Build and Maintain a TRUSTWORTHY BRAND

WHY WOMEN AREN'T GOING ON ASSIGNMENT

RELO EQ THE SECRET TO PROFITABLE MOBILITY

OVERCOMING CULTURE SHOCK
Trust in Our Relocation Promise

Suite of Services:
From title and equity to closing, from home inspections and appraisals to broker and inventory management, we create a customized solution to suit your needs.

Transparency:
As the only support services provider who manages their own network of title/closing providers, brokers, inspectors and appraisers, we keep you informed throughout the entire relocation process.

Risk Management:
Partnering with a division of Fidelity National Financial, you can rest assured that information security is at the forefront of all we do. Our corporate-wide IT resources are unsurpassed in the mobility industry.
DON’T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT.

Aires was as coordinated and professional as any relocation company I’ve dealt with in completing over 10 interstate moves in the past 30 years.

–Eleana
Houston to Bethesda

#AiresWordsToMoveYou2020

scan to learn more about Aires

While the quotes are real, some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of Aires and our clients.
MOBILITY

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To establish a good reputation, mobility companies need to have more than a memorable logo and the right business name.
A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE IN IMMIGRATION

At Fragomen, we don’t just facilitate immigration—we create opportunities. From individuals and small local businesses to the world’s largest companies, we support all of your immigration needs, all over the world. We are internationally local—with offices in the heart of each region and services stretching around the world. No matter where you’ve come from, or where you’re going next, Fragomen is here to propel you forward.

Fragomen
www.fragomen.com

Fragomen has more than 50 offices and serves more than 170 countries worldwide.
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Earn the Global Mobility Specialist (GMS®) Designation at 50% OFF
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Already a GMS® and Want to Earn Your “T”?
Receive 20% OFF the Strategic Talent Mobility Course Today!
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Subscribe to the Worldwide ERC® Learning Portal at 20% OFF
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Promo Codes GMS50 and STM20 each limited to first 50 purchasers.

Visit www.worldwideerc.org/learning to learn more
Calendar of Events

JUNE 2020
Webinar: The Public Charge Rule—How Nimble Is Your Immigration Program?
4 June
Sponsored by Berry Appleman & Leiden LLP
worldwideerc.org/events-conferences

OCTOBER 2020
Global Workforce Symposium 2020
28–30 October
Washington, D.C.
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.
We’re dedicated to relocation services, but it’s relationships we really care about.

When an employee relocates, there’s a lot riding on every detail. We’re here to make the mortgage process easier so they can focus on what really matters: feeling at home so they can feel better at work. And that makes your job easier, too.

Find out how we can help you and your employees.
1-800-362-5332 | chase.com/relocation
In its “HR 4.0: Shaping People Strategies in the Fourth Industrial Revolution” report, the World Economic Forum identified six strategic workforce imperatives for HR and business leaders. The document was published in collaboration with Saudi Aramco, Unilever, and Willis Towers Watson late last year, just before the COVID-19 pandemic truly began taking hold. But to my mind, the areas it identified are just as—and perhaps even more—relevant today. They include:

1. Developing New Leadership Capabilities for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)
2. Managing the Integration of Technology in the Workplace
3. Enhancing the Employee Experience
4. Building an Agile and Personalized Learning Culture
5. Establishing Metrics for Valuing Human Capital, and
6. Embedding Diversity and Inclusion

At its core, 4IR is about the deep integration of technology into nearly every aspect of our professional and personal lives. With that in mind, the significance of the first two imperatives has never been more evident than over the last 90 days. Clearly, the presence of leaders with the right skills to successfully embed innovative technology solutions within the workplace, while managing distributed teams and supporting remote work, has proven to be a business imperative in ways we could never have imagined even just six months ago.

I believe all of these imperatives are equally important and intrinsically linked. But what I think will be particularly crucial for talent mobility professionals during COVID-19 recovery are those identified in numbers 3–6: bolstering employee experience, learning, meaningful value measurement, and inclusion.

If we start with employee experience, our top priorities are to ensure their safe return to work and movement. It’s crucial to include the employee voice as we set those protocols for our own businesses. Last month, we proudly announced our involvement in a collaborative Safety Back to Work (SB2W) initiative with Randstad, NV, the Adecco Group, and the ManpowerGroup. In my conversation with Jim Link, CHRO with Randstad North America, we confirmed that employees are increasingly looking to their employers to provide safety guidelines.

Another way we can enhance the employee experience is by providing access to learning tools. Jim and I agree that now is an ideal time to upskill, new skill, or reskill. To make that easier, we’ve extended special offers to take part in our Global Mobility Specialist (GMS)® and Strategic Talent Mobility courses, as well as on Learning Portal subscriptions, offering an extensive catalogue of customizable course options.

Business leaders are at a crucial juncture: successfully emerging from a crisis requires rethinking priorities. Employee safety, health, and wellbeing top that list. They are closely followed by honing new skills and broadening connections with our clients and teammates around the globe. We’re bringing all voices to the table to develop the solutions that will move us forward. It will take a unique blend of human resources, capital, innovative technology, and global perspectives, experiences, and minds. I can’t think of an industry better equipped to bring all of those elements together than this one.

LYNN SHOTWELL, GMS
President & CEO
Worldwide ERC®
DELIVERING HAPPY, PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYEES READY TO TAKE YOUR BUSINESS TO THE NEXT LEVEL REQUIRES SOMETHING EXTRA.

PASSION, CARE & COMMITMENT

At Sterling Lexicon™ that something extra is the passion, care and commitment our team brings to everything we do.

Whether you’re relocating one or 1,000 employees, or managing global assignees, Sterling Lexicon offers the same personalized and caring approach every employee deserves.

We are committed to treating each client like our only client, offering tailored solutions that meet your specific business goals, and ensuring you have the expert network and insights needed to make better informed program decisions.
How NOT to Study (But Still Learn) a New Language

Learning a new language takes hundreds of hours, so you’ll need to vary your exercises if you don’t want to burn out. Besides speaking with a real person to improve your language skills, try these technologies for 15 to 30 minutes a day, and help solidify your listening and vocabulary skills without actual studying:

Language Learning With Netflix, a Google Chrome Extension
What it is: Watch any Netflix show with subtitles in the language you’re learning, with the added ability to click on words for definitions in 18 other language options.
Why it works: Most people don’t last more than five minutes watching TV in another language. With this extension, you can watch for five minutes, click on new words, hear them, say them out loud, and repeat the entire phrase. A feature even automatically pauses the movie or show after every sentence so you can process what you heard and repeat it out loud if you want. It’s incredibly effective for remembering new vocabulary and increasing your listening skills. Eventually, you’ll need the subtitles less and less.

FluentU
What it is: Authentic videos from YouTube feature the ability to turn subtitles on and off, a click-dictionary to show you the words in your language, along with games and quizzes to help you memorize the new phrases and words.
Why it works: Staying active and involved in the language is critical to acquiring it. You listen to it, say it out loud, play with it, pronounce it, and put together the puzzle. Here, you can also review vocabulary lists and check off the ones you’ve acquired. This technology is geared more toward those who want to keep track of vocabulary.

Pimsleur
What it is: Audio books and/or situational movies build your listening skills, and you learn in context, focusing on the most commonly used words in the language. Pimsleur even slows down the conversations.
Why it works: You get to learn your second language as you did your first: Repeat, listen, repeat, listen.

So the next time someone asks you how you study Spanish, you can say, “I don’t study. I acquire Spanish through real conversations and Netflix. Obviously!”
In recent weeks, worldwideerc.org shared news of our partnership with global HR service firms Randstad NV, The Adecco Group, and ManpowerGroup on a collaborative Safely Back to Work (SB2W) initiative. Bringing together the perspectives and voices of government, industry, labor union, and association leaders from around the world, the alliance seeks to establish best practices on health and safety protocols as the economy reopens and people begin to return to work. Worldwide ERC® will be a leading voice in best practices for the safe movement and travel of the global workforce.

Meanwhile, it’s officially summer in many parts of the world, which would normally be the beginning of a busy internship season. Take a look at our article on some of the benefits of these programs to both interns and employers, and how companies are beginning to adapt to the current environment by offering entirely virtual opportunities.

We also reported on the EU’s decision to postpone registration under the new European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) until the end of 2022, instead of sometime in 2021. By the beginning of 2023, U.S. and other travelers to Europe who do not need a visa to visit countries in the Schengen zone will be required to first get approval under the system. The exact dates of when ETIAS will be operational and when the registration requirement will be in place are fluid. Citizens of countries who are required to obtain a visa to enter a Schengen country will continue to need to do so and will not be required to register under ETIAS.

In addition, we brought you news of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s delay of the effective date by which U.S. residents will need a REAL ID as an official government-issued identification. In light of the closing of state government offices because of restrictions to contain the spread of COVID-19, enforcement of the requirement has been shifted from 1 October 2020 to 1 October 2021.

We will continue to deliver regular updates on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on business, employee health and well-being, and the economy, as well as Congressional and other regulatory relief efforts.

In Case You Missed It (ICYMI)

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

Twitter – Now is a great time to boost your skills and focus on your professional development. Hopefully you caught our post on how we’re providing some extra support to help you get there. We’re offering one-time discounts: 50% off the registration fee for the Global Mobility Specialist (GMS)® designation and a 20% savings on the Strategic Talent Mobility (GMS-T)® course and Learning Portal subscriptions. But you need to hurry—offers are limited to the first 50 purchasers and expire on 15 June! Learn more at bit.ly/2GJOZER.

Facebook – Were you one of the more than 150 participants in the Worldwide ERC® Foundation for Workforce Mobility’s #VirtualWalk2020 last month? Lots of great photos were shared by walkers—and, in many cases, their two- and four-legged accompanying family members—from all parts of the industry and many different regions. Take a look!

LinkedIn – We shared with you a summary of and a link to a recruiter.com article on the ways in which artificial intelligence (AI) is streamlining core mobility tasks, by our own Worldwide ERC® Senior Vice President of Product Development Karen Cygal. We also connected you to our government affairs quarterly legislative agenda, which provides details on background, status, Worldwide ERC® position, and any organizations we may be partnering with on key issues. And if you missed it on worldwideerc.org, we provided you with summaries and links to our ongoing updates about COVID-19-related travel restrictions and Congressional relief packages.
The Paxton Companies was recently honored with Move for Hunger’s 2020 Hunger Fighting Hero Award and February’s Mover of the Month Award for its help in collecting nearly 15,000 pounds of food from a local event and delivering it to food pantries and shelters.

This single donation provided more than 12,000 meals to children, families, and individuals in need throughout local communities in just one month.

According to the company, a guiding principle of the Paxton Companies continues to be giving back to the communities that support its business. “We are proud of this accomplishment, but the year is far from over, and we’re looking forward to supporting Move for Hunger’s goal and helping fight to end food insecurity even more in the year to come,” says COO Bill Paxton.

