, Smith was CSO at Shyft, providing consultative and strategic perspective to the growing global mobility tech company. Prior to her role at Shyft, Smith was president and CEO of Worldwide ERC® for 10 years, growing the organization globally and building a content-rich community. She joined Worldwide ERC® after a 13-year stint with Microsoft, where she developed and implemented strategy for the company's world-class Mobility Center of Excellence.

In addition to numerous global speaking engagements, Smith's professional experiences also include guest lectures on talent mobility at Georgetown University and Seattle University and authoring material for the NACE Foundation. She has also been interviewed, published, and/or quoted in such outlets as Forbes.com, HR.com, SHRM, *Fortune*, *CIO* magazine, *TLNT* magazine, *HR Dive*, *Recruiting Daily Advisor*, and Business.com.

"Our current environment demands innovative thinkers, key relationship builders, reinvention specialists, informed experts, and reliable industry narrators," says CapRelo President and CEO Barry Morris. "Peggy is all of those and brings a unique ability to wisely assess the current marketplace while expertly scoping out a path to the future." *M*



Luke Humphreys



Edward Marx Jr.



Peggy Smith

Collective Wisdom

To help keep you in the know on many of the topics or questions that are top of mind for Worldwide ERC® corporate/HR members, here are some of the things currently being discussed in their dedicated community group at *worldwideerc.org/community.*

TEMPORARY REMOTE WORK REQUESTS

How is your company responding to employee requests to temporarily work remotely due to COVID-19 until offices reopen? Are you allowing employees to work in other states? Other countries?

If yes, how are you handling payroll reporting compliance? Corporate tax compliance? Individual income tax compliance? And is there a threshold on the number of days? Any other considerations?

Or, are you saying no and requiring the employee to take vacation and/or unpaid leave?

Note: These are not employees who are "stuck" outside of their country of employment due to travel bans, but employees who are requesting to be in another location to be closer to family or for other personal reasons.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS SITE

Does anyone have a free site they are referencing to stay up to date on global travel restrictions? I know [certain companies] offer access at a cost but am wondering if anyone has found reliable public info via any other site to keep employees updated.

EXPENSES POLICY AND WORK AUTHORIZATION

We are looking into consolidating our expenses policy related to immigration support for inbounds to the U.S. (both transferees from other countries and direct hires).

1. *What expenses does your organization cover related to immigration process (e.g., flight and accommodations during visa application, etc.) for both U.S. hires and employees on assignment in the U.S.?*
2. *How do you handle situations where U.S. employees lose work authorization for one reason or another (e.g., expiration during COVID-19) and can no longer perform work in the U.S.?*

NOTIFY AND CONSIDER

We would like to understand if your company has implemented a notify-and-consider process for your PERM applications? (Note: This process is required to avoid the six-month freeze if a U.S. worker has been laid off in the same role.) We understand that this is a common practice and are interested in learning more as we consider implementing.

DOMESTIC RELOCATION

How many of you incorporate a repayment agreement with your domestic relocation policies/packages?

Read the answers or add your own comments to these questions, or post a new one of your own in the Worldwide ERC® Community's Corporate Benchmarking Forum.

Corporate and government agency members can log in at worldwideerc.org/community.

WORLDWIDE ERC® Research



When business, HR and talent mobility resume their rapid transformation, will you be ready?

DATA DRIVEN INSIGHTS

Answer that question with confidence and clarity with Worldwide ERC®'s NEW Benchmarking Platform

The results of our first-of-its kind Global Movement Study are in, providing a robust database of information on every type of global mobility assignment, policy and practice.

Right now, we're in a collective global pause in our efforts to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. But we will recover, business travel and assignments will resume, and talent mobility will continue on a transformative trajectory, quite possibly even faster than before.

Be ready. Be informed. Be equipped

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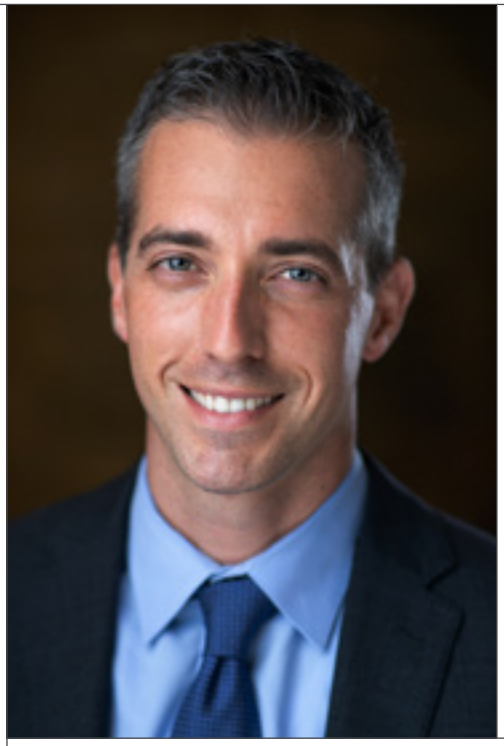
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YP40

Young Professionals



A Look Back & Moving Forward: Julius Milani

As the YP40 Committee celebrates its 10th anniversary this year, we are interviewing members who have served as chairs over that transformative decade. In this month's edition, we hear from 2016 Chair Julius Milani.

***Mobility:* As one of the leaders of the YP40 Committee, what was your most memorable moment in your time as chair?**

Julius Milani: When I became chair of the YP40 Committee in 2016, I initially felt unqualified to take the role—although I was incredibly honored to be asked. I was just a few years into being a Worldwide ERC® member and was hesitant to take on the responsibility. What I found is that my peers in the group were also very new to mobility, and we created a bond around that—which I think we will keep forever. We brainstormed new ideas and were unhindered by legacy thinking. When I look back at everyone in that group, most of them are still working in mobility, and they have all advanced greatly in their careers and are on track to do amazing things.

The most memorable moment—and something I'm very proud of—was launching the YP40 Boot Camp. It started with just a few people and eventually became a group of more than 30 people who met to work out early in the morning before the daily meetings. "Sweat Networking" was born, and I've made so many new connections through this event. One potential customer who was reluctant to answer my emails came up to me after the workout, introduced himself, and said, "Hey,

aren't you the guy who's been emailing me?" It's truly a great way to build relationships, without having to take a shower.

***Mobility:* What do you think the Young Professionals group of 2030 will look like, and what aspirations do you have for inspiring the next generation?**
JM: My hope for the Young Professionals group in 2030 is that we will be able to integrate with them successfully and quickly. I hope that we are open to their ideas and can acquire their new way of thinking, which they will inevitably bring to our industry. The faster we can adapt to their lifestyle, the better, because this will be the future of mobility. With working from home becoming the norm across our country, I believe this group will be more casual in everything they do. Pamphlets and brochures will not be in their vocabulary, and we'll need to be willing to communicate with them in different ways and be open to leaving our old ways behind.

***Mobility:* Is there something you know now that you wish you had known 10 years ago?**
JM: Be yourself at all times, and take necessary risks, because you have plenty of time to make up for them. If you don't risk anything, you risk even more.

***Mobility:* What's your best piece of advice for new young professionals entering the field now?**
JM: First of all, care for and connect with everyone you possibly can within the industry. People move around, gain promotions, and change roles all the time. You never know where they may end up. I've been friendly with competitors who have ended up being great customers years later. Treat everyone as if they were your customer, no matter what their position within their company. Genuine care and respect for people will drastically improve your reputation and help build your character.

"If no one is leading, then take the lead. Be respectful, but don't be afraid to step forward into a role you may not feel ready for."

Second, and perhaps even more important, if no one is leading, then take the lead. Be respectful, but don't be afraid to step forward into a role you may not feel ready for. *M*

Julius Milani is vice president of national accounts at Brook Furniture Rental.

Employers Can Make Tax-Free Disaster Relief Payments to Employees

By Peter K. Scott

During the ongoing pandemic, attracting and keeping top talent is an even bigger priority. COVID-19 relief measures can help. But while attention in the U.S. has been focused on broad relief measures enacted by Congress, the existing tax code already can be used to assist employees on a tax-free basis.

When the president declared a national emergency on 13 March, it triggered the provisions of Section 139 of the Internal Revenue Code, Disaster Relief Payments, which provides for a broad range of non-taxable relief benefits for employees.

Section 139, which was enacted after the 9/11 disaster, overrides the ordinary tax rule that benefits provided to employees by employers are taxable. The section says that "qualified disaster relief payments" are not taxable income but may still be deducted by employers.

A qualified disaster relief payment is any amount paid to or for the benefit of an individual to reimburse or pay reasonable and necessary personal, family, living, or funeral expenses—or reasonable and necessary expenses to repair or rehabilitate a personal residence, or repair or replace contents—paid as a result of a "qualified disaster." Under this language, both reimbursements to employees and payments to third parties on behalf of employees are covered.

A qualified disaster is defined as, among other things, "a federally declared disaster." That term is defined elsewhere in the code as "any disaster subsequently determined by the president … to warrant assistance by the federal government under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act." The president invoked those provisions when he declared a national emergency on 13 March, thus triggering Section 139.

Payments as a result of disasters are not income to the recipient unless they are compensated by insurance or are replacements for regular wages. They are not wages for purposes of employment tax reporting, employment taxes, and the W-2. Although some assistance such as paid sick leave that represents regular wage replacement would not be covered, a very broad range of assistance would be covered. Consequently, employers who provide such assistance can do so without incurring gross-up costs.

Many planned or ongoing relocations have been affected by the COVID-19 emergency, and payment or reimbursement of those resulting costs should be covered by Section 139.

Examples of payments that might be considered excludable include:

- Items such as hand sanitizer and home disinfectant supplies.
- Child care or tutoring due to school closings.
- Work-from-home expenses, such as setting up a home office, increased utility expenses, higher internet costs, or equipment such as printers and office supplies.
- Higher commuting costs, such as taxis or Uber instead of using mass transit.
- Unreimbursed health-related expenses, such as copays and deductibles.
- Housing and transportation for additional family members, such as college students returning home.
- Purchase of nonperishable food reserves.
- Temporary lodging, for example, for employees brought back to the U.S. from foreign assignments who cannot occupy their regular home, or employees who are stranded overseas.



- Help for employees facing difficulty paying rents or mortgages as a result of decreased hours or furloughs.
- Temporary food and lodging expenses for employees whose relocation is suspended during the emergency but who have already vacated their previous home.
- Extra home purchase settlement costs resulting from difficulties in executing or filing documents.
- Extra household goods expenses, such as additional in-transit storage or surcharges resulting from the emergency.
- Any extra loss on sale, provided it can be solidly established and documented in terms of amount and the effect of COVID-19.

The provision does not have any requirements for substantiation or any limits on the amount or frequency of payments, nor is there any requirement for a written plan. However, since payments must be for reasonable and necessary expenses, companies should establish some form of substantiation and some companywide rules for the operation of such a program. It would be wise for companies to establish a written policy covering who is eligible for benefits, the types of expenses that will be considered for payment or reimbursement, and the extent of substantiation necessary. For example, items considered nonessential, luxury, or decorative should be excluded. It would also be useful to require written applications for relief with specific descriptions of the expenses incurred or to be incurred. And employers should consider establishing some form of written employer plan that is communicated to employees.

Although research has not identified any state with specific guidance on Section 139, payments excluded from federal gross income under that section will not be taxed for state purposes for two reasons. First, most of the states with an income tax conform in some way with the federal tax code, and none have explicitly decoupled from Section 139, which has been in the code for many years. Second, nearly all begin their tax computations with either federal adjusted gross income or federal taxable income, neither of which will include any payments that were excluded under Section 139. Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that these payments will escape both federal and state withholding and taxation, with one caveat: It is possible such payments could be considered wages for unemployment insurance taxes in some states.

