

# Sifted \ Guides

A guide for growing and globalising companies



## How to run the modern office

### HR tech to manage global teams



# How to run the modern office

## HR tech to manage global teams

How companies manage their global mobility — also called employee relocation or assignments — is undergoing big change, and CEOs are looking to HR to sort it out. Fortunately, new players are opening up options for businesses of all sizes with tech that promises to manage the process more smoothly — and at a fraction of the cost. In this guide, we hear from HR and talent managers about navigating the uncertainties of the post-pandemic office, and discover how they can maintain their ambition to nurture global career paths for employees, even as companies watch their pennies more closely.

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# Global mobility is here to stay



Hanna Asmussen, CEO and Founder, Localyze

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Global mobility is always in transition. Most recently, we've seen it transform from an idea that emphasised bringing people to work into one focused on bringing work to people. Even as we face more economic uncertainty, one thing is certain: global mobility is becoming more important for businesses.

Globally, there were around 281m international migrants in 2021, representing a 27% increase over 10 years. As the populations of many developed countries age and retire and developing countries continue to stay young, global mobility will become the key to balancing demographic changes — ensuring businesses can find the skilled workers they need, no matter where they may be headquartered.

In the interim, we're also seeing an increase in digital nomads and business trips, with people moving around the globe at rates much higher than in the past. In the United States alone, the number of people who have become digital nomads grew 131% between 2019 and 2022. And while global business travel took a hit in 2020, it's expected to see a compound annual growth rate of 3% over the next several years, becoming an \$829.5bn industry by 2027.

Amid these changes, countries are creating new visa and immigration options to encourage business and remote work from within their borders, leading to shifts in global economics. More than 50 countries now offer some form of digital nomad visa, making them enticing destinations for the roughly 62% of workers aged between 22 and 65 who work remotely at least occasionally.

All of this movement adds up to a lot of admin for companies to keep up with, leading to a crop of global mobility service providers designed to make things easier. Global mobility platforms such as Localyze, and others mentioned in this report, are empowering companies to break down borders and embrace a global workforce. Whether your goal is to bring qualified employees to your HQ, hire them remotely to work from their current location, or provide benefits to help your employees thrive, you'll find a solution for your needs within these pages.

The good news is that when you get global mobility right, your employees are likely to thank you with increased loyalty and hard work. Most (91%) of expat workers who receive company benefits are satisfied with their jobs and 40% of expats are among the top performers at their current companies. Additionally, employees who are satisfied with the support they receive from their company are 1.5x more likely to stay with the company.

Companies need highly qualified people in order to thrive. More and more, these people can be found beyond their borders. Companies who embrace global mobility are reaping the rewards of happier employees, better problem solving and higher levels of innovation, while setting themselves up to thrive in the coming years.

We hope you enjoy this Sifted special report featuring insights from those in the trenches of global mobility. Localyze is determined to help break down borders in order to make global mobility simple for both you and your team. We're just getting started and can't wait to see what the future holds.

## Introduction

# So you want a global mobility plan...

Can tech take some of the pain out of managing distributed teams?

**G**lobal mobility — also called employee relocation or assignments — broadly involves one of the following: business travel, short-term, long-term, or permanent relocations. Business travel and the long relocation have dipped but the other two categories have shot up since the pandemic.

Most companies now allow their employees to embark on some kind of temporary or permanent remote work, hybrid cross-border work, or virtual assignments and “digital nomad” activity. But such arrangements are rarely consistent throughout the business.

Suddenly, companies are finding themselves in the position of needing to standardise the practice — through a global mobility strategy — in accordance with not just internal strategies, but international laws.

And just as likely, companies find themselves needing to set up programmes to boost relocations because they want to tap into a larger talent pool with more diverse skillsets, levels of seniority and life experience. Global mobility programmes are also shown to help attract talent, and once employed, improve rates of employee satisfaction and retention.

The pressure is on to do this well: 90% of employers say they’ll either sustain or increase their company’s mobility scope over the next three years, according to a recent poll of 1,000 HR executives by consulting firm EY. The survey, carried out in 16 countries, also revealed that companies are seeing the advantage of talent moves in their equality, diversity and inclusion goals, with two thirds (61%) saying it creates better opportunities for underrepresented groups.