One of the Paxton Companies’ core values is a dedication to corporate social responsibility. Over the course of its partnership with Move for Hunger, enough food has been collected and delivered to prepare more than 100,000 life-saving meals for the community. According to the company, it participates in a host of community service events throughout the year designed to benefit the local and global communities it serves.
ALWAYS HERE FOR YOU THROUGH ALL THAT LIES AHEAD

In times of uncertainty, you need a service provider who cares about the success of your company and the safety of your transferees, and who makes sure you have the tools and resources needed to keep your transactions moving forward. With Stewart Title Relocation Services, you have that.

During this COVID-19 pandemic, our team’s top priority is to help you navigate this challenging time while keeping you and your clients safe. As we adapt to this changing environment, we have put a variety of solutions in place to help you conduct business with as little disruption as possible:

- Real-time bulletins and alerts from Stewart legal and underwriting teams
- Detailed guidance from our national network of title and closing offices regarding the changing business requirements in their local area
- The ability to adhere to social distancing guidelines through a variety of signing and closing options, including:
  - **Mobile Notary** – Sign an entire document package in the presence of a notary at a location of your choice
  - **Hybrid Signing** – e-Sign non-notarized documents online and wet-sign documents requiring notarization with mobile notary at a location of your choice
  - **Remote Online Notarization (RON)** – e-Sign a document package anytime and anywhere

*Where legally permissible by law or regulation.

Thank you for trusting us to help you and your customers through this unprecedented time.

relocation@stewart.com
**AROUND THE WORLDWIDE ERC®**

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**TRANSCOM AWARDS US$7.2 BILLION GLOBAL HOUSEHOLD GOODS CONTRACT**

American Roll-On Roll-Off Carrier Group Inc. (ARC) has been selected for a multiyear award contract by the United States Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) to provide global relocation services for the Department of Defense (DoD) and U.S. Coast Guard.

ARC will lead a full-service, worldwide relocation effort with a team of subcontracting partners focused on improving the quality of service provided to service members, their families, and DoD civilians under the Global Household Goods Contract (GHC) (HTC711-19-RR004). GHC is valued at US$7.2 billion for the transition period and three-year base period.

Under the contract, a single commercial move manager has been appointed to oversee activities that relate to the domestic and international movement and storage-in-transit of household goods. ARC will provide all personnel, equipment, facilities, tools, materials, supervision, and other items and services necessary to deliver global household goods relocation services. GHC includes an initial nine-month transition period, which commenced in May, and the contract may run for more than nine years, if all options and awards are exercised by the government.

“Moving not only can cause significant stress for an individual but can also challenge the mettle of an entire family,” says ARC CEO Eric Ebeling. “This is especially true for our nation’s service members, who are routinely challenged to relocate every two or three years. Team ARC brings superior quality, deep experience, increased capacity, and enhancements for the customer experience. We have been looking forward to this announcement and cannot wait to get started.”

Team ARC’s component partners have served TRANSCOM since its inception and have served service members and the military for more than 75 years. The major subcontracting partners in Team ARC include:

- UniGroup (parent company of United Van Lines and Mayflower Transit)
- Atlas World Group (parent company of Atlas Van Lines)
- Suddath
- The Pasha Group
- Deloitte

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**GRAEBEL COMPANIES INC. LAUNCHES ANNUAL STATE OF MOBILITY REPORT**

Talent mobility professionals around the world are doing more: more volume, more customized services for mobile employees, and more strategic support within their organizations. But how do they plan to meet business demands and keep up with global uncertainties and policy changes, while successfully relocating, attracting, and retaining top talent?

These are among the key answers and insights featured in the *Annual State of Mobility Report 2020* from Graebel Companies Inc.

The online report offers industry insights from 280 global mobility professionals surveyed during Graebel’s insideMOBILITY industry events in 2019 in five cities worldwide. In addition, for the first time, the 2020 report also incorporates outside perspectives from a variety of resources to further inform and educate human resources and mobility professionals about global best practices they can use to enhance their programs and outcomes.

“Mobility professionals are facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities given today’s ever-changing business, political, and socioeconomic environment,” says Bill Graebel, SGMS, Graebel chairman and CEO. “While talent mobility teams bring diverse thinking and solutions based on regional needs, our report clearly shows they are unified in their goal to elevate the employee experience by continuously evolving their programs and policies.”

Among the report’s key findings from talent mobility professionals are:

- 41% feel that mobility program transparency and flexibility are the features that enhance their employees’ relocation experiences the most. This means companies need to review all elements of their global mobility program through their employees’ eyes to effectively compete for talent.
- 58% plan to focus on offering a valuable perspective on broader talent management matters over the next five years. This includes sharing strategic insights within their companies about human resources and talent management integration, real-time business intelligence, analytics, and dashboards.
- 7 out of 10 say technology used by their assignees will be the biggest change to their program over the next five years. This indicates that assignees’
engagement with technology—and the amount of control they’re given—can help shape their experience and level of satisfaction.

The free interactive report is available at view.graebel.com/state-of-mobility-2020.

LEADING REAL ESTATE COMPANIES OF THE WORLD® INDUCTED INTO TRAINING TOP 10 HALL OF FAME

Leading Real Estate Companies of the World® has been inducted into the Training Top 10 Hall of Fame, joining only 16 other companies from a variety of industries named to the Hall of Fame since its inception in 2008.

LeadingRE earned the distinction after ranking in the Training Top 125 for four consecutive years, including first in 2018, second in 2019, third in 2017, and ninth in 2016.

LeadingRE will remain in the Hall of Fame for three years or longer by adhering to specific standards for training excellence.

The award comes in recognition of LeadingRE’s training and educational offerings, which the company considers key drivers in the continued international growth, high performance, productivity, and profitability of its global network of 565 independent real estate brokerages. Its offerings include the LeadingRE Institute, an online learning portal and learning management system that hosts more than 300 courses and numerous certifications.

In addition, LeadingRE provides live training and networking events, webinars, leadership development programs such as MAESTRO, CEO mastermind groups, and targeted offerings for multiple audiences within its member brokerages.

“Our structure allows us to develop programs on the most timely and relevant topics, and we are committed to delivering the most impactful information in digestible, easily accessible formats,” says LeadingRE Executive Vice President, Member Services, Kate Reisinger, CRP. “At a time when remote learning is more important than ever, we are especially proud of our industry-leading Institute platform, which will keep our members fully engaged and highly skilled.”

Other Hall of Fame members include notable companies such as Ernst & Young, PricewaterhouseCoopers, IBM, and Verizon.

Aires and Erickson Immigration Group Announce Partnership

Aires and global business immigration law firm Erickson Immigration Group (EIG) have announced a formal partnership to help clients enhance visibility into immigration compliance and reporting, providing integrated technology solutions for organizations and their employees.

Aires’ MobilityX platform delivers a transparent view of all global mobility activities for both management and employees. Through innovative technology integration, EIG’s platform data has been incorporated into the MobilityX tool.

“Our approach to technology is simple—provide the best-in-class platforms, tools, and dashboard views to solve our clients’ problems and address their needs,” says Jerry Erickson, EIG president and founder. “This partnership with Aires is a proactive step forward to harnessing the best possible user experience for our clients to further our mission of uncomplicating the complicated immigration landscape.”

The solution created by Aires and EIG provides for the following enhancements:

• **Initiation:** Service is initiated in one location; double entry of data is not required.

• **Milestone Tracking:** Key dates are shared between Aires and EIG. The status of immigration and that of mobility services are displayed together in a single portal, providing the full context of the employee’s mobility journey.

“We know that our customers need access to a simple solution that minimizes effort and provides all data in one single location,” says Aires Executive Vice President Joleen Lauffer, CRP, GMS. “Aires is excited and proud to partner with EIG to deliver this solution to our clients.”

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Executive Spotlight

LISA BERANICH JOINS JOHNSON INTERNATIONAL

Lisa Beranich, CRP, GMS-T, has been appointed senior vice president for Johnson International, where she will be responsible for the company’s international division, including household goods, commercial, and military moves.

Previously, she was managing director of Stevens International, where she was responsible for setting business growth strategies and implementing programs to enhance sales on corporate, government agency, and RMC accounts. She also was vice president of government services with Washington, D.C.–based Secor Group, managing sales and operations teams for domestic and international GSA government moves and U.S. military moves, and director of business development for Graebel Companies, where she worked with executives in both government and corporate sectors to create brand awareness and increase business for the company.

BARRY SCHELLENBERG IS PRESIDENT AND COO OF ATLAS VAN LINES


In his new role, Schellenberg will lead the Atlas Van Lines household goods division in the U.S., which includes transportation services, corporate marketing, revenue distribution, customer service, agency development, information technology, and the Avail Move Management subsidiary.

“Schellenberg is a proven leader in operational improvement and growth techniques,” says Jack Griffin, chairman and CEO of Atlas World Group. “Having achieved meaningful and lasting impact in diversifying and growing our footprint in Canada, we are eager to have him at the helm of our largest subsidiary.”

Schellenberg has more than 30 years of experience in operations, supply chain, strategic execution, and logistics. He previously held leadership positions with Sameday Worldwide, CE Franklin, DHL, and UPS.

“I’m extremely thankful for the last five years with Atlas Canada and the opportunity to lead its team and chart a path for meaningful growth in the region and industry,” says Schellenberg. “I look forward to continuing that momentum with Atlas Van Lines and helping to create a sustainable future for the van line.”

JEFF HAWK APPOINTED AT AIRINC

Jeff Hawk has been named the new Americas region leader at AIRINC. He moves into the role vacated by Morgan Crosby, who was recently named to the newly created role of global growth leader.

With 27 years of mobility experience, Hawk has led the company’s data operations group, served as a senior client engagement director, and managed the EMEA region as an expatriate himself.

“Jeff has been anxious to get back on the front line with clients,” says Steve Brink, AIRINC’s CEO. “We asked him to step in to run our data operations a few years ago. In that role, Jeff made a significant difference as he brought more client-focused solutions to our entire operation. In regularly talking to our clients, they communicate how easy our data is to understand, while also providing the necessary details behind the data. Jeff has been instrumental in helping AIRINC streamline data analysis, support, and delivery. He is now ready to pivot this expertise and previous experience of running the EMEA region to the Americas.”

In his new role, Hawk will continue to serve as an integral member of AIRINC’s Executive Leadership Committee.

“AIRINC has a strong legacy of partnering with our clients to meet the ever-changing demands of mobility,” says Hawk. “Our client engagement team is always ready to assist with the creation of new policies, global workforce compensation, and improvements to the overall employee experience. I very much look forward to this continuing journey with our clients in the Americas.”
How can we help?

In this time of uncertainty, none of us can be sure when business will return to normal—or what that “normal” will look like. This makes running a mobility program and managing a mobile workforce harder than ever.

TRC is here to help. Our employee-owners bring unmatched experience, resourcefulness and empathy to every assignment. And our flat, nimble structure allows us to pivot quickly in a rapidly changing environment.