Given the significant economic difficulties faced by many employees, employers may wish to take advantage of the ability to financially support them on a tax-free basis. In this time of unprecedented need, employers can use the existing tax code to provide nontaxable relief for employees who face COVID-19-related expenses, including those stemming from relocations that are interrupted or canceled, or in which extra costs are incurred. In such cases, employers will also avoid extra gross-up costs. *M*

Peter K. Scott is Worldwide ERC® tax counsel and principal of Peter K. Scott Associates. He can be reached at +1 910 579 5332 or pscott@worldwideerc.org.



San Diego

By Dee Emerson, CRP, GMS

Located on the coast of the Pacific Ocean in Southern California, San Diego is widely known as "America's Finest City" and is renowned for its idyllic climate and 70 miles of pristine white sand beaches. Representing some of the best of California's natural beauty, coastal scenery is visible from much of the city, while vast deserts and rolling mountain landscapes provide visual variety.

With a citywide population of more than 1.4 million and more than 3 million residents countywide, San Diego is California's second-largest city and the U.S.' eighth largest. San Diego County is made up of 18 incorporated cities and towns along with other neighborhoods and communities, such as Carlsbad, Coronado, Del Mar, downtown San Diego's Gaslamp Quarter, Point Loma, Chula Vista, Old Town, La Jolla, and North Park.

The economy of San Diego is influenced by its deep-water port, which includes the only major submarine and shipbuilding yards on the West Coast. Several national defense contractors were started and are headquartered in San Diego, including General Atomics, Cubic, and NASSCO. San Diego hosts the largest naval fleet in the world. According to the Naval Base San Diego website, it is home to 54 ships and more than 150 tenant commands, and roughly 48,000 sailors, soldiers, U.S. Department of Defense civilian employees, and contractors. About 5% of all civilian jobs in the county are military-related, and 15,000 businesses in San Diego County rely on Department of Defense contracts.

Tourism is a major industry owing to the city's climate, beaches, and tourist attractions, including the immense Balboa Park, world-famous San Diego Zoo and San Diego Zoo Safari Park, SeaWorld, and Legoland California, as well as numerous art galleries, artist studios, museums, and gardens. San Diego's Spanish and Mexican heritage is reflected in historical sites across the city, such as Mission San Diego de Alcalá and Old

MARKET AT A GLANCE	
ECONOMIC CLIMATE	GOOD
NEW CONSTRUCTION	COMING BACK
SUPPLY	LOW
DEMAND	HIGH
MARKET DIRECTION	UP
MARKET MOOD	POSITIVE

STATISTICAL SNAPSHOT			
	TODAY	1 YEAR AGO	CHANGE
UNEMPLOYMENT	2.7%	3%	–10%*
MONTHS OF SUPPLY	1.4	2.4	–41.7%
MEDIAN SALES PRICE	$585K	$570K	+2.6%
AVERAGE DOM	32	29	+10.3%

*Unemployment change expressed in terms of overall percentage (not points).
Source: Greater San Diego Association of REALTORS®

Town San Diego State Historic Park. Also, the local craft brewing industry attracts an increasing number of visitors for beer tours and the annual San Diego Beer Week in November. In fact, San Diego is called "the craft beer capital of America" by the San Diego Tourism Authority.

San Diego's commercial port and its location on the U.S.–Mexico border make international trade an important factor in the city's economy. Historically, tuna fishing and canning was one of San Diego's major industries. Although the American tuna fishing fleet is no longer based in San Diego, seafood companies Bumble Bee Foods and Chicken of the Sea are still headquartered there.

The San Diego Unified School District is one of the top large urban school districts in the U.S. Key measures include its top scores on state and national tests and its leadership in areas such as technology, curriculum, neighborhood and specialty schools, career-technical education, and food services. Its graduates include Hall of Fame sports stars, along with some of the nation's top scientists, writers, and leaders.

LOOKING BACK

Around two decades ago, San Diego began experiencing dramatic growth in real estate prices, to the extent that the growth was sometimes described as a "housing affordability crisis." Median single-family home prices more than tripled between 1998 and 2007. For example, in May 2007, the median price for a house in San Diego cost $612,370. Growth in real estate prices was not accompanied by comparable growth of household incomes: The housing affordability index fell below 20% in the early 2000s. The median home price then declined by more than $200,000 between 2005 and 2010, and sales dropped by 50%.

LOOKING AHEAD

Extreme volatility in the U.S. financial markets is likely to remain as coronavirus headlines continue to impact investor sentiment. In this climate of uncertainty surrounding the spread of the coronavirus, mortgage rates are at historical lows and will likely remain low throughout 2020.

Local population growth is slowing; however, San Diego County's 3.3 million residents are expected to reach 3.5 million by 2025 and 4 million by 2050. This addition of 700,000 new San Diego County residents over the next 30 years will also come with 400,000 new housing units and 360,000 new jobs.

San Diego County employment is up 0.7% from last year, totaling more than 1.5 million jobs. San Diego's unemployment rate is 29% lower than the California average and 22% below the national average.

Most homesale experts are predicting a slump in San Diego homesales in 2020. However, with a growing economy and an increasing number of homes for sale, it could be a great window of opportunity for homebuyers ready to purchase a property.

The good news is that the continued strength of the labor market, along with historically low mortgage rates, should keep positive housing momentum alive in 2020.

The bottom line is that jobs, not low rates, buy houses. But with a robust labor market combined with historically low rates, both of these should fuel housing. *M*

Dee Emerson, CRP, GMS, is relocation director at Influence Relocation Services and a member of the Relocation Directors Council (RDC). She can be reached at +1 858 882 7345, dee@influencerelocation.com, *or* influencerelocation.com.

The Numbers

The Conference Board's *From Immediate Responses to Planning for the Reimagined Workplace*

The Conference Board conducted an online survey in April to gauge how organizations are reacting to the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents included more than 150 human capital executives in mostly large companies. These executives span a range of industries, with more than 60% representing business and professional services, manufacturing, and health care sectors. The survey findings shed light into the future of remote work, practices that HR is prioritizing for a safe return to work, and expectations around revenue and cost-reduction measures. See the full report at *conference-board.org/topics/natural-disasters-pandemics.*

Excerpted from The Conference Board's From Immediate Responses to Planning for the Reimagined Workplace: Human Capital Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic, *April 2020. Reprinted with permission.*

When does your organization expect your U.S.-based revenue level to return to pre-COVID-19 levels?

In the next 3 months (May to July 2020)	4%
In 4 to 6 months (August to October 2020)	19%
In 7 to 12 months (November 2020 to April 2021)	33%
After 12 months (after April 2021)	39%
We do not anticipate that revenue levels will return to pre-COVID-19 levels	4%

What do you expect will be the five most significant changes at your organization when you are in the recovery phase? (Select your top five.)

Rank	
1	Our ways of working to include more remote/virtual work
2	Our disaster recovery/business continuity and scenario planning
3	Our office design (e.g., to prioritize employee health and safety)
4	Our HR policies re: flexibility, personal time off, vacation, sick leave, etc.
5	Our focus on employee engagement and experience
6	Our technology infrastructure
7	Our expectations for leaders
8	Our commitment to supporting working parents and caregivers
9	Our crisis communications processes
10	Our relationships with customers
11	Our organizational structure/operating model
12	Our employment brand
13	Our commitment to the corporate mission and values
14	Our consumer brand perception in the marketplace
15	Our internal talent mobility willingness (e.g., to move employees around within the business)
16	Our leadership style
17	Our approach to compensation
18	Our performance management processes
19	Our relationship with vendors, suppliers, and partners
20	Our approach to benefits

Organizations that employ mostly professional and office workers are experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic very differently than those with a higher percentage of industry and manual service workers.

	Remote Work	Workforce Cost Reductions
Professional and office workers	More likely to predict an increase in full-time employees working primarily from home More likely to self-report no change in productivity	More likely to restrict hiring to critical roles in the next three months Less likely to take all other workforce cost reductions
Industry and manual services workers	Less likely to predict an increase in full-time employees working primarily from home 12 months after COVID-19 Experiencing larger declines in self-reported productivity	More likely to have reduced workforce or worker hours More likely to plan to take harsher workforce cost reductions in the next three months

Percentage of respondents that expect an increase in full-time employees working primarily from home (at least three days a week) 12 months after COVID-19

All organizations	77%
Mostly industry and manual services	67%
Mostly professional and office	83%

Percentage of U.S. full-time employees working primarily from home (at least three days a week)

	Before COVID-19	Expectation 1 Year After COVID-19
Less than 10%	76%	31%
10% to less than 20%	15%	23%
20% to less than 40%	6%	28%
40% or more	3%	19%

As part of your transition plan, which of these issues will you focus on?

Ensuring office preparation for return to work (e.g., sanitation and safety)	89%
Creating the sequence and timing by which business units/workers reenter the workplace	86%
Addressing health and safety concerns for those returning to the office	86%
Determining organizational risk and response if a worker contracts COVID-19 in the workplace	80%
Reviewing/revising business travel policies	75%
Offering mental health/well-being support for all workers	75%
Determining worker sentiment to return to work (e.g., temperature checks before entering the workplace)	75%
Reviewing/revising work-from-home policies	71%
Setting global decisions about returning to work (e.g., sorting response to national restrictions and targets)	44%
Offering financial well-being support for all employees	38%
Acquiring "critical" or "essential" talent	34%
Upskilling/reskilling workers for new roles, lines of business, equipment, software, or product specifications	24%
Adjusting compensation (e.g., restoration of salary cuts, hazard pay for those on the front lines, or reinstatement of merit pay)	22%
Acquiring new hires for all open roles	19%
Adjusting benefits (e.g., restoration of 401(k) or 403(b) match, adjusting sick leave or vacation time)	13%
Redeploying talent for impacted employees to partner organizations with expedited hiring process	11%
Securing vendors to outsource critical employee functions (e.g., payroll)	4%

Excerpted from The Conference Board's From Immediate Responses to Planning for the Reimagined Workplace: Human Capital Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic, *April 2020. Reprinted with permission.*


UP
TO THE
CHALLENGE



POST-PANDEMIC, BUSINESSES CAN LOOK TO MOBILITY TO SUPPORT RECOVERY, BOOST RESILIENCE, AND SUCCESSFULLY MANAGE GLOBAL TALENT

BY M. DIANE McCORMICK

As businesses look forward to the era after COVID-19, mobility is an essential element of recovery, resilience, and managing global talent.

"Talent mobility has evolved to a place where companies want people to have a positive experience, they want to keep moving people, and they want that global perspective among employees," says Jennifer Connell, SCRP, SGMS-T, vice president, advisory services, at Weichert Workforce Mobility. "In the post-pandemic situation, mobility will be more important."

The crisis revealed that mobility's expertise in compliance and people support is needed for all mobile employees—not just long-term expatriates, but also remote workers, locally hired foreigners, commuters, and frequent travelers.

"This is an opportunity for mobility professionals to step up to the challenge," says Mercer Principal Olivier Meier.

NOW IS NOT THE TIME TO EASE UP

When the pandemic hit, mobility teams everywhere joined colleagues in discussing retrenchment essentials, such as planning, risk, duty of care, and compliance. Now is not the time to ease up.

The crisis has highlighted mobility's strengths in driving employee experience, supporting compliance, managing risk, and working with stakeholders to add value, says Thalia O'Toole, head of global mobility services, KPMG Ireland. "With strong project management skills, most mobility team members could support other areas of the business, if needed," she says.

The pandemic has also proven that mobility leaders must be the conveners of knowledge within their organizations, says Katrin Razzano, vice president, mobility strategy consulting services, at Graebel Companies.

"Become the center of expertise and information that enables the business to move forward and make decisions," she says, adding that partnering with corporate tax and immigration departments can help a company circumvent potential—and costly—problems. "Become that center of expertise and information that enables the business to move forward and make decisions."

