

Employee Experience

MAKING THE BEST OF STAFF RELOCATION THROUGH THE
EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE





In recent years 'employee engagement' has taken a backseat to the broader 'employee experience'. This accommodates a greater scope of focus for what workers look for from an employer, including better work-life balance and upskilling opportunities.

Nearly 85 per cent of respondents to Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends 2019 survey thought employee experience is an important issue yet to be addressed in their organisation. Overworking and reduced staff wellbeing leading to productivity burnout and job dissatisfaction is an increasing concern for organisations worldwide, especially during high-stress periods. Improving the employee experience is therefore critical - nowhere more so than in talent mobility policies.

Staff relocation overseas is an essential part of modern business growth - mobility is seen by more than 75 per cent of respondents as important or very important to their organisation (Deloitte). But it can also present difficulties for organisations that don't focus on the employee experience during the process.

In this whitepaper we first consider what factors contribute to the employee experience during an international relocation. We then analyse how the changing relocation market is affecting the way organisations manage staff wellbeing during an overseas move, as well as other barriers to success.

What factors contribute to the employee experience during relocation?

Two factors fuel talent mobility in organisations:

1. **The needs of the business:** Either to fill an available role overseas or improve staff training.
2. **The drive of employees:** To experience new cultures or to advance their careers.

Deloitte shows nearly one-third of businesses cite the need to expand operations to new markets as the main reason for trying to improve internal employee mobility.

However, few businesses consider an overseas work placement as an opportunity to improve employee engagement. SIRVA's Mobility Report shows 16 per cent of all international relocations are entirely voluntary, indicating the desire amongst employees for relocation to experience a new culture or way of working.



Businesses should repackage employee relocation as a chance for individuals to upskill or take on new responsibilities while staying in the organisation. Nearly half of SIRVA's 2018 survey participants rated work experience outside their home location as a key requirement for career advancement, further showing this desire for chances to impress overseas.

The employee experience also hinges on how the relocation timeframes are handled. Employees will quickly become disgruntled with the move if the company is too focused on managing costs at the expense of satisfying their needs. Similarly, staff will also want an overseas move resolved quickly, meaning administrative processes need to be streamlined.

But this is all becoming increasingly challenging as changes in the working world continue to affect talent mobility.

The changing nature of business talent mobility

More and more organisations are looking at cost when reviewing their staff relocation processes. Cost management was ranked as the primary challenge in SIRVA's 2018 Mobility Report showing the growing desire for enterprises to reduce costs without sacrificing mobility capabilities.

Businesses also need expertise to streamline relocation processes (according to 46 per cent of respondents to SIRVA's 2018 survey) and improve the speed of service deployment (33 per cent). Overseas placements are stressful for employees and their families, as well as the support staff required to manage the logistics of the move. Adding to this pressure with a complex relocation process that drags on for months will only harm the employee experience.

Finally, organisations need to consider the trends changing the way employees work. The digital age has made online collaboration easier than ever, while the 'gig economy' has changed the thinking on how projects are completed. More frequent, shorter term working periods are replacing ongoing workflows, contributing to new expectations about flexibility on location-based assignments.

This is a theory borne out in SIRVA's Mobility Report showing that while long-term international move volumes will stagnate in the next one to three years, over 40 per cent of respondents expect an increase in short-term relocations.

Considering each of these factors and how they will affect the employee experience is important for businesses to ensure they are getting the best from their mobilisation policies without compromising staff happiness.



Other barriers to a smooth employee experience during relocation

Internal processes aren't the only barrier to a positive employee experience. Many external factors can affect how staff members feel about an impending move, including:

- Immigration and visa control.
- Shorter assignments time with less notice.
- Changing desires towards moving overseas.

Immigration and visa control

Tightening border control measures worldwide are becoming a significant barrier to businesses relocating employees abroad. In Australia, The Department of Home Affairs recently sanctioned changes to its skilled visa programs to accommodate a new list of eligible employment roles. There has been a particular focus on increasing migration to regional areas and regulating the number of doctors entering Australia. This is part of a worldwide trend towards re-analysing immigration numbers and altering the types of migrants eligible to move abroad.

Protracted visa application processes can add further stress to relocation and dampen the excitement employees may feel about trying a new role overseas.

Shorter assignments time with less notice.

With an anticipated increase in shorter-term relocation assignments comes employee stress around the impact of travel on their home life. More than 60 per cent of young professionals say their employer expects them to be ready to travel at a moment's notice, according to a Hilton Corporate Travel survey. Not giving employees fair warning about an overseas relocation, no matter how short-term, can ultimately compromise their positive employment experience.

Further, Hilton research shows nearly half of business travellers say their company doesn't consider their personal lives when arranging overseas assignments. A significant amount of this limited foresight when it comes to overseas assignments comes from senior management expecting millennial workers to relish the opportunity to travel. However, times are changing, and young professionals are not as willing to head overseas at any time as many believe.



Changing desires towards moving overseas

Many businesses believe that as more millennials enter the workforce their desire to work overseas will maintain the demand for overseas relocations. However, BDO research suggests that this thought process does not necessarily follow reality.

A survey of employees in 20 countries found 18 per cent are 'very likely' to accept a work move abroad - a 7 per cent decline from 2012. Further, BDO found that factors beyond the employer's control - such as changes in government policy or social unrest in relocation destinations - matter a lot to staff. That makes improving employee experience within a streamlined and cost-effective move critical.

Managing the employee experience when mobilising talent

Only 40 per cent of businesses are ready to meet the needs of talent mobility in the coming years, according to Deloitte's survey. Those who don't account for the employee experience and manage relocations professionally could compromise staff wellbeing and drive the most talented away.

About SIRVA, Inc.

SIRVA delivers customized relocation and moving solutions that satisfy the needs of clients and their people in the highest quality and most efficient way — wherever they do business. Offering an extensive portfolio of mobility services across 170 countries, SIRVA provides end-to-end solutions and delivers an enhanced mobility experience for clients and their people. SIRVA has a portfolio of well-known and recognizable brands including Allied, northAmerican, SMARTBOX, and Allied Pickfords.

SIRVA AUSTRALIA

Level 2 Suite 2.02, 636 St. Kilda Road, Melbourne VIC 3004

+61 (3) 8696 3400

contact@sirva.com.au

www.sirva.com.au

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