Working closely with our independent network of supplier partners, we keep our clients’ moves and programs on track while helping them to prepare for the future.

TRC is one of Inc. magazine’s 2020 Best Workplaces!

Learn more about TRC at trcglobalmobility.com
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.

**TAX PROTECTION OPTION**

Does anyone provide tax protection (rather than tax equalization) as part of their expat program? If yes, how has this impacted which other expat benefits your firm provides? We’re doing a refresh of our expat benefit program at the moment, and I would love to connect with anyone whose firm uses tax protection rather than tax equalization to understand how or if this has influenced the rest of your expat benefits!

**L-1 INTERNATIONAL TRANSFERS**

Question regarding companies and immigration linked to L-1 international transfers:
1. When do you start the perm process for these L-1 employees?
   a. 1 year
   b. 3 years
   c. Other
2. Do you look at a shared-cost process for L-1 employees versus full company cost?
   a. Shared (%)
   b. Company

**A1 FILINGS**

Does anyone have a process in place for filing A1 certificates for business travelers within the EEA and Switzerland? We are trying to implement a process for managing A1 filings for EU employees traveling to other EEA member states or Switzerland and are curious if you may have a process in place. If so:
- Is the process being managed by global mobility, HR, travel?
- Does your local payroll provider handle the actual filings of the A1s, or do you outsource this to your tax provider/third party?

**POLICY STARTUPS**

A newbie here: We are just starting up with our expat and mobility policies and plans, so I’m curious to find out how other companies deal with two things:
1. How/what tool do you use for tracking employees’ whereabouts? We are a distributed company, and people travel constantly, so asking for them to submit info is annoying. We are looking at getting some sort of tool that would be easy to use and ideally implement with our HR system of choice.
2. How do you deal with employment law compliance if you need to employ people outside of where you have payrolls set up?

**HOMESALE ASSISTANCE**

Our company offers an AV-GBO option for new hires at director level and above. What type of buyout option do you have for executive-level new hires? If you are not offering any homesale assistance for new hires, what impact, if any, have you seen with performance, retention, engagement?

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.
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 2014 Chair Robyn Tierney.

*Mobility:* As one of the early leaders of the YP40 Committee, what was your most memorable moment in your time as chair?
*Robbyn Tierney:* Without a doubt, my most memorable experience was forging such great and lasting industry connections with my peers. We were all coming from different organizations and had very different backgrounds. Being part of the Worldwide ERC® YP40 community gave us an opportunity to quickly bond, and many of us still keep in touch today.

*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?
*Robbyn Tierney:* I think the young professionals of tomorrow will have many of the same qualities as the members of those early groups. They are likely to bring terrific ideas and perspectives to the table. As our way of doing business has dramatically changed, I believe they will have moved beyond just face-to-face meetings and will be fully embracing new and significant ways to stay personally connected through advanced technology.

*Mobility:* Is there something you know now that you wish you had known 10 years ago?
*Robbyn Tierney:* While I’ve known it for a long time, I’m even more convinced now of the power of maintaining relationships, particularly during times of transition. Our industry is a relatively small one, and we are still very much in a relationship business. I believe firmly in keeping colleagues and peers close as, throughout change, you will most likely cross paths again. I’m grateful for those former colleagues with whom I still get to frequently interact.

*Mobility:* What’s your best piece of advice for new young professionals entering the field now?
*Robbyn Tierney:* Don’t get discouraged if you are not currently in your dream job. We all have huge ideas and aspirations, but building your career from the ground up is the most valuable thing you can do for yourself. Learning and experiencing all of the facets of the mobility industry as you grow prepares you for the next step and makes you a better partner in your various roles. M

*Robbyn Tierney* is product manager with National Corporate Housing Inc./Single Source Solution.
In recent years, the U.S. government has engaged in a more vigorous pursuit of taxpayers who hide assets overseas to avoid U.S. tax responsibilities. The IRS summoned information from credit card companies about cards issued by foreign institutions, successfully obtained information from Swiss banking authorities about Swiss bank accounts, conducted three separate programs providing limited amnesty for taxpayers who come forward to admit their past transgressions, began numerous audits of taxpayers identified as having foreign assets, expanded the reporting already required under the law, and implemented new reporting regimes.

For U.S. employees overseas, the principal report that must be understood and complied with is the Report of Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts (the FBAR).

THE FBAR
Schedule B of the U.S. Form 1040 tax return includes an often overlooked question as to whether the taxpayer had a financial interest in or signature authority over any foreign financial account, such as a bank or securities account. Many U.S. expatriates working in foreign countries undoubtedly have their own such accounts, or signature authority over employer accounts. If the aggregate amount of such accounts exceeds $10,000 at any time during the year, the taxpayer is required to electronically file a separate Treasury Department FBAR on FinCEN Form 114 by 15 April of the following year. However, that deadline is automatically extended to 15 October if the report is not filed by 15 April.

In recent years, the IRS emphasized the required FBAR reporting. Worldwide ERC® members should be aware of that and make sure that their employees are filing properly. The penalty for failing to file is severe. Even an unintentional failure is subject to a penalty of up to $10,000, and in recent cases the IRS has taken the position that the penalty applies to each account not reported, rather than only once for the year of the failure. This view was upheld in U.S. v. Boyd (C.D. Cal), on 23 April 2019. Other such cases are pending.

The penalty for a willful failure can be the greater of $100,000 or 50% of the amount in the account. In 2018, four cases were decided that disagree about whether the penalty for willful failure is limited to a maximum of $100,000 under regulations promulgated by the Treasury Department before the statute was amended in 2004 to escalate the maximum penalty to 50% of the amount in the account. Those regulations have never been changed to reflect the 2004 amendment. Two courts held the IRS to the old regulations, but two claims court cases allowed the higher penalty.

Expats sometimes overlook IRS requirements that persons who have only signature authority over foreign accounts—but no financial interest—must nevertheless file the FBAR. The regulations eliminate the filing requirement for those who have direct contact with the financial institution. But employees or officers who have the authority to sign checks on the company’s account are required to file FBARs and report the accounts even if the company itself is already reporting them.

Consequently, officers or employees of foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies, for example, or officers and employees of U.S. subsidiaries of foreign companies must understand and comply with foreign account reporting rules.
corporations—who have signature authority over foreign financial accounts—must file reports. Worldwide ERC® members should make sure that relevant employees are aware of these obligations.

**FORM 8938**

Under U.S. Code Section 6038D, a taxpayer with foreign accounts aggregating more than $50,000 at any time during the year must report them on a separate statement filed with the tax return and include the name of the institution, the account number, and the aggregate amounts. The relevant regulations make clear that the rules concerning filing of Form 8938 are separate and distinct from the obligation to file the FBAR.

Under IRS regulations, the Form 8938 is required if assets exceed $50,000 at the end of the year or $75,000 at any time during the year.

A special rule shields many expats from the requirement to report. If a U.S. individual is a resident of a foreign country for purposes of Section 911 (the foreign earned income exclusion), then that individual does not have to file Form 8938 unless foreign assets exceed $200,000 at the end of the taxable year or $300,000 at any time during the taxable year. If the individual is married and files a joint return, these numbers are increased to $400,000 and $600,000. Consequently, most overseas employees will not be subject to this report.

While the FBAR must be filed by persons who have signature authority but no beneficial interest in foreign accounts, that rule does not apply to reporting under Section 6038D.

Like the failure to file the FBAR, the penalties for failing to file the Form 8938 are severe. If a taxpayer does not file Form 8938 and does not have reasonable cause for the failure, there is a $10,000 failure-to-file penalty. If the failure to file continues for 90 days after the taxpayer is notified of the failure by the IRS, there is an additional $10,000 penalty for every 30 days in which the failure continues, up to a maximum of $50,000. There also is a 40% penalty on any understatement of tax attributable to assets not disclosed on a Form 8938, and the statute of limitations for the year is extended until the taxpayer does provide the required information.

**Worldwide ERC® members with employees stationed abroad must make sure these employees are aware of and understand their reporting obligations.**

**CONCLUSION**

Worldwide ERC® members with employees stationed abroad must make sure these employees are aware of and understand their reporting obligations. With Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) reporting, under which foreign financial institutions must report accounts held by U.S. citizens to the U.S., the IRS has enhanced ability to match reports from foreign financial institutions to individuals and their returns—and determine whether required reporting has taken place. The cost of noncompliance can be severe. 

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.
Tulsa, Oklahoma

By Thomas E. Allen, SCRP

Tulsa, the second-largest city in Oklahoma and the 47th-most populous city in the U.S., is situated on the Arkansas River between the Osage Hills and the foothills of the Ozark Mountains in northeast Oklahoma, a region of the state known as “Green Country.” For most of the 20th century, the city held the nickname “Oil Capital of the World.” It also features one of the nation’s largest concentrations of art deco architecture, since the city’s success in the energy industry prompted construction booms in the popular art deco style during the first half of the 20th century. Profits from the oil industry continued through the Great Depression, helping the city’s economy fare better than most economies in the U.S. during the 1930s.

In 1925, Tulsa businessman Cyrus Avery, known as the “Father of Route 66,” began his campaign to create a road linking Chicago to Los Angeles by establishing the U.S. Highway 66 Association in Tulsa, earning the city another nickname: the “Birthplace of Route 66.”

During this period, Bob Wills and his group, the Texas Playboys, also began their long performing stint at a small ballroom in downtown Tulsa. They are largely credited with creating Western swing, a musical genre with roots in country music, made popular at Tulsa’s Cain’s Ballroom. The Tulsa sound, a variation of rockabilly, blues, and rock ‘n’ roll, was started and developed largely by local musicians J.J. Cale and Leon Russell in the 1960s and 1970s. The Tulsa sound heavily influenced musicians Eric Clapton and Jimmy Markham. Musicians from Tulsa or who started their musical careers in Tulsa include Garth Brooks, Hanson, Ronnie Dunn, Gene Autry, and Kristin Chenoweth. In 2012, Tulsa was ranked by city information source Livability as having one of the best music scenes outside of New York, Los Angeles, and Nashville.

Efforts toward economic diversification have created a base in the sectors of aerospace, finance, technology, telecommunications, high-tech, and manufacturing. Amazon recently announced plans to build a more than 600,000-square-foot fulfillment center near Tulsa International Airport. The company will invest an estimated $130 million in the state-of-the-art facility, which will employ roughly 1,500 people with an annual payroll of about $50 million.

Considered the cultural and arts center of Oklahoma, Tulsa is home to two art museums and full-time professional opera and ballet companies. The Philbrook Museum of Art is considered one of
the top 50 fine art museums in the U.S. and is one of only five to offer a combination of a historic home, formal gardens, and an art collection. In the Osage Hills northwest of Tulsa, the Gilcrease Museum holds the world’s largest, most comprehensive collection of art and artifacts of the American West. The museum includes the extensive collection of Native American oilman and famed art collector Thomas Gilcrease, with numerous works by Frederic Remington and Thomas Moran. The archive of legendary singer-songwriter-artist Bob Dylan was acquired in 2016 by the George Kaiser Family Foundation and The University of Tulsa, with many items on display in the Gilcrease Museum.