Mobility teams can mine their databases and ask the questions that gather information on costs, people tracking, or compliance, says Meier. "[Then] volunteer this information before it's asked."

Winning a seat at the strategy table requires building and strengthening relationships, cultivating champions for mobility, and developing data and compiling information to drive strategic decisions. Relationships don't just "switch on overnight," says Sean Collins, managing partner at Talent Mobility Search. Mobility can build those relationships by becoming a trusted partner to other divisions, getting ahead of the conversations, and helping them achieve their goals.

"You really need to understand the business to be able to identify how you can add value to it," he says.

HOW MOBILITY PUTS THE PIECES TOGETHER

Even before the pandemic, many companies were increasing their reliance on extended business travel, but were they watching those assignments for their taxation and immigration implications?

The extended-travel trend is likely to continue, and mobility can leverage its proven ability in understanding the strategic importance of supporting talent to "coordinate the pieces," says Connell. "Mobility providers have always been the brokers of all the activities within relocation or assignment. Being able to get in there and help companies develop a plan around extended business travel that ensures compliance and achievement of goals will be paramount."

Supporting shortened assignments or virtual placements could give mobility another seat at the strategy table, says Meier. Meanwhile, eliminating barriers to mobility through such policies as supporting single parents, cultivating role models, and broadening recruitment efforts can diversify the talent pool to include more women, minorities, returnees, and locals.

Weathering upheaval also demands flexible policies, such as supports for remote working, that prioritize the needs of talent, Meier adds—which could keep that talent from being open to hearing offers from competitors.

These policies should realign with the expectations of key talent demographics, such as early career hires. In a five-generation workplace, the two younger generations want to see

the world—and are saying so, says Razzano. Increasingly, young workers are raising their hands for global assignments, and COVID-19 won't stop that long-term trend. "They are mobile, and they have a mobile mind," she says.

Duty of care is another companywide responsibility that extends into mobility, says Collins. As mobility professionals and their vendors manage the pandemic, they should upskill in the areas where expatriates and families require heightened levels of empathy and support. Assignees want assurance that health care needs will be addressed and crisis plans are well thought-out. "Mobility is going to have to be prepared for all these types of questions," says Collins. "That means dealing with ambiguity and complexity."

Physical distancing means that mobility teams should consider "whether and how an assignee should be repatriated, whether home or elsewhere, or if the assignee should remain in the host location," says O'Toole. "The health and safety of an employee is paramount, and employers have a duty of care to ensure that an employee's physical and mental well-being is protected as much as possible."

Whether or not companies will continue to put global assignments on hold, Connell recommends that mobility teams capitalize on opportunities to engage grounded employees in virtual services, such as cultural and language training. The strategy prepares companies to mobilize rapidly when the world is greenlighted, while also providing employees a positive experience—and ensuring greater productivity—when they settle into new assignments.

The pandemic-related crisis revealed the important need to view the mobile workforce "as a pool of flexible resources that increases business resilience," says Meier. Traditional company objectives attached to assignment goals—such as "increase business by 3% a year"—don't address long-term impact. For example, did the host location benefit from the expat's presence, or is the replacement assignee starting from scratch in building contacts and know-how?

"There's no perfect way to do it, but you have to go in the direction of finding the long-term benefits of mobility," he says.



"THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MOBILITY PROFESSIONALS TO STEP UP TO THE CHALLENGE."

— OLIVIER MEIER, MERCER



> "IT'S ABOUT MAKING SURE THAT THE BRAND IS THERE AND THE CONNECTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS ARE IN PLACE, SO THAT MOBILITY REMAINS A STRATEGIC PARTNER AND DOESN'T MOVE DOWNSTREAM AS AN OPERATIONAL FUNCTION."
>
> — SEAN COLLINS, TALENT MOBILITY SEARCH

TAKE THE STRATEGIC APPROACH

Cost cutting is a hallmark of the COVID-19 era. The question for mobility professionals is whether they wait for word from the CFO or take the reins.

"We are in a war for talent and therefore have to be smart about cost savings," says Razzano. "You can get ahead of it and not be a victim." Even if the CFO orders elimination of a certain number of positions, "you need to be very clear with yourself before the call arrives about how you are going to deliver on savings requests, by data-based savings ideas or by having to let team members go."

Razzano advises reviewing cost savings from an enterprisewide perspective, asking other stakeholders about their untouchable areas, and becoming their ally. Data analytics of benefits utilization can reveal those areas that aren't delivering returns and those that drive satisfaction.

Mobility teams of the present and future should review their skill sets, work with stakeholders, think creatively, and make decisions—even the difficult ones—that offer solutions, says Collins. A strategic approach could consider upskilling in-house and outsourcing other needs to innovative vendors for more efficient operations. "Do we have the right resources on the team?" Collins says. "Can we change that mix-up a little bit? There could be quite a bit of reorganization going on."

The post-COVID era could also accelerate a trend toward building mobility teams into centers of excellence, concentrating expertise and data to eliminate fragmentation and promote consistency across company functions. "It's about making sure that the brand is there and the connections and relationships are in place, so that mobility remains a strategic partner and doesn't move downstream as an operational function," Collins says.

In an age when mergers and acquisitions could accelerate, mobility teams can drive efficiencies by helping the merging companies leverage supply chains and review the mission-critical aspects of talent management and mobility, says Connell.

As mobility teams keep pace with their adapting companies, vendor relations play an increasingly important role. "Feedback from our clients is that vendors who can provide integrated technology tools and support integration with third-party providers in a sound, cost-efficient manner will not only support the employee experience but earmark mobility teams as leaders within the business," says O'Toole.

Mobility has "long been at the forefront of technology solutions to track services needed for an employee, collect compensation data, estimate assignment tax/social security costs, and flag business traveler risks," O'Toole adds. The pandemic accelerated reliance on technology for communications and service delivery, so vendors are likely to adapt existing technology solutions or invest in new solutions "to support changing client needs. Consider current technology supports

in use and ask your vendor what more is available or in development."

ARE VIRTUAL WORKERS HERE TO STAY?

In the post-pandemic world, remote working is increasingly feasible but still fraught with challenges. Some complexities are common to companies across the globe, such as monitoring productivity and promoting collaboration.

Other complications, however, are unique to mobility. Even the concept of "virtual assignments"—designating an employee to work remotely from one location for a job based in another—can risk triggering a permanent establishment. While mobility teams can be supportive of assignees' wishes to work from home, they should also engage stakeholders in such questions as "whether the work can be done by that employee from a new location or would need to be managed from the existing location; the impact the location may have on immigration, social security, and personal tax compliance; and the degree to which estimated assignment packages and costs will now be impacted," says O'Toole.

In addition to individual compliance, she notes, global mobility teams are "already mindful of corporate compliance issues that may arise, such as permanent establishment concerns, transfer pricing considerations, payroll withholding, and data protection laws."

Mobility professionals should play a lead role in asking and answering the key questions as companies accelerate their remote-work policies, Collins notes. For example, must an employee move in order to perform a role? And as notions of physical distancing change, could an employee work from home, at least part of the time, after being moved to a location where the company does business?

"A big part of the success of assignments is typically around the ability to network and build relationships," says Collins. "If you're not in the office, that's going to be very difficult. How does that impact the success of an assignment?"

Meier agrees that mobility professionals should step up to assess their companies' remote working practices and share their expertise on compliance and cultural issues. Factors include avoiding cross-cultural misunderstandings; overseeing productivity of remote workers; assuring remote workers that they are valued and integrated into company operations; training managers and employees; and reviewing the impact of remote work on day-to-day activities, reporting, and performance reviews.

"If not leaders, mobility professionals need to be at least stakeholders in the decisions about remote working," says Meier. "They need to integrate the remote working option in the decision tree about mobility and types of assignments that are possible. They need to have a structured process or checklist to determine when a virtual assignment is a valid alternative, because it's not going to be the case for all types of assignments and jobs."

DEMONSTRATE THE VALUE

As painful as 2020 has been, it does offer the opportunity to think strategically, leverage mobility's traditional strengths, and create new levels of impact.

"We're there as the subject-matter expert on so many aspects of business," says Razzano. "That goes for working from home. It goes for moving people around. But most importantly, it goes for working from a precarious place where people are not supposed to be. Most certainly, I think mobility has a huge role to play going forward."

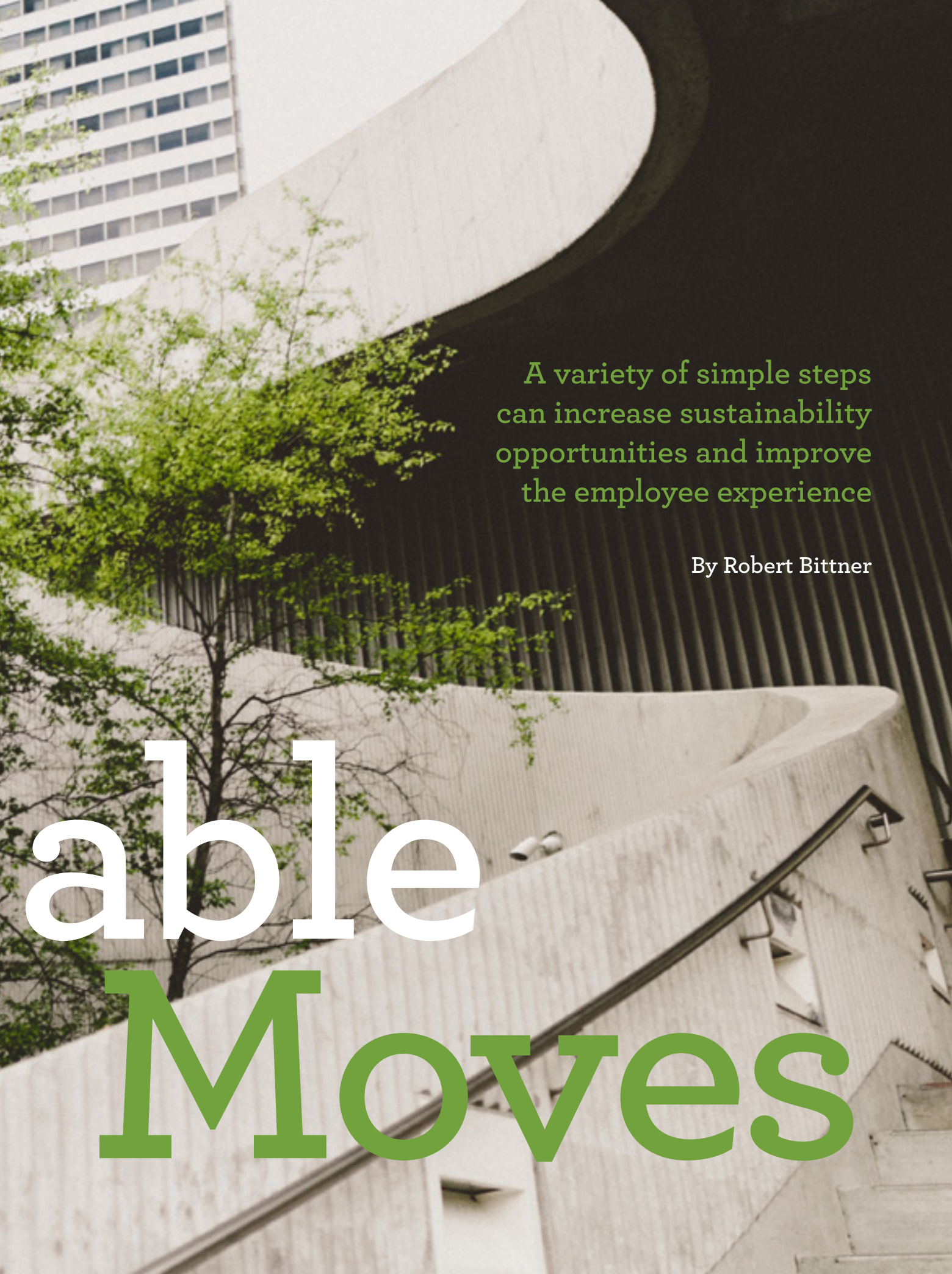
Collins sees "an opportune time for mobility to demonstrate the value they can bring to the organization," especially because the pandemic crisis has revealed the critical nature of mobile talent.

"This is a time for mobility professionals to grasp that and leverage the spotlight currently shining on function, to build that brand and demonstrate how strategically important they are to the business and how they can help their stakeholders achieve their talent and business goals." *M*

M. Diane McCormick is a freelance writer in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and a frequent contributor to Mobility.

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Sustain



A variety of simple steps can increase sustainability opportunities and improve the employee experience

By Robert Bittner

able Moves

During a typical move, the average family in a three-bedroom home in the U.S. will cart away about 8,000 pounds (3,600 kg) of belongings. Often, it happens without a second thought. As a result, some of those belongings are clothes and furniture the family no longer wants but didn't have the time or inclination to weed out prior to moving day. And some of those items are still sealed in boxes from a previous move.

"I have been in the relocation industry for over 25 years, and many times employees move items that they would otherwise get rid of," says Julie Coleman, global mobility manager, Americas region, Shell Oil Company.

Spurred on by conversations with supplier oleRRelo Group, Coleman began exploring the potential benefits of reducing the number of extraneous items employees were moving.

"I support Shell as a household goods supplier, doing their relocations within North America," says Bryan Oler, senior vice president, oleRRelo Group. "Every year we have a goal of adding value to the program. Our goal here was to give back to the environment by reducing the carbon footprint, which we would achieve by reducing shipment sizes—which also leads to cost savings. Rather than shipping unwanted goods, let's give people an opportunity to donate before we move them. That way, we don't waste money shipping this stuff that they're just going to get rid of later—or just store in their garage till the next move."

"If we are not moving items that people no longer want, and we have a process to donate those items to local charities while helping the environment, then we all win," Coleman says. "This was a creative way of looking at cost savings, but it also touched on corporate responsibility and sustainability."

The model Coleman and Oler implemented has inspired other mobility departments to improve efficiency, save on unnecessary expenses, and improve the employee moving experience while benefiting local communities.

Strengthening the Core

Approaching each move from the perspective of sustainability opportunities is one more way to ensure a company's core values are highlighted and enhanced.

"When it comes to mobility, my focus is to ensure that the experience the employee has—whether as a new hire, assignee, or transferee—really reflects their employer's values," says Tanya Mariottini, GMS-T, director, global mobility, Expedia Group. "If, as an employer, you have a strong sustainability program or a reputation for corporate social responsibility, then those things should be reinforced by your mobility program. This is a great opportunity to build a positive perspective of employees toward your company as their employer."

Mariottini believes it is relatively easy to begin putting these ideas to work. If you already have a sustainability or corporate social responsibility program in place, you have an important team in your company with whom to discuss ideas and champion solutions. "They could be a great resource to reach out to, to learn more about what they're doing and what partners they may already be working with," she suggests. "Then I'd encourage you to connect with the broader mobility community through Worldwide ERC®. In my experience, most people are more than happy to share what's worked for them, what hasn't, and help make other connections."

If you're encouraging employees to donate items prior to moving—and, perhaps, even assisting with those transactions—it is worth taking the time to be as informed as possible about those charity partners. Not every charity will be aligned with your core values. Not every charity processes donations in the same way. Vet potential partners to ensure the best fit.

"At the start, we looked at a couple of charities that really didn't give the donated goods back to the community," Oler points out, something that was important to Shell. "They would just take the donations to a recycling operation, which meant they'd often end up being disposed of overseas."

"We want people in the community to be able to use the items donated," Coleman explains. That applies to donated canned goods as well: Shell has aligned with Feeding America, which supports local food banks.

While cost savings and charitable donations are important parts of Shell's approach, Coleman was even more excited by the prospect of helping the planet by reducing carbon dioxide emissions as a result of shipping less weight, which further supports the company's commitment to sustainability. "That's what got me started on the program," she says. "We are now working to quantify the CO_2 savings with



Sustainable Suppliers

Many suppliers are well positioned to take a proactive approach to sustainability with their clients, notes Bryan Oler, senior vice president, oleRRelo Group.

"The first step is to have a conversation about adding value to your individual clients on the service side of things," he says. "Create a discussion—within the Worldwide ERC® global community, with your local Worldwide ERC®-recognized regional relocation groups, or in the informal peer groups that naturally take hold—just to ask what it might look like to eliminate 50 pounds per move, for instance. What would it look like to educate our customers on the service side, and what might the potential cost savings be? That's the starting point.

"Then, on the individual level, talk with each employee who is getting relocated about what help they might need when it comes to donating. Be a resource for them."

having fewer moving boxes and less packing paper—and, overall, less weight—transported."

Savings can occur elsewhere as well. For example, she learned that eliminating 2,000 pounds (900 kg) of recycled packing paper potentially saves 17 trees, 80 gallons (300 L) of oil, and 7,000 gallons (26,500 L) of water.

Starting the Conversation

While sustainability is a natural fit within the mobility community, Mariottini believes it is still largely in the background. "I've personally been interested in sustainability for a long time," she says, "but you don't hear people in mobility really talking about how they're incorporating sustainability into their programs."

To help change that, Mariottini—then in a previous position with Nike—moderated a panel on sustainability with Coleman and Oler at Worldwide ERC®'s 2019 Global Workforce Symposium in Boston.

"A few things seemed to really resonate with attendees," Mariottini says. "One was food waste and fighting hunger in your local communities. Others were CO_2 and packing-material reduction related to household goods shipments. By not moving all of those household goods, there is a cost savings in addition to the reduced environmental impact. You also aren't using all of those packing materials. The employee has a better experience because they don't have all these extra boxes of stuff to deal with later. It's a great service to the employee, and people feel good about it. You know you've donated food to a local food bank or household items to a reseller as opposed to throwing them out.

"The information shared really connected with people and encouraged them to think about how even little, easy things can be incorporated into their mobility programs. We have multiple opportunities to bring visibility to sustainability and social responsibility within mobility programs."



> "If you have a strong sustainability program or a reputation for corporate social responsibility, then those things should be reinforced by your mobility program. This is a great opportunity to build a positive perspective of employees toward their employer."
>
> — Tanya Mariottini, Expedia Group

Oler agrees, noting that it was important to make this a focal point at the conference. "It prompted a lot of discussion around the ideas about how to get employees to move only what they need and, then, how to make sure you're actually putting goods into use instead of using a recycling operation," he says.

The session allowed time for discussions among the attendees, which proved to be both informative and inspiring. "The response was great," Mariottini says. "We handed out what we called commitment cards, printed on recycled paper, and asked attendees to write down something meaningful they learned from the session and what commitment they were going to make to introduce new ideas into their own programs. Approximately 45 people filled out the cards.

"I wanted to do this session to encourage people to start thinking more about this topic," she says, "bringing more visibility and more dialogue around it so people can come up with their own approaches and make the world a better place. There are lots of different ways to incorporate sustainability into your mobility program. Finding a way that aligns with your business strategy allows you also to demonstrate the strategic value of your program."

Not surprisingly, a mobility-focused sustainability program also resonates with employees themselves.

Easing Anxiety, Boosting Pride

"The employee response has been phenomenal," says Coleman. "We have heard from employees that this program lifted a burden off of them," with the company making it easy for employees to set aside items for donation and arranging for the Salvation Army—Shell's charity of choice for household goods—to pick up those items prior to the pack and load.

"Of course, these are things they could do on their own," she says. "But often people don't think about it or have time to handle the gathering

of items and then physically taking the items to the charity. Most relocating employees are authorized for their relocations six weeks or less before they start their new role. Employees have a million other things on their minds. This program makes it really easy."

Notably, donations are collected at a specific, predetermined time, which helps employees avoid a time-wasting collection "window" that might otherwise stretch to half a day or more. "That took a big burden off of the employees," Coleman says.

Oler found that, as a supplier, there also were benefits for some of his own people. "This kind of program is meaningful for a percentage of our employees," he says. "Being in the trucking industry, we still have a long way to go in terms of sustainability and environmental impact. But programs like this are meaningful—especially for new hires that we bring into the organization from outside the industry.

"People are looking for a reason to choose one employer over another," he adds. "Being seen as socially responsible is definitely a positive." *M*

Robert Bittner is a Michigan-based freelance journalist.

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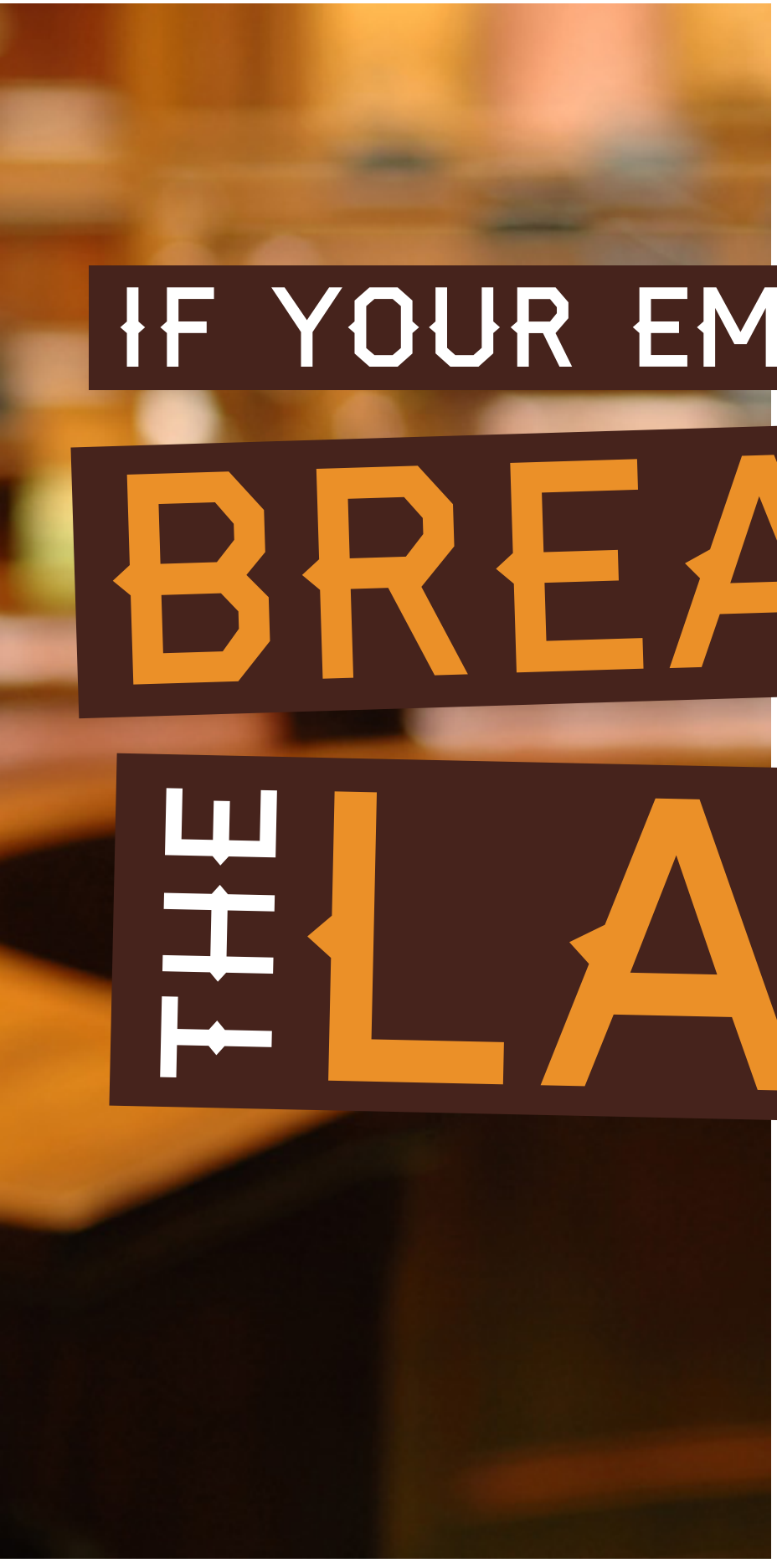
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IF YOUR EMPLOYEE BREAKS THE LAW

THIS IS THE EXTENT OF YOUR CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY IF ONE OF YOUR EXPATS GETS INTO TROUBLE

BY HEATHER LARSON

A simple Google search yields many global rules or regulations that seem perfectly reasonable in one culture but are perceived by others as odd, outdated, or just plain crazy. If those search results are to be believed, in Denmark, you must name your newborn one of the 41,000 country-approved names; in Greece, wearing high heels at archaeological sites is banned; in Germany, you can be fined if your vehicle runs out of fuel on the Autobahn; and in Japan, some cold medicines are illegal.