More recently, 66 acres of central Tulsa were transformed into Gathering Place, a $465 million park that opened 8 September 2018. With a $100 million endowment for maintenance and family programming from the George Kaiser Family Foundation alone, it is one of the largest and most ambitious public parks ever created with private funds.

LOOKING BACK
Median prices of single-family residential units in Tulsa’s Multiple Listing Service area reflect an upward increase on a linear basis for the past 10 years, quarterly. The quarterly percent change was 0.9%, for a total percentage change upward of 36.1%. The total dollar change was $43,335, or a $1,083 quarterly change. Traditionally, the Tulsa market experiences slower absorption in the fourth and first quarters of each year, with strong second- and third-quarter activity.

Tulsa prices are moderated by the availability of land for residential development with a moderately strong speculative new construction market segment. Tulsa’s older, established residential neighborhoods continue to experience “infill” development with new construction via lot splits, long-held vacant residential sites, and demolition of older existing dwellings. Broken Arrow, a Tulsa suburb to the southeast, is now experiencing infill development near the chic Rose District.

LOOKING AHEAD
According to the preliminary trends, the Tulsa market area has experienced some upward momentum with an increase of average prices in February. February 2020 also saw 2,051 new listings, down 4.87% from last year at 2,156. Furthermore, the month also featured 1,101 closed listings versus last year’s 1,102, a –0.09% decrease. Listed versus closed trends yielded a 53.7% ratio, up from February 2019’s 51.1%, a 5.09% upswing. This will certainly create pressure on a decreasing month’s supply of inventory in the months to come. Overall, with average prices going up and DOM decreasing, the listed versus closed ratio finished strong in February 2020.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Federal Reserve cut the federal funds rate on 3 March by 0.5%, making the threat of the virus tangible to most housing market consumers. The Federal Reserve cut the federal funds rate by another 1% on 15 March to offset the expected severe economic impact as consumers began to pull back. It is too early to extract the empirical implications for the housing market as a result of the coronavirus, and most, if not all, of this article relied on market data generated before consumer awareness occurred on 3 March.

Thomas E. Allen, SCRP, is manager of Thomas E. Allen Appraisals LLC and has been appraising in Tulsa and northeastern Oklahoma real estate since 1971. He was the 2000 president of Relocation Appraisers and Consultants (RAC). He can be reached at +1 918 851 3500 or tomallenok@gmail.com.
How are global employee benefits changing in light of evolving workforce priorities? Data from *Modernizing Benefits: From Transactional to Transformational – Global Insights From Willis Towers Watson’s 2019/2020 Benefit Trends Survey* helps answer that question. The survey takes the global pulse of current employer perspectives, strategies, and practices, and it explores programs, priorities, and key challenges companies will face over the coming years.

The study was conducted between May and June 2019 and received responses from more than 4,300 companies, which employ more than 22 million employees in 88 markets around the world. Read the full *Willis Towers Watson’s 2019/2020 Benefit Trends Survey*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rising benefit costs</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differing wants and needs of a multigenerational workforce</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Challenges communicating around benefit choices</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact of regulatory changes/changes to statutory benefits</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of budget to deliver effective communication strategy</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of appropriate technology to effectively deliver company’s benefit programs</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of data to measure plan outcomes or changes in employee behavior</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of employee engagement with benefit programs</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fragmentation of vendors/providers and lack of integrated tools</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unions/collective labor agreements</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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</table>
Top Priorities for Benefit Portfolios by Region, According to Willis Towers Watson’s 2019/2020 Benefit Trends Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>North America</th>
<th>Latin America</th>
<th>EMEA</th>
<th>Asia-Pacific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>Enhance work policies</td>
<td>Market norms and employee wants and needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Market norms and employee wants and needs</td>
<td>Enhance work policies</td>
<td>Well-being</td>
<td>Enhance work policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Enhance work policies</td>
<td>Market norms and employee wants and needs</td>
<td>Market norms and employee wants and needs</td>
<td>Well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Inclusion and diversity</td>
<td>Inclusion and diversity</td>
<td>Inclusion and diversity</td>
<td>Core benefits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An Evolving Definition of Employee Well-being, According to Willis Towers Watson’s 2019/2020 Benefit Trends Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Physical Well-being</th>
<th>Emotional Well-being</th>
<th>Financial Well-being</th>
<th>Social Well-being</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not a Focus</td>
<td>Emerging Focus</td>
<td>Already in Focus</td>
<td>Continuing Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMEA</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Please rank the following in terms of your priorities for driving engagement and supporting employee decisions around their benefits (% top priority).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit Category</th>
<th>Asia-Pacific</th>
<th>EMEA</th>
<th>Latin America</th>
<th>North America</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Product simplification</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and communication</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision support and navigation tools</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sample is based on companies with at least 100 employees in 2019 Willis Towers Watson Emerging Trends in Health Care Survey.

Build and Maintain a TRUSTWORTHY BRAND

To establish a good reputation, mobility companies need to have more than a memorable logo and the right business name.

By Heather Larson
The term “brand” dates back 4,000 years, and in that distant past, if you received a cow with a well-known “brand” on it, you knew what you were getting. It probably had been fed right and treated well.

Fast-forward to the 21st-century version, and your brand can still be an identifying symbol, like Nike’s swoosh or a name like Ikea. When people see these brands, they immediately have certain thoughts and expectations about the companies. And they know what they are going to get if they buy from either.

Brands aren’t just logos—they’re expectations, says Scott Ginsberg, head of content at Metric Collective, a portfolio of technology companies that serve franchises and small to medium-size business (SMB) customers.

“[They’re] promises of a certain kind of consistency and continuity over time,” Ginsberg explains. “If you’ve done your marketing job well, when a customer buys from your organization, that person knows what they will get.”

Ginsberg has also worked as a marketing consultant for United Van Lines for the past 15 years and uses the moving segment of the relocation space as an example. “With any given trucking or moving company, their brand is their most valuable asset,” continues. “Families and businesses aren’t only buying it, they’re buying into it.”

As a mover, every day, you’re taking customers’ most prized possessions and carrying them up to 2,000 miles across the country, says Ginsburg. In the same way, your brand as an asset can grow in value daily, he says, and even small enhancements matter.

Grow Your Reputation Gradually and Deliberately

Don’t be fooled into thinking that developing your brand is something you do rapidly, all at once, and you must throw a lot of money at it. That usually doesn’t stick.

Organizations that consistently execute bite-sized, concrete expressions of their brand through slow and deliberate means are the ones that accrue the most leverage, Ginsberg explains. Doing so enables them to make sure their brand is exactly what they want it to be, creating maximum value for their customers.

Ginsberg also assures those in the mobility industry that building a positive brand doesn’t have to be cost-prohibitive. Only a small percentage of high-profile companies have tens or hundreds of millions of dollars in marketing spend, and they build their reputations in the macro, he says. They use everything from football halftime sponsorships to the takeover of a sandwich shop to big-budget, mass-market, stunt-driven efforts so their brands will earn iconic status.

Small to medium-size relocation businesses have to take a different approach. “They don’t have the resources or capital to build their brands in the macro,” says Ginsberg. “They have to do it in the micro, one bite at a time.”

One way you can add a small bite right now is to take advantage of social media marketing. Stacy Caprio, founder of Accelerated Growth Marketing, suggests you feature real relocation stories that showcase the fun and beautiful side of relocating, especially internationally.

While our current situation has obviously put most assignments—and for that matter, many major marketing or brand-awareness-raising initiatives—on hold, it’s a good time to think about the strategy for what’s next, and ways to showcase some positives in the post-COVID recovery. “Focusing on some real-life stories of travel and relocation are an easy way for any relocation company to build a brand that has ardent followers and supporters,” says Caprio.

Also consider that while many moves may be on hold right now, relocation managers were integral to getting employees and their families who were on assignment to safe and secure locations and are very often key players on the response teams for how to reengage safely when the time is right. That commitment to employee safety and career development during a time of crisis is a very human, very real story to tell, and it can reinforce a company’s values in action.

To increase the visibility of your brand, Adeel Shabir, content marketing executive at Centriq, a home management app, also encourages sharing
As a mover, every day, you’re taking customers’ most prized possessions and carrying them up to 2,000 miles across the country. In the same way, your brand as an asset can grow in value daily, and even small enhancements matter.

your expertise on social media channels or within a blog post.

“This way you can be seen as an authoritative individual, and people will like you for your personal brand,” Shabir explains.

He says social accounts can also be used to increase the trustworthiness of your brand and increase your engagement level as time passes.

Manage Your Company’s Standing

Of course, building a brand takes more than some social media interactions and blog posts. Especially now that the world of work and our understanding of company priorities are dramatically shifting, some reassessment about the kind of reputation you want may be in order, and it may require some additional homework. Identifying the business attributes your company has that set you apart from the competition has always been at the core of branding efforts, says Joseph Giranda, director of commercial relations at CFR Rinkens, a company that specializes in the international moving of vehicles and household goods. And that’s still true today, even if we are contemplating these questions in a very different global environment. Think of it this way: What do you want to be known for?

Then, identify your target audience and customer base. “The beauty and challenge of the relocation industry is that our target clients are located all over the world,” says Giranda. “Having a solid message that simultaneously fits different cultures is essential.”

Once you have a grasp on your client base, customer relationship building and online review management also have a strong effect on your company’s reputation, both online and through word-of-mouth, says Giranda.

You’ll also want to do some research and dig into what type of brands your competitors have come up with. Are they all about the same, or do they vary vastly among companies? You don’t want to duplicate them, but look at the choices they’ve made, and figure out why.
Chances are, your employees are engaging with clients much more than you are. That makes them the face of your brand. Do you know what they are saying about you?

Now, consider what you can do to make your business stand out. What kind of an audience do you want to appeal to? Which core segments of the population are you primarily targeting and why?

This is also a good time to ask for feedback from your staff. They often have ideas you hadn’t thought about. Then make sure they are on board with the brand you have in mind. The voice of the employee is critical to these efforts, as every one of them is ultimately a brand messenger in their interactions with current and future customers.

Attract Young Adults Who Want International Experience

In the article “Talent Mobility Program Branding,” posted on the Mercer website, Olivier Meier, a principal at Mercer, writes, “There is an opportunity for HR teams to work with marketing to make mobility program brands personal, memorable, congruent, and viral.”

Meier also writes in the same article, “Branding is a powerful recruiting tool, as is the promise of an international assignment, but only if that is well communicated to potential candidates.”

You want to be the business where everyone wants to work. That way you get the pick of the crop with new hires: those eager and willing to gain new skills, those with technical expertise, the ones who bring harmony to the workplace, and the ones who are flexible. Flexibility is particularly important as the world navigates safe returns to offices. Having remote work options where possible, flexibility in standard hours, or commuting and safety protocols that are clearly communicated and understood by all will help set employers apart.