"It is tempting to find practices and laws in other countries 'weird,'" says Lisbeth Claus, professor of management and global HR at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon. "I caution people to distinguish between a cultural practice and a law, as employers must ensure that their policies and practices are not only legal, but also culturally appropriate."

"Culture deals with values, beliefs, needs, and attitudes that are socially preferable and expected in communities of people—whether they are nations, communities, organizations, industries, or professions," says an excerpt from Claus' new book, *Be (Come) an AWESOME Manager*.

Employees and employers must remember, cautions Claus, that while travelers and expats can potentially be forgiven for a minor cultural faux pas, ignorance of the law is not an excuse for breaking it, and organizations and individuals must comply with the laws in the countries where they operate.

Whose responsibility is it, then, to educate new expat employees about laws and cultural mores in their host location?

WHO BEARS THE BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY?

There's no easy answer to this question.

"A lot depends on the circumstances—what law we're talking about; how different it is from home-country norms; whether the violation is likely to arise in the course of the job versus off-hours; and whether the employee is a business traveler, expatriate, or foreign-local," notes Donald Dowling, shareholder with Littler, an employment and labor law practice.

Dowling says there's almost never a hard-and-fast rule forcing an employer to give an internationally mobile employee training on host-country criminal law.

Bruce McIndoe, president of WorldAware, a firm offering risk management solutions, agrees. He also wants to go on record saying he's not a lawyer but is drawing his conclusions from his work background over the past 20 years.

"While I'm not aware of any legal requirement to inform foreign nationals of the local laws, it would make good business sense to do so," says McIndoe. "Organizations spend significant time and money finding, recruiting, and placing talent in foreign assignments. Why would they want them to accidentally fall afoul of some local law and get tied up in the legal system, possibly expelled from the country, or worse, end up in a local jail?"

For example, companies should warn employees not to accept anything like a package or papers from someone, because it might be drugs or secret information. You don't want them entrapped and then accused of being a spy, cautions John Rendeiro, vice president, global security and intelligence, at International SOS.

Some countries partially or fully ban alcohol, some have different rules regarding the blades on pocket knives, and satellite phones are illegal in certain countries.

Assignees and extended business travelers also have an obligation to learn about laws, customs, and traditions in their host country. If that's not part of their training, they should ask their employer to fill them in before they arrive in-country. Barring that, they may have to educate themselves.

Rendeiro says the employer should anticipate anything that might happen that is out of an employee's comfort zone. He gives driving as an example. In any country where drivers are on the other side of the road from what the employee is used to, he says, the assignee or traveler should consider taking other options such as ride-share, taxi, or public transportation.

"It's too easy to revert to how you drive in [your home country] and cause an accident," Rendeiro says. "Employees should also stay away from any kind of political activity, no matter what the country. Even peaceful political rallies can change quickly, and the unpredictability of civil unrest means travelers should avoid it."

ON THE CLOCK

If the expat gets into trouble unintentionally during working hours, the employer should assist him or her.

According to Claus, employers have a greater moral than legal obligation when someone commits a crime. When an international assignee gets into



"I CAUTION PEOPLE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN A CULTURAL PRACTICE AND A LAW, AS EMPLOYERS MUST ENSURE THAT THEIR POLICIES AND PRACTICES ARE NOT ONLY LEGAL, BUT ALSO CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE."

— LISBETH CLAUS, WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY

trouble in a host country, it impacts the brand and corporate image of the employer in addition to affecting the employee.

"Being arrested for involvement in a car accident in a foreign country, whether innocent or guilty, is always riskier for the person and the company," says Claus. "Therefore, in my experience, companies assist their employee mostly through diplomatic and other channels they trust."

Using channels you trust is key. Then, when you get that call that your employee is in trouble with the law, don't automatically presume guilt, says Rendeiro.

"Your first obligation is to provide local legal assistance," Rendeiro says. "Try to help [your employee] work things out to prevent any further damage."

If this trouble lands the expat in jail, the employer should assist with communication with family and friends; engage a security provider, if available; and make sure medical help is on standby, if needed, explains Rendeiro. You should also get the local embassy or consulate involved. Hire an investigative firm, if warranted. In other words, tap all the resources you have that can help.

Should the employee need legal representation, McIndoe says that in his experience the employer covers those costs.

OFF-DUTY ISSUES

"Even if the employee encounters legal problems when he's not technically 'working' or 'on the clock,' the company is not off the hook. It's still the employer's corporate responsibility to support their staff while on business travel. Many organizations are now providing duty-of-care services to employees while on personal travel," says Rendeiro.

"We do have to face the fact that there are many things an employer can't do, but employees want to work for organizations that look after them," he adds.

McIndoe says that in the only case he's aware of in which the expat was not working when he allegedly broke the law, the employer did provide legal referrals but did not get involved in the case, nor did it pay for legal services. But, he says, he's never seen this issue specifically covered in any policy.

"I'm not aware of any legal obligation, and it comes down to the particular employer and the specific situation," explains McIndoe.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GIG, CONTRACT, AND FULL-TIME WORKERS

Any responsibility should be spelled out in the gig or contract worker's contract, McIndoe says. Full-time employees may have some additional protection.

For example, full-time employees of a U.S.-based company or a foreign company that is controlled by a U.S. employer are afforded some extended U.S. employment law rights.

"These laws include the Family and Medical Leave Act, Age Discrimination, Title VII Civil Rights, Fair Labor Standards, and others," says McIndoe. "However, in certain cases, companies can invoke the foreign laws defense. That defense argues that to

AT-RISK INDIVIDUALS

Willamette University's Lisbeth Claus notes that employers have a duty of care to inform, prepare, and train all employees about legal risks in other countries prior to their departure. And they must assess the risks of sending specific "at-risk" people to certain countries, which is especially the case for LGBTQ assignees. More than 70 countries criminalize homosexuality; those specific countries are listed on a map published by Human Dignity Trust.

For an employer to send an LGBTQ person to one of those countries, it must: 1) conduct a risk assessment; 2) make the employee aware of the risks through education and training; and 3) take measures to mitigate the risk and support the employee, says Claus.

An employer should also never assign a mobile employee to do a job task that flatly violates host-country law, says Dowling. In one famous case, a U.S. airline refused to let Christian American pilots fly routes over Mecca, because, according to the case report, Saudi law prohibits nonbelievers in Islam from entering or even flying over the holy city. Doing so is a capital offense, and the penalty is beheading.

Alcoholic beverages present another potential cultural and legal risk. Sixteen countries impose criminal laws against alcohol, and expats or business travelers who consume it in their home locations need to be made aware of what is and isn't allowed.

adhere to a U.S. law would violate a law of the host country of their workplace location."

The following is an example cited by Ruppert Manes Narahari, a Pittsburgh-based law firm, on its website:

"Ella, a U.S. citizen, works for an American contractor in Afghanistan as an assistant manager. When a supervisor position opens, she applies for it, but her employer tells her that she can't be promoted because Afghanistan has a law forbidding women from supervising men. In the United States, Ella would have a sex discrimination case, but in Afghanistan, her employer has a foreign laws defense."

Technically, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not a legal matter, says Claus, although some of the people issues under CSR may be regulated by law. Since the CSR of a company is based on principles and values regarding the relationships with its stakeholders, it should not matter whether the person is a customer, employee, or contract worker.

CAN INSURANCE HELP?

In some cases, taking care of the employee accused of breaking the law may get expensive. And whether insurance can help depends on several factors, says Dowling.

In these scenarios, the employee "in trouble" is, by definition, a criminal, Dowling says. Some insurance products, such as kidnap-and-ransom insurance, are designed only to pay crime victims. Another type, director and officer (D&O) insurance, might pay out for certain financial law violations, possibly even an FCPA (foreign bribery) claim. Some traffic laws are criminal laws, but if you're speeding—thus committing a crime—and get into a car accident, usually auto insurance pays the claim, unless the insurance company can prove you were driving recklessly.

Some employers may choose to carry these types of insurance. If you don't, then let employees know which types of insurance they might need and why. Trusted Choice suggests coverages can include international life insurance, war and terrorism insurance, political violence and kidnapping insurance, or personal liability insurance.

The obligation of the employer concerning an expat assignment should be spelled out in the policy or in the expat's contract, says McIndoe. If assignees are concerned about the host legal system or its laws, they should explore buying legal insurance to provide them with assistance and financial protection, McIndoe says.

"When you prepare your expats appropriately—inform them about crime, political unrest, medical care, and threats in their host country—it's less likely that they'll run afoul of the law," says Rendeiro.

Then, if things change in the country in question, be sure to keep your employees notified of those changes, since educating them about security doesn't end when they get to their station. It has just begun. *M*

Heather Larson is a freelance writer based in Tacoma, Washington.

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Blockchain technology, most commonly associated with cryptocurrency, such as Bitcoin, has the potential to transform the way individuals, industries, and governments do business. Numerous initiatives are being explored around the globe to test the seemingly endless possibilities offered by this technology.

For those not completely comfortable in the digital world, blockchain technology might be one of those terms that draw blank stares instead of a nod of recognition. In its simplest terms, the "blocks" are pieces of digital information that securely store details of transactions, the participants in those transactions, and a unique code distinguishing an individual block from all the other blocks. The "chain" is a public database where all the blocks are stored, hence blockchain.
Source: investopedia.com

Many believe blockchain technology can thoroughly transform the field of human resources management. One magazine writer pointed to five ways blockchain can revolutionize the industry: It can protect HR from cybercriminals; it can transform the recruiting and hiring process; it can facilitate payments to gig and contract workers through smart contracts; it can improve accuracy of time and attendance data; and it can help companies pay workers in cryptocurrency.
Source: hrtechnologist.com

The genesis of blockchain remains something of a mystery. Everyone seems to agree that blockchain technology was the work of the same person who invented Bitcoin—but no one seems to know who that is. The anonymous inventor in 2007 released a paper explaining the concept behind cryptocurrency and blockchain technology. The paper was released under the name Satoshi Nakamoto, a pseudonym.
Source: bitrates.com

Dubai, a city along the Persian Gulf in the United Arab Emirates, aims to become one of the world's first "smart cities" by powering its government with blockchain technology. The government in 2018 initiated the Emirates Blockchain Strategy 2021, which intends to place 50% of government transactions onto blockchain by next year. It expects blockchain to save US$3 billion in the routine processing of transactions and documents, and $108 million in the annual printing of documents.
Source: medium.com

The city of Zug in Switzerland is home to the Crypto Valley Association, a nonprofit that wants to build the world's leading blockchain ecosystem. That's not surprising, considering that in 2016 Zug became the first city in the world to accept Bitcoin payments for taxes. And in 2018, Zug successfully completed its first testing of a blockchain-based voting system.
Source: blockchain-council.org



Mobility Matters

Interesting, challenging, and surprising stats and finds around the globe

By Jon Ferguson



everledger®

Everledger, a London-based firm, developed a blockchain to track the movement of diamonds from their source to the sales counter to ensure they didn't come from areas of civil conflicts fueled by sales of the precious stones. The blockchain is tracking about 2 million diamonds representing about 900,000 carats.

Source: forbes.com

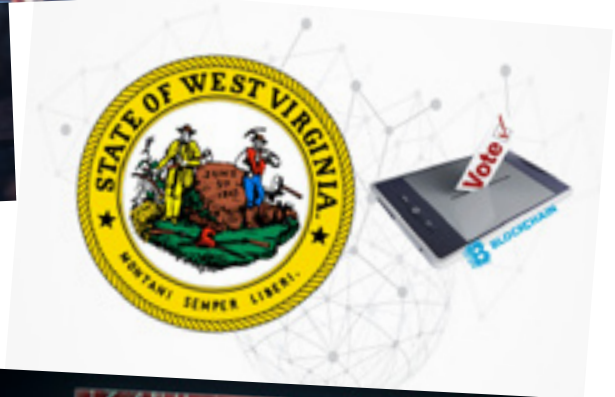


Estonia has transformed itself into a digital society. It's using blockchain technology to ensure the security of data that allows 99% of government services to exist online. For the past two decades, Estonians have had digital ID cards that allow them to cross borders in Europe, apply for various public services, pay fines, or send encrypted emails.

Sources: qz.com, e-estonia.com

Blockchain technology has the potential to revolutionize numerous industries, including real estate. Blockchain could dramatically speed up the transactions and transfers of property deeds between the parties involved in real estate deals, which often seem to crawl along at a frustrating pace. Blockchain could allow all documentation to be securely stored so all those involved in a deal could access it when required.

Source: interestingengineering.com



Some believe blockchain technology might one day play an important role in elections around the world. Others aren't so sure. Proponents make the case that allowing people to vote through mobile devices will increase participation, and that blockchain is the key to ensuring the security of elections. Skeptics, however, argue that blockchain makes election processes overly complicated and no more secure than other internet-based voting systems. Despite that, there are pilot programs, including one in West Virginia, involved in testing the use of blockchain in elections.

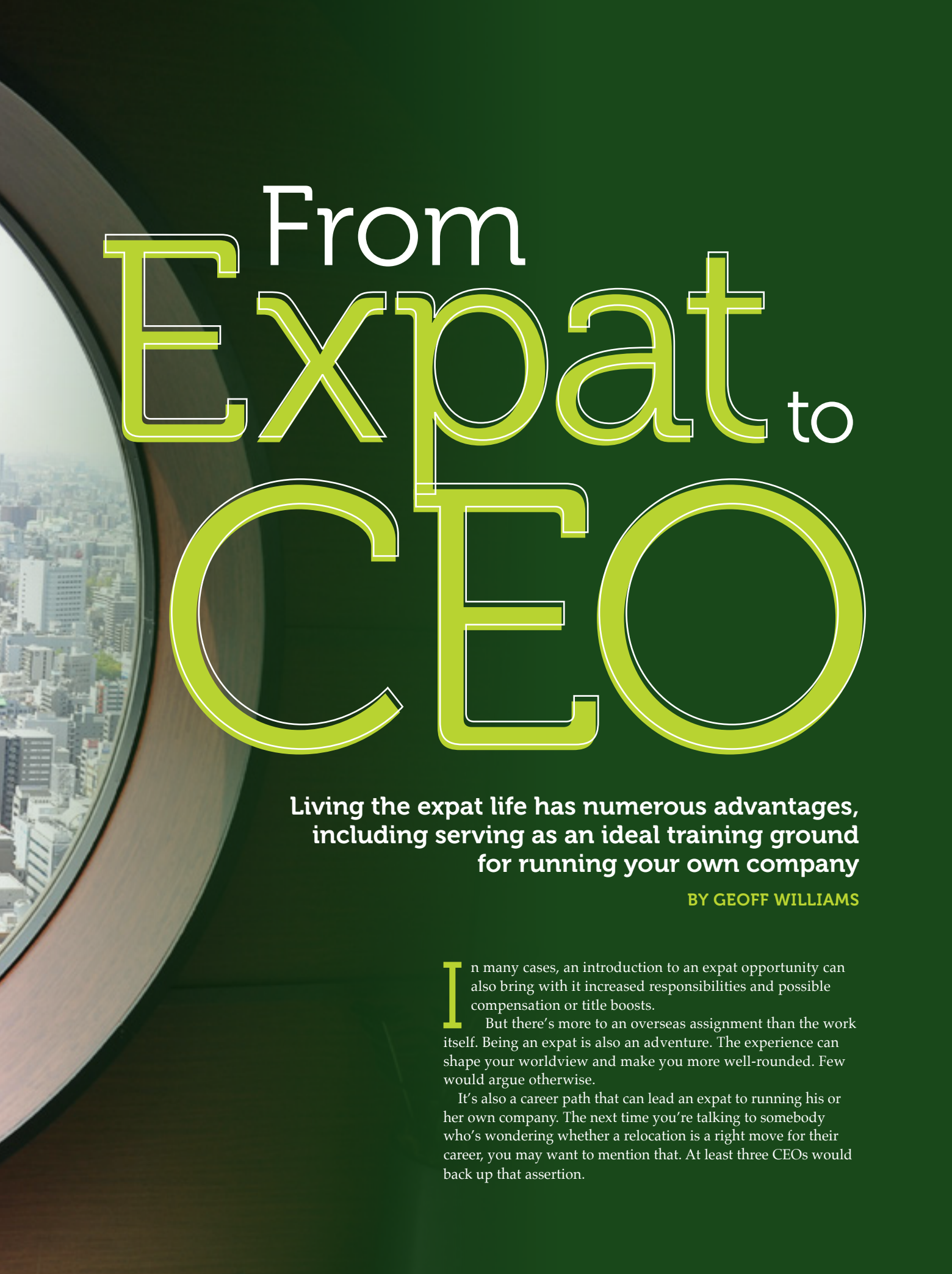
Source: cbinsights.com



China has something of a complicated history when it comes to blockchain technology and cryptocurrency. There was a time when the country was considered a leader, having the most Bitcoin transactions and numerous investors, companies, and government agencies searching for ways to expand the blockchain and cryptocurrency industries. Later, however, China also was the first country to declare a ban on cryptocurrency and block its citizens from accessing foreign coin exchanges by erecting the so-called Great Firewall.

Source: asiablockchainreview.com





From Expat to CEO

Living the expat life has numerous advantages, including serving as an ideal training ground for running your own company

BY GEOFF WILLIAMS

In many cases, an introduction to an expat opportunity can also bring with it increased responsibilities and possible compensation or title boosts.

But there's more to an overseas assignment than the work itself. Being an expat is also an adventure. The experience can shape your worldview and make you more well-rounded. Few would argue otherwise.

It's also a career path that can lead an expat to running his or her own company. The next time you're talking to somebody who's wondering whether a relocation is a right move for their career, you may want to mention that. At least three CEOs would back up that assertion.

Mikaela Kiner, CEO of Reverb

When Mikaela Kiner received an assignment that took her to Hyderabad, India, with her family, she had no inkling that less than 10 years later, she would be the CEO of Reverb, a human resources consulting firm in Seattle.

Kiner used to work for a company called Amazon—maybe you've heard of it? She was a human resources executive, and as she puts it, "I had been asking and raising my hand for a global assignment for a few years."

That opportunity came in 2009, just as the Great Recession was wreaking havoc. So the last thing Kiner expected when she walked by her boss's office was to be waved in and asked: "Are you serious about taking on an assignment overseas?"

Kiner said she was, but she asked for 24 hours so she could run it by her husband. He had already said he was up for a move, but nevertheless, this was a big leap into the unknown. Kiner, who had been on a business trip to India, knew she would love living there but took a "preview trip" with her husband just to make sure he was still on board with the idea. That trip was a success, and soon they were packing up and taking their children, Simon, then 7, and Sidonie, then 4, to a brand-new life in India.

When Kiner moved, Amazon was already there, but the company's human resources department was in its infancy. As Kiner describes it, she was asked to blend two HR departments together and "bring more of that Amazon corporate perspective to both teams."

It was definitely a fish-out-of-water experience.

"When I arrived, I was the only Westerner out of 2,600 employees in three cities," Kiner says. "I brought over another American expat, and everyone assumed we were either brother and sister or husband and wife."

She loved the work experience—and being immersed in a completely new culture and showing her family an entirely new country. The family went on a lot of trips, exploring the country.

"After a week or so, I asked [my son] what he thought of India, and he said, 'I like it except for three things.'" He felt that there was too much air pollution—mainly, people burning stuff on the edge of the road. There was an abundance of mosquitoes, and there were too many stray dogs.

"We can all agree on that," Kiner said at the time. "If you like everything else, it's great."

When they returned to the States for good, Kiner found herself—for the first time in a long time—restless working for Amazon.

"I think that's a very common reaction for expats," she says. "When you're in another country, you have a sense of ownership and independence, and then you come back to a situation that's lacking that. You're back at the mother ship and plugged into an established setting. I missed what I was doing in India and the level of engagement that I was able to build in that smaller setting. I think there was a piece of me that wanted to go back."

Six months after returning, she left Amazon.

Kiner then worked for two more companies, much smaller ones, which felt less corporate and had more autonomy, and then she started Reverb in 2015. She has several employees and dozens of human resource contract workers. The company has thrived, and last year, the *Puget Sound Business Journal* named it the second-fastest-growing private company in Washington state.

"I absolutely believe this experience helped me get where I am today and contributed greatly to my professional development," Kiner says.

She looks back fondly on those years in India. She and her family were considering a trip to India this year but decided against it, with some of the political unrest in the parts of the country they were going to visit. Then, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic pretty much finished off any idea of a vacation.