Mobility is a powerful offering when recruiting and retaining top talent, says Ginsberg, particularly with employees in their 20s and 30s who want to satiate their wanderlust, both inside and outside their jobs, he says. As countries begin to reopen and business travel resumes, allowing those employees who are actively seeking cross-border experiences can be a great way to have them engaged while potentially attracting new ones.

“Companies need to stay competitive by framing their job openings accordingly,” Ginsberg explains. “By offering everything from unlimited personal time off to remote positions, international assignments, and even the incentive of business travel, organizations can build an attractive employer brand that candidates can’t resist.”

For example, according to Experience by Simplicity, “Public accounting firms and multinational businesses increasingly recognize the value of offering international assignments to high-potential employees. To meet client demand for professionals with global experience, some large accounting firms are giving hiring priority to entry-level candidates who studied abroad during college and are offering international internship programs. In addition, international assignments, often lasting about three months, are becoming more commonplace at public accounting firms. These short-term rotations offer
professionals a chance to increase their cultural business knowledge and gain exposure to other countries’ tax, compliance, and legal issues.”

After all, once you’ve attracted the best candidates and done your hiring, you want to keep them.

**Inspire Your Current Employees**

It’s no secret that workers talk to others about their jobs and employers—and not always positively.

“If we think about who the social ambassadors for a brand are, the largest group of insiders is its employees,” says Ari Lightman, professor of digital media and marketing at Carnegie Mellon University’s Heinz College.

With ever-increasing ways to communicate their work experience and association with a brand in a positive or negative way, employees are on the front line of sharing the culture, beliefs, and quality of work associated with an organization, Lightman explains. He says there are a variety of cases in which employees have provided information to journalists about a company’s policies, treatment of employees, and stance toward a particular group of consumers, users, or stakeholders.

“This organic spread of information can have a dramatic impact on its brand in ways that are hard to counteract,” notes Lightman.

Many organizations are also moving to a federated identity, which implies any location or branch will have consistency of experience when employees work with company-provided applications. If an employee has a different experience, Lightman says, it slows down productivity. They may not be able to find the company information they need in order to be effective and productive, and this could lead to frustration, disengagement, and employee flight, he says.

Giranda agrees and also reminds us that, chances are, your employees are engaging with clients much more than you are. That makes them the face of your brand. Do you know what they are saying about you?

“Poor management of standard procedures, operations, customer service expectations, and more will directly affect the way your brand is perceived,” says Giranda.

Another way to support your employees—particularly those on international assignment—is to provide them and their families with flexible guidance and help. For example, when assignees travel to another country, they and their families need to be able to depend on their employer for what they need. You take care of the details, so the assignee can do the job. If you don’t, employees share that with others, and that can cause your brand to plummet.

**More Than One Solution**

Giranda says enhancing your identity is not a one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to mobility.

“It’s imperative to identify what your business needs are to be successful, and support those needs to build a brand that people want to work for and buy from,” summarizes Giranda.

Constructing and maintaining your brand is also not a one-time effort. It’s a constant mix of seeing what works and what doesn’t, and moving ahead one small step at a time. Reevaluation needs to be constant—not one and done—particularly in our rapidly changing and challenging environment.

Ginsberg also offers this recommendation for your HR: “Promote your company’s mobility as a conduit to cross-pollination. In every job post or interview, cite your client mix, office dispersion, and departmental mobility as the driver of a team member’s project variability.”

In other words, let people know they will get to jump from thing to thing to thing, with nary a dull moment. Use testimonials from current employees about how they leverage insight across teams, branches, and departments in real time. Not only do companies that practice and preach mobility help ramp up employee learning exponentially, but the reward potential is astronomical—for both the brand and for the employee. M

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

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WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?
Or, why are the numbers so low for female assignees?

By Morgan E. Wiedmann
Our world is becoming more accepting of diversity and inclusiveness. But in mobility, one area is still lagging, and that’s gender diversity.

When I learned that only 15% to 20% of international assignees are women, I was stunned, puzzled, and surprised, especially in 2020, when, now more than ever, women are holding leadership positions in a wide array of industries.

I wanted to dig deeper and learn why women are so underrepresented when it comes to going on assignments. Is this a matter of unconscious bias, reluctance to accept assignments when they are offered, or something else entirely? Are companies even aware of this, and are they doing anything to increase the number of women on assignment? And if so, what?

In the annual Weichert Talent Survey, we asked our colleagues whether they’d be interested in going on an assignment and found that approximately 20% of women responded positively. While that number is a little higher than the industry average of 14% that was reported in Mercer’s 2017 edition of the Worldwide Survey of International Assignment Policies and Practices, it still has room for improvement. And it brought up more questions: Is it just that our colleagues love where they work? Or does it highlight a broader issue within business—that women are more hesitant to go on an assignment than men?

Next, I interviewed corporate mobility professionals around the world and found that 22% of women at their companies are going on assignment. So, I thought, OK, a little higher number here, but still, why so low?

Noting the lyrics of Beyoncé’s song “Run the World (Girls),” it seems surprising that women are avoiding opportunities to advance not just their careers but their life experiences. So, I dug deeper into why women are not raising their hands to relocate, why they wouldn’t want to take their career to another level with a move, what’s holding them back, and what would entice them to take on an opportunity to relocate.

CULTURE, FAMILY, AND CAREER

Michelle Douglas, manager of global mobility for Walmart Canada, feels two variables—cultural shift and family dynamics—are preventing some women from going on an assignment.

Walmart Canada has several women on assignment right now, and Douglas believes that these women, who are working overseas and taking on diverse leadership roles, can serve as role models and inspire other women to do the same.

But add in family dynamics, and it becomes a larger issue around a woman’s willingness to transplant her family. “Family is a huge part in the assignment [experience],” says Douglas. “As I think about some of the women whom we do have on assignment right now, they are women with small to midsize families. For these women to accept a new role was very much contingent on the comfort level of their family moving into the host country.”

Mala Cornell, manager of global mobility for CPP Investment Board, says that being more vocal about career development opportunities could increase the number of female assignees. Cornell feels that women—in Canada, at least—aren’t as apt to raise their hands, assuming that if their manager thought it was a good idea, he or she would approach them.

“If you’re heads-down, too busy getting work done—and not really talking to other groups or finding out what is happening on a global scale, which requires a lot of discussion, not just email—you’re not going to hear about these opportunities and have the chance to put your hand up for them. I think we can do better. Developing women’s careers is something that HR and talent management personnel need to focus more on if we want to see women put their hands up for assignments, promotions, and other things.”

— Mala Cornell, CPP Investment Board
hands up for assignments, promotions, and other things,” says Cornell.

FROM AN ASSIGNEE’S POINT OF VIEW
Fiona Tsui, a former assignee and senior adviser, compensation, human resources, facilities, and office services, at CPP Investment Board, agrees that getting the word out about available international assignments more often—and sharing stories of those women who successfully go on assignment—can inspire, motivate, and be the key to getting more women to raise their hands for opportunities like these.

“Uncertainty is one of the things that discourage people from putting their hand up to say, ‘I do want to take this opportunity and try.’... It’s good for companies to advertise the type of programs they have to support women, and their employees in general, who go on assignment. I think it would entice people to go,” she says.

Tsui, a millennial, was excited for the opportunity to go to Hong Kong for three months, while her spouse stayed in Toronto. For her, this wasn’t just an opportunity to advance her skill set and grow in her career, but it was also a chance for her to experience work life in her country of origin.

Post-assignment, Tsui says she now looks at things with a different lens and cultural perspective, which she shares with her team back in Toronto. Her best advice to females interested in working overseas is this: “Have an open mind, and communicate your interest with your manager, so if there is something in the pipeline that the company is planning, they are aware that you are interested in an opportunity to go abroad. Also talk to your family about it, and early, so you are prepared when the opportunity is available.”

For Barbara Lam, senior manager, global mobility, Asia-Pacific, for Avery Dennison Corp., not only does she work in corporate mobility, but she also has firsthand experience as a female assignee.

In late 2001, when Lam worked for a previous company, she had the opportunity to go on an assignment from Hong Kong to the Philippines for two years. This assignment gave Lam a different perspective on global mobility, which she is now able to apply to Avery Dennison’s program.

“Under our global mobility program, we took development, opportunity, and flexibility to ensure a good work-life balance for our employees. While it’s not specifically designed for women, it could be the reason that more women go on assignment,” explains Lam.

After her assignment, Lam relocated to the U.K. for almost four years and is now living and working in Hong Kong again. According to Lam, her experiences have shaped who she has become, personally and professionally.

THE COMPANY VIEW
At CPP Investment Board, Cornell explains, some regions provide shared cost or discount pricing for day care. Their global policies include parental leave, family leave, shared parental leave, time away from work, and flex work—critical benefits that support the whole family.

Average Number of Women Assignees Reported by Companies

![Chart showing the average number of women assignees reported by companies.](chart.png)
Although the number of women assignees is still exceptionally low, a shift may be coming, with factors such as younger generations and more women entering the workforce daily, along with changes in the ages at which women are having children.
experiences, acquiring new skills, and going on international assignments to learn about new cultures and develop both skills at work and their careers,” says Lam.

Gosia Piasecka Manos, HR-global rewards at Chemours, agrees that gender diversity should work itself out with the future younger workforce. “In an effort to attract and retain more female workforce talent ... the ratio of the population being on assignment should be offset and balanced between genders,” Piasecka Manos says.

Millennials, and especially younger generations, are already raising their hands and starting these career development conversations early, sometimes even before the idea pops into management’s mind. “Our younger generation is not afraid to ask to go on assignment or ask for things that my generation wouldn’t even bother with, such as, ‘My husband is relocating to London; can you move my job there?’ They are much bolder, and I love that, which is great because, from a career development standpoint, I don’t think they’re going to worry what the policy says. ... They’re going to ask anyway,” says Cornell.

The final challenge then becomes how companies can not only increase the number of women assignees but also provide a set of policies and practices that balance fairness with inclusivity. As the talent shortage increases overall, more women enter the workforce, and mobility programs increase their flexibility, the future is looking bright for women looking for an assignment. As that happens, we must keep adapting programs to support an assignee experience that works for all.

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Office jargon that mangles the language, signifies nothing, and is repeated ad nauseam is one of the banes of corporate culture. And there is no way to escape it, because it can be heard everywhere.

A 2019 survey conducted in the U.K. by Glassdoor asked respondents to list the office jargon they most hated. The top 10, in order, were “touch base,” “no-brainer,” “punch a puppy,” “game changer,” “pick it up and run with it,” “we’re on a journey,” “lipstick on a pig,” “run it up the flagpole,” “if you don’t like it, get off the bus,” and “mission statement.”