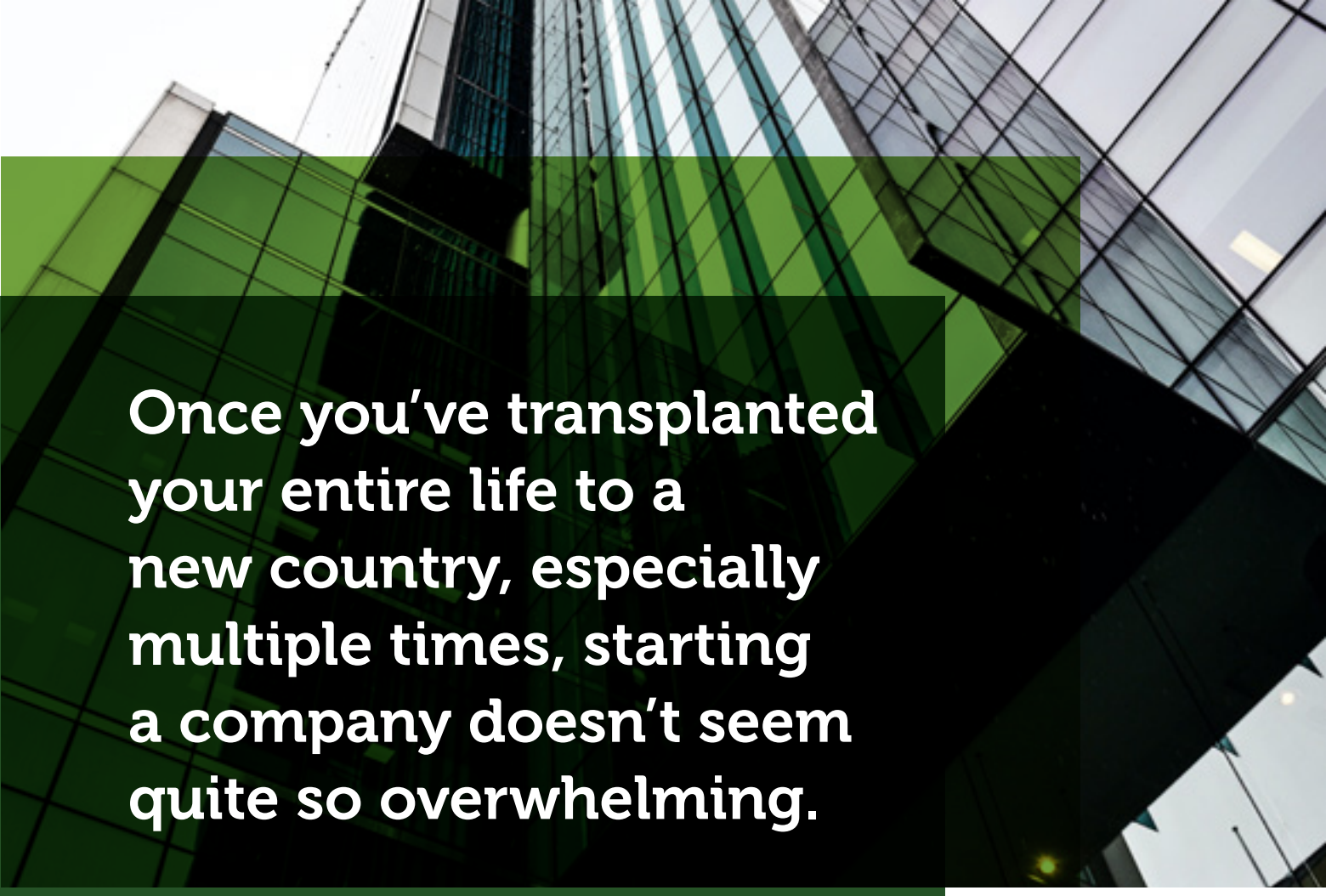
But the lessons she learned—for instance, not to assume that just because something is done in one part of the world that it'll be done the same way in another—are still with her, as are the relationships she developed.

"A lot of the people I hired or worked with are still working for Amazon, and they'll call and visit when they're in the area," she says. "The lasting relationships are irreplaceable. It's one of those benefits that you may not think about when you go on an assignment like that."

David Morin, CEO of SocialPro

David Morin is an expat living in New York, which he has called home the last 2½ years, but he is from Sweden. In between, he has lived in Barcelona, Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Sarajevo.

The way Morin travels, running a digital business is almost the only way he could be a business



Once you've transplanted your entire life to a new country, especially multiple times, starting a company doesn't seem quite so overwhelming.

owner. Morin owns an online business, SocialPro, a website he founded in 2012 that offers free training, courses, and a newsletter—all aimed at improving one's social life. And he definitely feels that living abroad for sustained periods has helped him as a business owner in innumerable ways.

First is confidence. "People have told me that they have had similar dreams … but didn't dare to risk everything if they were to fail," Morin says, referring to friends who have talked about striking out on their own to a new country or who have wanted to start a business. "I can understand that fear. What if you tell people that you're leaving your country, but it doesn't work out, so you have to come back two months later? What if you lose touch with your friends and don't make new friends and end up lonely?"

But, he says, once you've transplanted your entire life to a new country, especially multiple times, starting a company doesn't seem quite so overwhelming.

Second, his worldview is much wider. In other words, when his company runs into a problem, Morin is better equipped to find a solution. "When you live in the same place all the time, you tend to meet the same people and end up thinking the same ways. Being an expat means that you meet new people and can experience new things," Morin says.

Finally, his network of colleagues is much more diverse. When you own a business, it's helpful to know a lot of people who can serve as problem-solvers. That way, when you need to work with a certain type of talent, you're not stuck wondering who to call. Morin doesn't find himself in that dilemma very often—especially since his business is all about becoming more social.

"I've met new people and had so many new experiences that I never would have had otherwise," he says. "Here in New York, I've made friends who have helped my business grow that I never would have come in contact with had I stayed in Sweden."

That's a situation that many expats find themselves in. Rather than having a tight-knit group of friends and colleagues in one community, they often wind up having close contacts around the globe. That can really help an entrepreneur, especially one with a supply chain or looking to do business around the world.



Marta Olszewska, CEO of Refill Aqua

A serial expat who has lived in five different countries in the last 13 years, Marta Olszewska started off in Poland and now lives in Barcelona.

She runs operations part time for a consulting agency and is the CEO and co-founder of Refill Aqua, an initiative to reduce plastic pollution in Barcelona. She also works as interim COO for Zengrowth, a marketing startup headquartered out of Germany.

Olszewska feels that being an expat helped fuel her desire and ambition to start her own business. "I think being a CEO and wanting to work on my own company was largely influenced by my expat experience," Olszewska says. "Not only have I been exposed to different cultures and languages, which helped me be part of local communities, but it helped me go out of my shell and dream bigger."

Olszewska says that she had a "mindset shift" when she was living in Latin America, Portugal, Belgium, and eventually leading a team in Southeast Asia. "All those experiences combined have contributed to the much more resilient and confident self that I am today. I honestly don't think I would have achieved it staying in Poland," she says.

Olszewska grew up in her hometown of Łódź, Poland, but she fell in love with the idea of living elsewhere after a student work exchange in college, during which she worked at an amusement park in Allentown, Pennsylvania, for four consecutive summers, from 2002 to 2006. "I got promoted to a team supervisor and was exposed to leading teams of international people, solving problems, evaluating employees, and facing often difficult conflicts with customers. I knew right then I liked having this responsibility and could do bigger things one day."

She was correct.

Near the start of her career, in 2009, she wound up living in Brussels. Her boyfriend got a job there, and she found work at a translation and SEO agency. "I then changed jobs a few years later. I ended up staying for five years and making my life in Belgium, although my relationship did not survive," Olszewska says.

From June 2014 to August 2015, she worked in Penang, Malaysia. "I was tired of a corporate life that wasn't for me, and I applied for a job in a startup called Piktochart without knowing it was based in Malaysia," she says.

It turned out to be an excellent decision. "I visited nine countries in one year of living there, which was one of the best experiences in my life, both personally and professionally. I became a leader of a marketing team at Piktochart and stayed with the company for five years," she says.

In the latter months of 2015, still working for Piktochart, she spent time with her family in



> "I think being a CEO and wanting to work on my own company was largely influenced by my expat experience. Not only have I been exposed to different cultures and languages, which helped me be part of local communities, but it helped me go out of my shell and dream bigger."
>
> — Marta Olszewska, CEO of Refill Aqua

Poland and traveling around Europe. At a marketing conference in Barcelona, she realized she had found a place she wanted to live and call home. "For the first time I wasn't driven by either a job or anyone else. I wanted to live in a place with the sea, blue skies, open people, and Mediterranean vibe," she says. She has lived in Barcelona since January 2016 and started Refill Aqua in 2019.

As for how being an expat has helped Olszewska, she says that being able to uproot and reinvent herself in new country after new country has given her a lot of self-assurance. She describes herself as a shy person with low self-confidence growing up, a feeling that endured through high school and college. "I felt I couldn't get out of my shell," she says.

But traveling and living as an expat helped with that. Olszewska says that during the two years she spent in Colombia, learning to adapt to a completely different culture from her own taught her a lot about communication. In Belgium, she learned about leadership styles and began to hone her own. In Malaysia, she says, she really became inspired by her CEO and found herself picking up all sorts of skills that any business owner would want to have. "I learned to trust my gut. I learned humility on a new level—being surrounded by the most humble and kind people I've ever met—and I learned how to collaborate remotely," she says.

By the time she went to Barcelona and found a cause and a company she wanted to develop, Olszewska says she felt "empowered."

For much of 2020, of course, she has been hunkered down in her home, sheltering in place with her fiancé, also a co-founder, and toiling away on their business. They are also focusing on being first-time parents; they're expecting a daughter in the late summer.

As far as Olszewska is concerned, the life of an expat is essentially a master class in leadership. She remembers spending a month in New York City in 2003 and being intoxicated by everything she was learning and feeling, simply by being immersed in another culture.

"I realized I could let go of the 'old me' and reinvent myself to whomever I wanted to be," Olszewska says. "It all depended on me." *M*

Geoff Williams is an Ohio-based freelance writer with expat experience and is a frequent contributor to Mobility.

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DESTINATION PROFILE: DUBAI

World-class ambitions, grounded in religion

By Jon Ferguson

Burj Khalifa, the tallest skyscraper in the world, soars 2,717 feet (828 m) into the air and hovers above the gleaming city of Dubai, a modern metropolis that sits in a desert on the southern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. The skyscraper and the 17 other towering high-rises that stand near it are among Dubai's calling cards, along with its mammoth malls, luxury hotels, vibrant nightclubs, and sprawling, man-made islands designed to look like a palm tree.

Unlike its Arab neighbors in the Middle East, Dubai—also the name of one of the seven emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates—does not depend upon oil for its wealth. Instead, the city has transformed itself into an economic force through the power of tourism, trade, real estate, and financial services.

What oil wealth Dubai does have it used to build its city's infrastructure, including two of the world's largest ports and an international air cargo hub. All that construction demanded laborers, and the industries that sprung from it needed skilled, educated professionals. That led to Dubai becoming a magnet for expatriates.

About 90% of the city's 2,878,344 residents are expats, and three-quarters of them are men. Although those working as laborers in low-paying jobs do not share in its wealth, Dubai continues to attract foreign professionals enticed by its promise of high-paying jobs and the city's tax-free status.

Still, like nearly every country in the world, Dubai and the UAE have suffered at the hands of the coronavirus pandemic. By mid-July, the country had experienced more than 57,100 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 340 deaths. The pandemic also ravaged Dubai's diversified economy, which relies on sectors such as hospitality, entertainment, tourism, and retail. The city imposed a lockdown for about two months starting in April, including a strict 24-hour lockdown on its population for about three weeks in the early part of that month, which brought its economy to a standstill.

There were also concerns that much of the country's huge population of expatriates would leave because of a lack of work. The former director general of Dubai's department of finance predicted a "minimum population contraction of 10% for the year."



Doing Business in Dubai

Dubai is an intriguing place, a city with world-class ambitions that soar above the clouds but grounded in a religion that asks its adherents to pause five times during the day and pray.

In terms of business etiquette, it might take some people a little time to get used to having someone step away from a meeting for prayers. Another difference is that the work week extends from Sunday to Thursday. Otherwise, doing business in Dubai is fairly standard.

Though Arabic is the official language, English is widely heard in Dubai. Business is best conducted in person, and most people expect some casual, congenial chitchat before diving into the work at hand. Patience is a plus at meetings, which have a reputation for being somewhat chaotic and where interruptions are typical. In terms of clothing, business casual hasn't quite taken hold, as the emphasis is on smart and stylish, including suits and ties for men.

One thing to keep in mind is that it is never proper for men to shake hands with members of the opposite sex unless they first extend their hand. Also, leave any jokes that could be considered in questionable taste at home.

Many expatriates may hope to make a financial killing because of the city's tax-free status. Dubai, however, is the Middle East's second-most expensive city in which to live, trailing only Tel Aviv, according to Mercer's *2019 Cost of Living Survey*. Globally, Dubai ranks as the 21st-most expensive city in the world in which to live.