Source: statista.com

Acronyms and inexplicable abbreviations can annoy and befuddle businesspeople. They might shorten up a phrase, but they also can spark long faces. Professionals surveyed in 2019 by TrustRadius cited KPI (key performance indicator), BAU (business as usual), and EOB (end of business) as being particularly loathsome.

Source: trustradius.com

Go.Verizon.com surveyed 1,000 men and women in the workforce, who reached a consensus that the most annoying example of corporate jargon is the phrase “analysis paralysis.” However, they were also asked what phrases they most liked to hear in the office. These favored phrases included “the big picture,” “bring to the table,” and “go all in.” Go figure.

Source: theladders.com

If you find yourself in a business office in Germany and are met by blank stares when you invoke the cliché “You can’t make an omelet without breaking eggs,” consider switching to the German equivalent, which is “Wo gehobelt wird, da fallen Späne.” It literally means “Where you plane wood, the chips fall.”

Source: nbcnews.com
Mobility Matters

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

By Jon Ferguson

The Australian Plain English Foundation decides each year which individuals or corporations deserve special mention for contorting “the English language to avoid an unpalatable reality.” Justin Milne, former chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, took home top honors in 2018 for uttering the phrase “external career development opportunities.” What does that mean, you ask? He used it when ordering an underling to sack a female journalist. When asked to explain, he replied that it’s “a silly corporate euphemism for firing her.”

Source: smartcompany.com.au

A U.S. technology firm conducted a survey about office jargon and examined how different generations of workers responded when asked what words or phrases might actually make them look smarter among their colleagues. Baby boomers favored the phrases “high-level overview” and “run it up the flagpole”; Gen Xers were partial to “no-brainer” and “drill down”; and millennials rallied around “take it offline” and “jump ship.”

Source: summithosting.com

“Bio break,” short for biological break, is an unfortunate term that can sometimes be heard when a participant in a business meeting needs to use the restroom. The phrase started cropping up in the 1990s, with Wired magazine in 1994 defining it as a “techie euphemism for using the toilet.”

Source: independent.co.uk

A blog in 2019 surveyed 1,000 people across different ages and locations in the U.S. to gather information about office jargon. One of the questions it asked focused on the worst language they had encountered in a job posting that described the ideal candidate for a job. Leading the way was “badass,” followed by “rockstar,” “ninja,” “superstar,” “change agent,” and “Sherpa.”

Source: getresponse.com

The phrase “drinking the Kool-Aid” is deeply embedded in the lexicon of corporate culture. Younger members of the culture, however, might not know the phrase has a grim history that traces back to 1978, when cult leader Jim Jones engineered a mass murder-suicide that killed more than 900 people who drank a grape-flavored concoction laced with cyanide.

Source: businessinsider.com
It's the secret to profitable, human-centered workforce mobility
Before the global pandemic put many moves on a temporary hold, employee relocation was evolving faster than ever. That transformative trajectory will likely continue—even if things look a bit different—when global businesses begin to re-open again. The war for talent has created a demanding workforce that expects more from their employers, with job seekers choosing organizations that value their growth and development both personally and professionally. Because of this, the old concept of employee relocation, in which businesses are focused on moving people and their belongings as quickly and cost-effectively as possible, is bad for business. With “old-school” relocation, the employee has a harder time adjusting to the new environment, new talent finds little motivation for moving, and worse, the organization’s productivity and retention rates are negatively affected.

Why was the old-school approach so ineffective before, and even more so now? Because of the emphasis on people’s “stuff” rather than their feelings. Most employee relocation services are great at getting an employee’s belongings where they need to go. What’s lacking is attention to their emotions. Employees and their families are often left to deal with very difficult situations that evoke negative feelings toward the company. These situations and emotions, if left unaddressed, affect the success of an employee relocation more than any other aspect of the move. Add in the significant personal concerns about safely connecting with all those involved in a move—and about individual well-being and safety in the workplace—and that emphasis on feelings becomes even more important. Relo EQ is the future of talent mobility success.

As a human-centered approach, Relo EQ is good for the emotional health of employees and the health of a business. By now, we all know the importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace. TalentSmart found that EQ explains 58% of success across all job types, and in another study, first published by Ei World, organizations with managers who had high EQ saw their businesses have a 22% annual profit growth versus the average 15%. Leaders and organizations with high emotional intelligence are not only better equipped to inspire and manage their teams, they’re positioned to make their company more money. Applying EQ to a talent mobility program will allow employees to integrate faster to their new environment, be more likely to recommend their company to others, and be more productive in their new role.

EQ encompasses how you perceive your own and others’ emotions. Having high EQ means you understand what motivates individuals and are able to develop strong relationships. Applying Relo EQ means that organizations implement a relocation program that can proactively address the emotions that naturally run high during the transition—from making sure the spouse and family are taken care of and ensuring the employee feels confident onboarding into a new role to responding in a compassionate, proactive way when something inevitably goes wrong.

EMPLOYEE RELOCATION AND THE BRAIN

In a relocation, you can consider logistics such as moving household goods, lining up the mortgage, and getting tax information up to compliance as Relo IQ. The details of this information are processed by the prefrontal cortex, or the rational brain. When things go wrong, however, our thinking shifts to a different part of the brain—the emotional side of it. That’s when the situation calls for Relo EQ.

This matters not only because so many things can go wrong during a move, but also because relocation itself can be such a challenging experience...
personally for employees and their families. Each challenge and setback can have a negative effect on an employee’s experience with your organization. Boxes with cherished family heirlooms could get lost or broken in the move, leading to feelings of anger. The closing date on the new house could be delayed, creating frustration with the process. An employee’s children could have trouble adapting to the new area, causing a major productivity distraction. The accompanying spouse may be fearful about finding a new job, leading to questions of whether they made the right decision and whether they should stay. Internationally, the cultural differences assignees and families confront will challenge their patience daily. Post-move loneliness, due to separation from family and friends, can become debilitating. Each of these issues influences productivity, engagement, and potentially, retention of talented employees.

When things go really wrong, the amygdala hijack may take effect. This is when a person has an emotional response out of measure with the actual situation because it stimulated a deeper emotional threat. We’ve all seen this in action, so let’s dig deeper into what is going on in the brain.

Director of the NeuroLeadership Institute David Rock created the SCARF model (see chart below) to explain a brain-based approach for collaborating with and influencing others. It outlines five key domains that influence our behavior when communicating with others. They are outlined in the chart below with some potential examples related to talent mobility that could trigger a threat response.

Research implies that when socializing with others, these five domains can activate the same threat-and-reward responses in our brain that we rely on for survival. That’s why it’s imperative for organizations to consider Relo EQ and have a process that will address those threats proactively, before they have damaging effects on the individual’s relocation experience and, potentially, their employee experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>CERTAINTY</th>
<th>AUTONOMY</th>
<th>RELATEDNESS</th>
<th>FAIRNESS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our relative importance to others</td>
<td>Our ability to predict the future</td>
<td>Our sense of control over events</td>
<td>How safe we feel around others</td>
<td>Our perception of fair exchanges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am I getting the support I deserve?</td>
<td>How can we help people feel more confident about a successful transition in the long term?</td>
<td>Can we help people feel a sense of control during their transition?</td>
<td>How do we help people make personal connections in the new location?</td>
<td>Is my problem resolved to my satisfaction, given my sacrifice?</td>
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WHY THE EXPERIENCE MATTERS IN TALENT MOBILITY

According to Deloitte’s 2019 Global Human Capital Trends, one of the biggest challenges for organizations is the need to improve the employee experience. It suggests that employers do this by addressing the “human experience” at work. This involves understanding workers’ aspirations and how the business can connect them back to the organization and society as a whole.

When businesses neglect the emotional toll a relocation has on an individual, the experience may feel cold and inhuman. This leads to feelings of anger, productivity loss, and potentially, retention issues. As Deloitte’s study found, employers need to put the human experience back into the work. Mobility can be a great incentive to retain and attract top talent, but only if the relocation process is given the attention it requires.

In his book Everybody Matters, Bob Chapman suggests that leaders think of their employees as someone’s “precious child.” He explains that when people feel supported by their company, it improves their work life, which makes their home life better, and vice versa.

Helping reduce your employees’ loneliness, it turns out, is good for business. Lonely workers take twice as many sick days as nonlonely workers—9.5 days, compared with 4.2 days—according to Cigna. And researchers at Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business report that lonely workers are less committed to their organization and have lower performance ratings from their supervisors.

Our research in IMPACT Group’s People Perspective on Relocation report highlighted that 41% of millennials expressed that making friends in the new location is a top priority. Many studies, including ours, find that loneliness increases following a move, especially among singles. Something as seemingly simple as helping your employees build connections in their new location can make a difference. Again, from the SCARF model, increased feelings of relatedness can make employees less likely to move on should the right opportunity arise.

Helping employees manage emotional situations during a relocation is imperative, because if they feel lonely, fearful, anxious, or angry, their work performance will suffer, and everything from productivity and engagement to an organization’s recruitment efforts will be impacted. Examples of services that make a difference in this way are settling-in services, spouse or partner employment support, and cultural training. These services enhance Relo EQ by minimizing the perceived threat level in the future state, thereby improving productivity and increasing employee retention and engagement.

When a spouse or partner of a relocating employee is out of work, the negative effects can lead to the employee’s resignation. Not only is the spouse dealing with loss of professional identity and loneliness due to lack of co-workers and friends, but there’s also stress from the loss of income. IMPACT Group’s data shows that the average salary of an accompanying spouse or partner is more than $75,000. The uncertainty of that financial gap could be a major determining factor in whether a candidate will accept a relocation offer or not. We should also consider the emotional challenges that emerge from a prolonged job search in an unfamiliar city. Job search assistance is one concrete option that, for a minimal investment in the relocation policy, can significantly reduce the threat of that future financial uncertainty and enable greater levels of focus and productivity for mobile employees.

MOBILITY IN TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Talent mobility is a critical way for employees to develop their skills across functions, jobs, projects, and geographies, and many employees want opportunities to expand these skills. Mobility can improve critical thinking and help workers demonstrate their leadership—both of which are vital when vying for management or executive-level positions. However, mobility opportunities can backfire on an organization if the relocation experience it offers focuses only on logistics.

Organizations can no longer expect to source and hire enough people with all the capabilities they need. They must move and develop people internally in order to thrive. Our research found that 51% of employees accept a move for the purpose of career development and 22% say they moved for a promotion opportunity.
The winners of the war for talent will proactively align their talent practices with employee motivations.

When business operations and travel begin to resume, organizations will continue to globalize and will likely need to compete aggressively for top talent again. The importance of internal, enterprisewide talent mobility programs will be paramount. Through a more thoughtful approach to Relo EQ—taking a human-centered approach to relocation—employees will be able to better align their personal goals with company goals. They will also be clearer on the “why” for the relocation and the “why” for their personal career.

THE EVOLUTION OF EMPLOYEE RELOCATION
With the promise of “lifetime employment,” employees used to pick up and move, no questions asked. There was also a time when relocation could mean a significant financial windfall for employees. But the concept of relocation has evolved. In the 1990s, we saw the dual-career couple emerge, as families had trouble supporting themselves on one income. We also saw numbers of male accompanying spouses increase as more women took on the role of breadwinner.

Today, while temporarily paused in the face of a global pandemic, there is still competition for top talent, and new skills will be in demand: Workers are looking for organizations that offer a positive employee experience, and organizations are realizing the benefit employee engagement has on their bottom line. All of this has transformed, and will continue to transform, what is required in talent mobility.

As we address globalization pressures in the 2020s, organizations should tailor mobility programs to ensure their relocating employees have a successful transition. Profits erode when companies incur moving expenses for employees who leave. In order to be successful, businesses need to shift their focus from logistics to helping employees through emotional situations. Relo EQ is the future of employee relocation. Organizations that focus on the emotional side of the move will ensure greater profitability from their efforts to mobilize global talent.

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OVERCOMING CULTURE SHOCK
How international schools can be a lifeline

BY ANGEL LOZANO
We have friends all over the world who have never moved, and they think that relocating to a new country is a vacation for us. They only see the benefits, not the hard work to get there.” That’s from Anna, a mother of three who moved with her family from Poland, her native country, to Germany and then to London.

Her opinion is shared by many in the expat community. It is true that people who have never moved internationally do not know the potential problems an expat family faces. Sonya, a Canadian who lives in the U.K. after moving from Switzerland, also points out the challenges of moving internationally: “Relocating can be a lonely proposition. Often, local communities are reluctant to welcome expats in if they think we will only be around for a short time. This is something that most people may not foresee, and it can prove to be quite difficult.”

One thing is certain: Almost every person who moves between countries will experience “culture shock.” Definitions vary, but in a September 2019 article on Investopedia, Troy Segal provides a good summary: “Culture shock is the feeling of uncertainty, confusion, or anxiety that people experience when visiting, doing business in, or living in a society that is different from their own.” Expats will immediately relate to this definition.

Overcoming culture shock is key to a successful relocation. It may be experienced at varying levels, depending on how different expats’ native culture is from the culture they are moving to. Over time, some people can overcome culture shock on their own, but they don’t have to. Organizations are available to provide help, advice, and resources to allow transferees to better adjust to the new society in which they will live.

For expats moving with children, these organizations include international schools.

A Built-In Community

An international school offers access to families who are or have been in the same situation. They understand the challenges of relocating to a new country and can identify with transferees. Often, school becomes the best “social club” for the international family. This is an important consideration and may influence expat families as they choose whether or not to enroll their children in an international school.

Schools may also offer parent groups that provide support to new families as they cope with the emotional, social, and practical issues inherent in the transitions of expatriate life. At London’s TASIS The American School in England, a parent association includes the Parents’ Information and Resource Committee (PIRC). Along with social events, these parent volunteers organize orientation seminars and information sessions on different practical topics, such as driving in the U.K. And not only do they support families as they adjust to life in England, but they also help prepare them for their next move.

Expatriates with children can also ask about “buddy” programs that can help new families settle in to school and adapt to life in a new country by connecting them with others who have already been through the relocation experience and may have children of a similar age and gender. Shoko, who just returned to her native Japan after a few years in the U.K., is an enthusiastic advocate of expat parent networking: “We’ve moved roughly every four years. We were introduced to a buddy family, who were very helpful and provided much support. We found the parent community an invaluable network, which helped us settle in and greatly enriched our experience over our four years in the U.K.”

If families are able to enroll their children in a school before an official move, that in-country contact can help to prepare transferees for life in their new home and be a source of great advice. Conversations can cover topics as diverse as the better areas for housing, the need to buy a car, the health care system, how to open a bank account, and how to get mobile and internet connections, among other concerns. Any family relocating with teenagers knows how important this last item can be, since even a day without connection will seem like a disaster to your children. For a less stressful relocation process, make sure to manage these issues as soon as possible.

Overcoming the Language Barrier

While familiarity with a language may lessen the immediacy of culture shock, differences in words, meanings, and the way in which people communicate can still lead to misunderstandings and confusion. “Sometimes the assumption that it will be easier makes it difficult,” says Anna. “You are not anticipating as many problems, yet it is still a big cultural change. And there are many British words that are simply not known to other English speakers, so there can be some guesswork. My husband and son are American, and they often look at me when a Brit word comes up in a conversation.”

According to Caitlin, a British mom who relocated to the U.S. and back again, “The language is not the barrier, but the differences in mentality, self-consciousness, and approach to life can be. Americans will have the impression that it is an easy transition, but after a while they see that, despite the language, it is a different country.”

The most frustrating moment of the relocation process may happen when expats are already in their destination and are starting day-to-day life. Something as simple as buying a screw in a country where a person does not speak the language could become a nightmare. Consider that the transferee needs to know how to find a hardware store and then drive there, and every country has its own driving culture. British drivers, for example, may be more apt to politely let you in when you use your turn signal and try to merge into a road, but the cultural norm for many Spanish drivers would likely be to accelerate to get past. Every country has its own rules, and it is important to be flexible, stay open-minded, and endeavor to find out how everything works as soon as possible.

Often, those who carry the greatest burden of the relocation experience in families are parents who are not being professionally relocated. These parents tend to deal with all the logistics of the move once they “land” in their new destination. Navigating a new culture and possibly an unknown language day by day can be quite stressful. Again, for them, the international school community can provide a lifeline.

An international school might, for example, offer classes to help parents improve their language skills. While it’s not an absolute requirement for expat families to know the host-country language, memorizing a few key words and phrases may help them get by. The ability to converse helps families fully enjoy a relocation experience. Many schools offer multilingual parent classes for those who want to improve their social English language skills. For Anna, the English language class offered at TASIS was helpful in ways beyond mastering some new speaking and reading skills. “The English language group is of great value to parents who don’t speak English as their first language,” says Anna. “Not only is it a language class, but it helps parents make friends and learn about the school, the culture, and events throughout the year.” Often, it takes only a few sessions for parents to gain confidence in their ability to participate in the social life of the school.

**Embrace the Experience**

Although relocating to a new country is a challenging experience, it is also a wonderful opportunity to discover a new culture and meet new people. Many expat families enjoy this way of life and jump from country to country every few years. The more remote the destination, the more challenging—but also the more rewarding—the experience may be.

Expats learn that every destination has its pros and its cons. But whenever they leave a country behind, they take with them the memories of all the moments their family experienced. And once they have moved on, they may even be surprised at how fondly they look back on the unique or quirky things that they never imagined they would miss. Embracing the adventure and reaching out to available resources can help them settle in and fully enjoy all the advantages that each destination has to offer.

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W ith a population of around 206 million, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, and 21 million of those people live in Lagos, making it one of the largest cities in the world. Lagos is the center of business and where most expatriates live; it also has a young population with a median age of 18, and about half of its residents live on less than US$2 per day.

Nigeria is the 12th-largest producer and the eighth-largest exporter of petroleum in the world, and it has the 10th-largest proven reserves. It also has one of the fastest-growing telecommunications markets in the world, and its finance sector is well developed. Nigerian-manufactured brands, such as Zinox computers and electronics and Innoson Motors, are gaining prominence as the nation embraces industrialization. Lagos has also become known as the heart of Africa’s tech scene, with one of the largest tech hub ecosystems in Africa. Before the COVID-19 lockdowns and social distancing recommendations, increasing numbers of co-working spaces were popping up to cater to the new breed of digital nomads making the city their home.

When business travel and global assignments begin to resume, expatriates arriving in Lagos will find themselves in one of the fastest-growing cities in Africa. Lagos gets a poor ranking by many living standard measures, which consider political and social stability, crime rates, and access to quality health care. Nevertheless, once expatriates get over the initial culture shock, there is more to Lagos than power cutoffs and traffic jams, with plenty to explore. And despite the chaos, expats can’t deny that Nigerians are a friendly, exuberant people.

As a young nation, its cultural identity is still being defined. There exist more than 300 indigenous cultures, each with its own food, dress, language, festivals, and way of life. However, a distinctly Nigerian way of doing things that is industrious, resilient, good-humored, improvisational, and flexible has emerged as a key characteristic, together with a sense of style, fashion, and music that is at once African and cosmopolitan. “We are masters of improvisation, always able to go with the flow,” says one Nigerian.
Nigerian society is hierarchical, with a focus on collectivism rather than individualism. Building trust and relationships is critical to business success, and patience is required to develop these. Decisiveness is admired. Flexibility, a sense of humor, and the willingness to improvise are great assets. Business meetings in Nigeria are very social occasions, providing the framework for the creation of solid interpersonal connections. English is the official language for doing business in Nigeria.

The Nigerian market benefits from a strong banking sector and the availability of a young, savvy workforce. The large and growing population creates a demand for products and services. Strong regional trade relations with other West African countries also make Nigeria an attractive market. Nigeria’s success, however, is hampered by inadequate power supply, poor infrastructure, skills shortages (particularly in management roles), crime, and corruption.

Nigerians have a less structured relationship with time, and the pace of business may be slower than in the West. E-commerce is developing, but most transactions are still carried out in cash. It is essential that the business strategy of a multinational company be tailored to speak specifically to this unique market. A homogeneous “Africa strategy” will likely fail to translate to a proud Nigerian people.

Nigeria ranked 131st on the World Bank’s Doing Business 2020 index—which assesses the business environment using various indicators including paying taxes, trading across borders, starting a business, and protecting minority investors—up 15 places from 2019.

The present leadership was elected on the promise of dealing with corruption, and it has taken a tougher stance while trying to encourage investment. Companies should ensure their employees are aware of applicable local legislation related to corruption, as well as the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) and U.K. Bribery Act (UKBA), and have policies and procedures in place to mitigate risks.

Other tips for doing business in Nigeria:
• Remember that bribery, corruption, favoritism, and nepotism are still unfortunate realities.
• Be willing to improvise and to make a real effort at getting to know Nigerian colleagues.
• Try to remain patient and calm in all situations.
• Be respectful of elders and those in higher positions of authority.
• Don’t criticize colleagues in public; instead, have a private word with them, if necessary.
• Nigeria is an incredibly culturally diverse nation, and expats should practice cultural sensitivity rather than stereotyping to try to understand the nuances of the different ethnic groups.
**Immigration and Permits**

Prior to the current coronavirus-imposed restrictions and lockdowns for all but essential and emergency personnel, immigration reforms aimed at improving the country’s business climate had introduced a visa on arrival.

Under this plan, expatriates require both a work visa and a CERPAC (Combined Expatriate Residence Permit and Aliens Card) to reside and work in Nigeria. For a company to employ an expatriate, it needs to have an Expatriate Quota (EQ). The EQ scheme is designed to prevent the indiscriminate employment of expatriates where there are qualified and suitable Nigerians to fill such positions.