Although budget-conscious residents can live comfortably and save, the city's extravagant offerings can encourage overspending—a trap that ensnares many.

The currency used in Dubai is the dirham, shortened to AED (Arab Emirates dirham). One U.S. dollar is worth AED 3.67, and the dirham has been pegged to the U.S. dollar since 1997, meaning the exchange rate never changes. The World Bank has ranked the UAE as the easiest country in the Middle East in which to do business.

Immigration and Permits

U.S. citizens considering a move to Dubai who want to check it out before committing are in luck: U.S. passport holders are entitled to visas on arrival at the airport, provided the stay is shorter than 30 days.

When expatriates decide to move there, they first need a residence visa, which usually takes about 10 days to three weeks to obtain. Work visas, which also are relatively easy to get and are often taken care of by the sponsoring company, normally last from two to three years. Spouses can piggyback on their partner's residence visa, but they will need their own work visa if they want a job.

It is imperative that anyone moving to Dubai with a spouse bring their marriage certificate, and it's best to have it first attested in the U.S. And don't forget to bring a fistful of passport-sized photos, because they'll be needed for visas, driving licenses, health insurance cards, and UAE identification cards, among other items.

A website sponsored by the government of the UAE reads that "respect for labor rights is a moral, cultural, and economic imperative" and points to a series of reforms enacted in 2016. The reforms include improving transparency of job terms and employment contracts; making it easier for workers to switch jobs by clearly defining contract terms and how they can be broken; and guaranteeing that relations between workers and employers are governed by government-monitored work contracts and labor laws.

Although some world watchdog groups have accused Dubai of being a haven for money launderers, the 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index, which is overseen by Transparency International, ranks the UAE 21st on a list of 180 countries, two spots ahead of the U.S.





Creative Family / Shutterstock.com

Housing and Living

Many sponsoring companies of expatriate workers provide temporary housing, but the key word is "temporary." The search for a more permanent home will reveal plenty of choices—everything from a compact studio apartment to a palatial villa. Most expatriates choose to rent, and the quality and size of the accommodations depend largely on one's budget. It's not cheap to live in Dubai, and for those on a tight budget, less expensive options can be found outside the city.

Renters face a variety of upfront costs, including four months of rent payments, a real estate agent's commission (usually 5% of total rent), a security deposit (5% again), a deposit for water and electricity service, and the fee to register a tenancy contract.

Because of the city's cosmopolitan nature and the UAE's reputation as one of the Middle East's more liberal nations, it can be easy to forget that it is a Muslim country rooted in Islam, which plays an important role in every aspect of its culture.

Though religions other than Islam are tolerated, proselytizing is not permitted. Foreigners can drink alcoholic beverages but only in bars and restaurants—not at home. Homosexuality is illegal, extramarital sex is prohibited, and public displays of affection are frowned upon. Women don't have to cover themselves completely, but they are expected not to expose backs, shoulders, or stomachs and to wear skirts that cover the knees.

Dubai has been called the "shopping capital of the Middle East," and it has the malls to prove it. The Dubai Mall, for example, includes more than 1,300 shops and more than 200 food and beverage outlets, and The Mall of the Emirates is described as the world's first shopping resort and includes 630 retail outlets and an indoor ski center with real snow. That's something that comes in handy considering the average high temperature in the desert climate of Dubai climbs to 100°F (38°C) or above from May through September. The coolest month is January, when the average high is 75°F (24°C).

Shopping for groceries can be a dizzying experience simply because there are so many choices, from large chains to small produce stands to online services.

Schools

Expatriates living in Dubai with children have several choices when it comes to schooling.

Education is free for all citizens of the UAE up to the university level, and the country's public schools are well respected. Noncitizens can attend the public schools but must pay a fee.

Expatriates, however, usually choose to send their children to one of the many private international schools catering to the foreign population. The schools, however, are expensive, and some expats instead choose to home-school. For those who wish to enroll a child at a private school, the Dubai School Inspection Bureau publishes an annual review of all of its private institutions—a valuable resource for parents. The best schools are inundated with applications each year, so parents should apply early.



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Transportation

Dubai residents can either drive their own cars or use the city's public transportation system. Cheap fuel and relatively inexpensive cars can make driving attractive, but Dubai's highways and streets are congested and clogged with drivers whom many consider rude and overly aggressive. The TomTom Traffic Index in 2019 showed Dubai drivers spent 10% more travel time than they should due to traffic congestion.

Over the last decade, the government has improved the city's public transportation system—which consists of the Dubai Metro rail system, water taxis, buses, and a tram—making it a reasonable way to navigate the city.



Health Care

The standard of health care in Dubai is high, and its medical facilities are modern and accessible to expatriates. Most public hospitals offer high-quality health care, but many expatriates choose the country's private medical centers because they offer a wider range of services. Since 2015, all foreign nationals living in Dubai must subscribe to at least minimum health insurance through the Dubai Health Authority.

Security

Person-on-person crime is rare, and weapons are almost never involved, as Dubai is an intensely monitored city. There is some petty crime, especially pickpocketing. What expatriates might have some trouble with are the strict cultural rules enforced by the authorities. Illegalities in Dubai include drunken behavior, swearing, photographing people without their permission, criticizing the government, and dressing immodestly. It is not unusual for foreign nationals to be jailed for doing something considered normal and legal in their home country.





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Unexpected Dubai

In Dubai, the police force likes its cars.

In 2017, Guinness World Records presented it with a certificate for having the world's fastest police car, a Bugatti Veyron that can reach a top speed of 253 mph (407 km/h).

And that is just one of the police force's fleet of 14 so-called "supercars," which include an Aston Martin One-77 (only 77 were built), a Bentley Continental GT, three hybrid Porsche Panameras, and two BMW i8s.

The supercars generally can be seen around the Dubai Mall and other tourist areas. A police official says tourists often ask the officers driving the cars to arrest them so they can catch a ride. *M*

Jon Ferguson is a freelance writer who lives in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

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What Should Companies Do as Employees Are Repatriated Post-COVID-19?

By Lisa Johnson

Many companies found themselves with employees and their families on international assignment when the COVID-19 pandemic became official earlier this year, with borders closing and quarantines being put into place. By June, some of these employees were ready to repatriate, whether because their assignments were complete, the company decided not to continue the assignment, or employees had personal reasons to request a return to their home location.

Employers facing such repatriations must consider some general questions. The biggest differentiator is whether the repatriation is temporary or permanent:

- **Temporary repatriation** may apply to employees on business-critical assignments that are not due to end for a while and when no business is to be conducted in the host location for the near term. Depending on home-country business conditions, companies may have a strong bias toward temporary repatriation based on current unemployment and furlough scenarios, but this is not the norm.
- For a **permanent repatriation,** cost for shipment of goods is typically covered as it would be under existing repatriation policy; however, it is unlikely that goods can be shipped without extensive hold time, so employers may provide departure services such as covering rent and retaining host accommodations until the goods can be shipped. They may also pay the costs of packing. Other assistance is typically in line with existing repatriation policy, with the exception of temporary living, which employers may offer in order to address quarantine requirements in the home country.

> *"Repatriation during this time is highly dependent on factors including business conditions and national guidelines in host and home countries."*

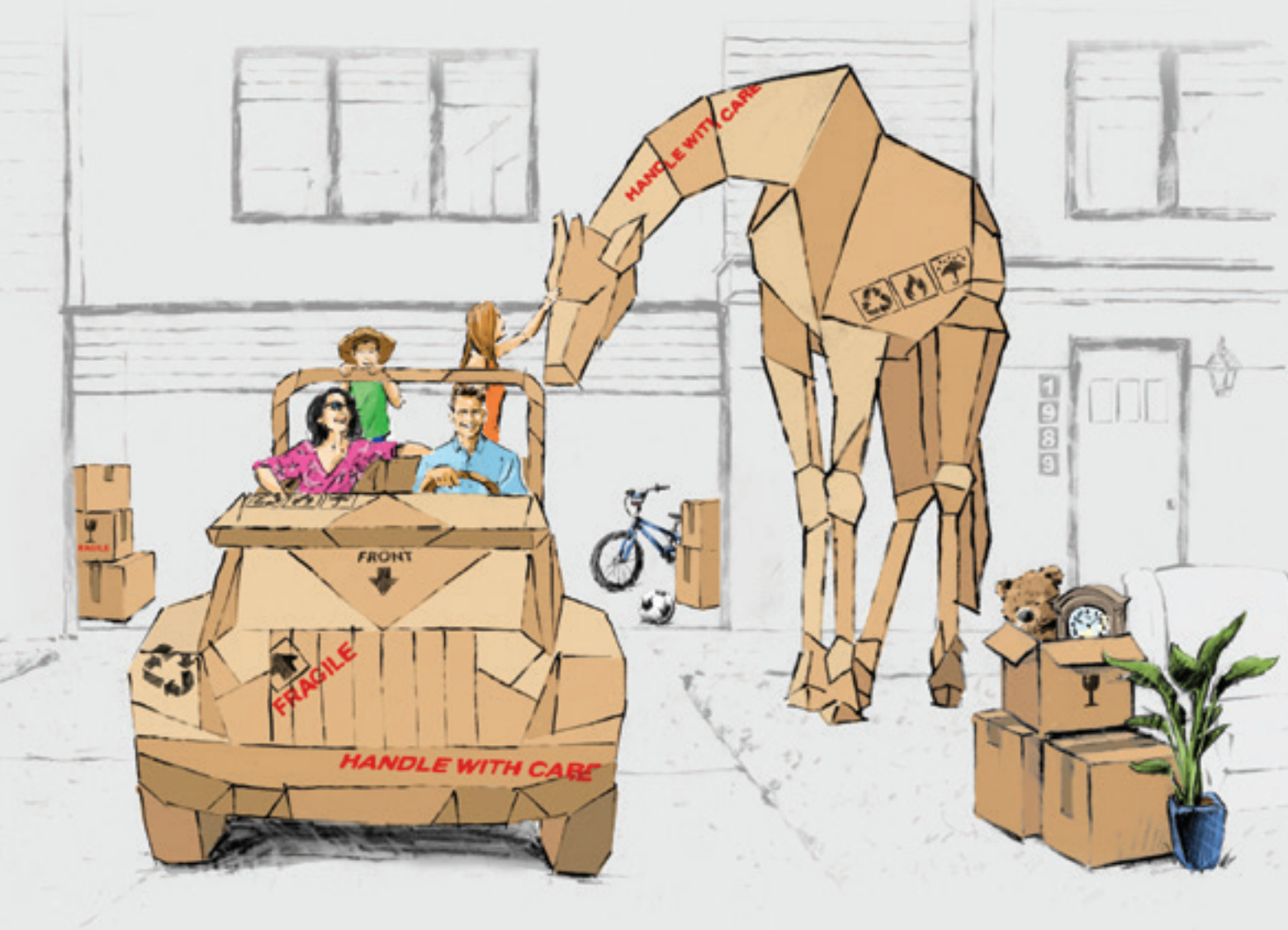
As of June, there was no consensus as to whether repatriation is addressed differently based on whether it is employee- or company-initiated:

- If an employee requests temporary repatriation, some companies will pay the travel costs as long as the employee can demonstrate a quarantine plan post-arrival. This is akin to how home leave and emergency travel are treated in policy.
- Other employers will cover the cost for quarantine accommodations.
- The home country's repatriation and quarantine requirements are a key factor in decision-making.

Repatriation during this time is highly dependent on factors including business conditions and national guidelines in host and home countries, the amount of time left on an assignment, and employee preference. As the pandemic shifts geographically, companies' plans will evolve, and as employees consider their options, it is likely that some consensus around common practices will emerge. *M*

Lisa Johnson is global practice leader, consulting services, at Crown World Mobility. She can be reached at ljohnson@crownww.com.

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