Labor relations are governed by legislation that outlines fair labor practices. Labor issues are generally limited to industries that have employees with registered trade unions.

If shipping household goods to Nigeria, be prepared that shipments may take time to clear customs. A household goods shipment must arrive in Nigeria within two months of the arrival of the expatriate. The owner must be present at customs when the shipment arrives, and certain documentation is required, such as a valid work visa and residence permit. Certain items are dutiable, and others are prohibited; therefore, it is advisable to hire an international removal company to assist, of which there are many that ship to Nigeria.

Pets brought into Nigeria require a health certificate and record of inoculations, and they will be subject to a quarantine period. Importation of birds into Nigeria is prohibited.

**Housing**

Most expatriates live in rental properties off the mainland on Lagos Island in areas such as Victoria Island, Banana Island, Ikoyi, and slightly farther out in Lekki—the only areas that offer suitable-quality accommodation, security, amenities, lifestyle, and convenience.

Rentals are paid in advance for the entire lease period, and rental prices remain high. Landlords are not particularly accommodating or open to negotiation around rent, what things are included in the rental, installation of upgrades, or attention to issues during the term of the lease. Most buildings and compounds have facilities managers who can help to resolve issues.

Good properties are in demand and need to be secured quickly. This can present a challenge as companies try to balance this with the need to meet procurement and foreign payment requirements and conduct due diligence on landlords.

Terminating a lease early is not easy. Landlords may agree to refund upfront rental fees if they are able to find another suitable tenant. However, this is not common practice and needs to be negotiated. Agents’ commissions of 5% and 10% and legal fees between 5% and 10% are payable by the tenant.

Withholding tax of 10% applies to rentals, as does a stamp duty. It is recommended that rentals be paid in Nigerian naira, not U.S. dollars, to avoid exposure to exchange rate fluctuations.

Electricity is prepaid and unreliable. Most properties have generators. Generator costs are included in the annual service fee payable by the tenant. Most expatriate properties in Lagos use the borehole system to access potable water, as well as a water treatment system. Water is included in a service charge.

Safety and security are the biggest concerns for expatriates. Crime rates remain high throughout the country. Expatriates tend to live in apartment blocks or compounds with 24-hour guards, a perimeter fence, CCTV, access control, and an alarm system. Costs for security will be included in the service charge for the compound.
Families and Living

Most expatriate families in Nigeria choose to send their children to one of the many international private schools available. Most follow the British, American, French, or International Baccalaureate system. International schools are costly, and places are in demand. Therefore, it is important to start the school search early in the relocation process and factor costs and logistics into planning, aligning timelines with the school year when possible.

While the official language is English, 520-plus languages are spoken in Nigeria, the most common being Igbo, Yoruba, Ijaw, Fulfulde, Ogoni, and Edo. Nigeria is a religiously diverse society, with Christianity and Islam being the most widely observed. Traditional African religions make up about 1%.

Football (soccer) is the national sport, and the Super Eagles, the national team, are highly ranked among African countries and internationally.

Lagos offers several shopping malls with a mix of local and international stores. Large supermarket chain stores such as Shoprite and Spar stock a wide variety of fresh produce and other groceries. Everything you need can be found there, but the brands may be unfamiliar. As far as local restaurants go, Nigerian cuisine is known for its richness and variety and is spicy and aromatic.

The climate is tropical, with a distinct wet and dry season, hot and humid most of the year, with rainforests, wetlands, and savanna.
Health Care

While any possibly updated post-COVID-19 entry requirements are yet to be determined at the time of publication, it is expected that the requirement for all visitors entering Nigeria to have a yellow fever certificate will remain. A yellow fever vaccination can be obtained from a travel clinic or hospital in the home country. The yellow fever vaccination must be administered at least 10 days before traveling to Nigeria.

Private health care is generally good in Lagos, including hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, general practitioners, dentists, and specialists. Wealthy Nigerians, however, still tend to go to the U.K. for more complicated medical procedures. Health care insurance and evacuation coverage are essential; although medical treatment is available, in the event of complications or an emergency, treatment in the U.K. or South Africa may be required. Most hospitals require patients to pay in cash immediately and then later file a claim on their medical insurance.

Medical checkups and advice on vaccinations and any chronic medication should be conducted prior to moving to Lagos.

Tap water in Lagos is not suitable for drinking. Bottled or filtered water is widely available, and arrangements can be made for supplies to be delivered.

Malaria is endemic in Nigeria. Precautions are recommended to prevent being bitten by mosquitoes.

Safety and Security

Nigerian people are generally well educated, entrepreneurial, and friendly. Nigeria, however, is a very complex society with a turbulent post-colonial history of authoritarian military rule, back-to-back coups, ethnic and religious divisions, and more recently, inequality between its well-educated, wealthy elite and the country’s rapidly growing urban poor. Crime and threats of terrorism—mainly in the North—are therefore a risk in Lagos.

Corruption is prevalent in business and day-to-day life. At roadblocks, some police officers may request or insist on a bribe—referred to locally as a “dash.” So, another advantage of having a local driver is that they have a better understanding of the system and are less likely to be taken advantage of.
Transportation

Infrastructure has not kept pace with increased urbanization, and the supply and quality of power, water and waste management, and road infrastructure are under strain, particularly in Lagos. A great deal of infrastructure development is in progress—the challenge is keeping pace with the sheer number of the city’s inhabitants.

Most expatriates have drivers, not because expatriates are not permitted to drive, but because the local driving style requires a skill set most expatriates do not possess. Local drivers are better equipped to navigate relations with local police, extremely congested traffic conditions, and often poor roads. Most companies provide their expatriate employees with a car and a driver.

Once again, social distancing and lockdowns notwithstanding, traffic congestion in Lagos has to be experienced to be comprehended. Prior to the pandemic, about 7 million people or more were typically on the move daily, on both the mainland and the adjoining islands. The islands are connected to the mainland via a limited number of causeways that are brought to a standstill during peak traffic times, which last much longer than in other cities. For expatriates relocating to Lagos, it is critically important to understand the impact of the city’s transportation challenges and to find an acceptable balance among work, home, and school locations.

Public transport is not recommended for expatriates but consists mainly of minibus taxis called *dankos* and motorbike taxis called *okadas*. Drivers are skillful in navigating the chaos; however, the rules of the road are largely ignored. Although drivers are not aggressive, a professional driver and a 4x4 vehicle are essential for newcomers to the city. Drivers familiar with traffic patterns, layout of the city, and dealing with local policing practices are invaluable in reducing frustrations for newcomers.

If expatriates choose to drive, they will need to obtain a Nigerian driver’s license, as international driving permits are not accepted. The process of getting a Nigerian driver’s license is fairly simple, but it can take some time to navigate potential bureaucratic hurdles.

Finances

Nigerian goods and services are subject to VAT at 7.5%. Personal income tax ranges from 7% to 24% depending on income. Nonresidents are subject to the same tax as residents. Double taxation agreements exist between Nigeria and some other countries.

Lagos is ranked as one of Africa’s most expensive cities for expatriates. Expat housing is expensive in Lagos, as a premium is paid to live in an expat area and to cover additional fees for security, water, and electricity as noted previously. Imported foods are costly, and the need for a driver and international schooling also add to the cost of assignments.

The local currency, the naira, fluctuates frequently and significantly against the U.S. dollar, which needs to be factored into payroll, the local package being reviewed quarterly, and the bulk of the package being paid in the home location.

Nigeria has a well-developed banking sector, with both local and international banks represented. Expatriates can open a local bank account, and typically do for day-to-day transactions, but most expats also prefer to keep an offshore bank account.
Expatriates will be surprised and delighted to discover Lagos’ thriving music scene, with a variety of music styles originating from the city, such as Afrobeat, jùjú, and Nigerian hip-hop. The Nigerian music scene received international attention when MTV hosted the continent’s first Africa Music Awards show in Abuja. The country also has a film industry, known as Nollywood, which is now the second-largest producer of movies in the world.

Visitors might also be surprised to find beautiful tropical beaches complete with bars and restaurants. Two of the most popular beaches are Tarkwa Bay Beach and Eleko Beach.

Lagos is a city of contrast, modern and cosmopolitan yet underdeveloped, but certainly vibrant, on the move, ever-changing, and distinctly Africa. M

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The Certified Relocation Professional Designation
Understanding Workplace Culture: Some Typical Japanese Beliefs

By Katheryn Gronauer

While it’s important not to lump every individual from a culture into one label or stereotype, it’s also valuable to understand some of the more commonly found cultural drivers of workforce norms and behaviors. In Japan, key differences in cultural values are often cited as reasons why some foreigners leave Japanese companies. But those differences don’t have to drive away workers—if individuals take the time to gain a better understanding of how the Japanese view workplace dynamics.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT
Japanese people tend to value those who have spent a solid amount of time following procedures, helping other teammates, and showing dedication to the company, typically through working long hours. Managers in Japan act as mentors who present opportunities for job growth to subordinates from the top down.

Many other cultures tend to place greater value on results and output as the key measure of whether or not an employee is ready for job growth, and generally believe that employees need to be assertive to their managers about opportunities they want to pursue.

A Japanese manager might find it surprising to hear career demands from an employee whom she believes has not yet shown enough dedication in the areas she finds most important. Her subordinate from another culture may feel he has produced quality results within a short time and therefore is ready for more challenges, and may find himself frustrated when his manager says he is not ready.

WORK STYLES
A “lack of fit with Japanese corporate culture” and “difficulty with communication” accounted for 28% of the reasons many non-native workers left Japanese companies in a recent survey conducted by the human resources company Disco.

For example, Japanese people tend to be process-oriented, whereas many other cultures are results-oriented. Employees in Japan are typically required to check with their managers before taking action as per protocol. Expatriates who do not understand why may perceive this rule as unnecessary and time-consuming. Strict procedures can make them feel that they are not trusted and that they lack autonomy and opportunities for creativity.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE
Japanese companies are notorious for having people work excessively long hours. A big contributor is the cultural value around prioritizing work above all else. Other cultures place a much higher value on work-life balance. The disconnect can be difficult at Japanese companies. At the same time, if employees from other countries do not participate at the level of their Japanese counterparts, it appears to show a lack of dedication, causing further tension in relationship quality.

Japanese managers also feel the stress of these cultural differences. In a recent study by PERSOL Group, a Japanese employment agency, 34.3% of Japanese managers with non-national subordinates reported feeling intense stress due to difficulty managing self-assertive personalities, demands for salary raises, and low indication of loyalty to the company.

PICTURE THIS
Expatriates who have pictured themselves in the role of a Japanese manager have found it easier to recognize the benefits of abiding to protocols. But knowledge of cultural differences alone is not enough. Ideally, Japanese companies, too, would take into account the work values of their foreign counterparts and identify areas of compromise to increase the likelihood of retaining global talent. Both Japanese companies and expatriates would also benefit from having open conversations about workplace expectations regarding work quality and participation during the hiring process.

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