Still: less than half, or 47%, say they have a “globally consistent mobility policy” addressing options like hybrid mobility, relocation or temporary projects, according to EY.



**More employees want international placements — use this to attract and retain talent and hit diversity targets.**



**Set expectations with a strong, standardised mobility strategy for the company, rather than case by case.**

## HURDLES TO A CROSS-BORDER CAREER

HR and talent managers could be forgiven for dreading the task of relocating their employees. When companies venture into foreign lands, there's a maze of rules to master, all of which requires a fair amount of legwork, brainpower and some fretting over liabilities.

Complexity can quickly mount up. EY research from 2022 found that firms operating in 30 or more countries needed an average of nine payroll providers. Sometimes knowing where your employees are is hard enough for big companies — less than half of mobility professionals say their companies consistently track employee movement across borders. Relocating can be even more painful for employees, who may have to uproot their families.

For all these reasons, specialist relocating services are becoming a lifeline for HR managers, as well as legal, compliance and administrative bosses, in companies that don't have the means or policies to support large-scale relocations in-house. New startups are arriving with promises to speed up painful visa applications and help give relocated employees a softer landing in their new countries.

New tech won't, on its own, guarantee the success of mobility plans. As we'll also discover, there are many everyday human factors required to make distributed teams function well. And with budgets tightening, there's a constant pressure on HR managers to convince their bosses of the value of these plans.



**HR can't master all the complexities (and liabilities) of international transfers on their own.**



**Even amid budget cuts, no matter the company size, outside help can create cost-saving efficiencies.**

# What does a global mobility strategy entail?

If well designed, a company's global mobility plan can boost profits, attract talent and improve rates of employee satisfaction and retention.

## LOGISTIC ISSUES

- Relocation
- Technology
- Legal and tax compliance
- Support for family and dependents
- Work continuity

## STRATEGIC ISSUES

- Market expansion
- Talent development
- Employee wellbeing experience and inclusion
- Employee retention and recruitment

## WELCOME TO OUR GLOBAL MOBILITY GUIDE

As companies grow, globalise and bend to the desires of employees, we know that HR tech — specifically the growing global mobility landscape — can be daunting. This manual can help make sense of things. It breaks down into three parts:

- How HR managers are managing global teams, and how mobility startups are supporting.
- The roles HR and talent managers say they're still struggling to master, and whether more tech would help or hinder.
- Our top tips for HR managers as they try and master mobility in the new workplace.

## Chapter I

# Rise of the relocator

Companies are using new tech to lower the stress and cost of moving employees from A to B

Running a global workforce and shuttling employees between offices requires a small army of people — lawyers and consultants mainly — with miraculous knowledge of visas, tax laws, health insurance rules and embassy opening hours. Can't it all be simpler?

### HERE'S WHAT'S CHANGED ABOUT MOBILITY STRATEGIES

As an example of a traditional internal work assignment strategy, consider the established programmes at HSBC, a banking company with staff in over 80 countries. Its two mobility programmes — one short, one long term — are both designed to give employees international experience. "The short term one is the most popular," Georgina Hawkes, the bank's head of global mobility, told a conference organised by EY recently. This is for junior talent, who relocate for six months to a different region. The long-term programme is "designed for the top 1%", says Hawkes, and relocates senior staff for two or three years to different parts of the world. "It's been incredibly important to [our] success over the years."

But with the air full of "the great resignation" and "quiet quitting", every sector — from tech to hospitality —

faces a fight for the top candidates. And expanding international opportunities has emerged as an important lever for retention.

**“The market will look elsewhere if you don't offer some flexibility around hybrid and international working.”**

*Reece Procter, team lead for people operations at Personio*


"The market will look elsewhere if you don't offer some flexibility around hybrid and international working," Reece Procter, team lead for people operations at HR tech unicorn Personio, said at another recent event. Workers expect a slice of foreign adventure in their jobs and are voting with their feet for flexible employers. In response, companies are establishing programmes to boost relocations with the goals of keeping employees happy, while also making sure they're accessing the best talent they can.


“Everyone’s minding budgets a little more carefully, but at the same time, the expectation from employees of what a relocation looks like is more now than in the past,” said Procter. “The cost of not doing it well is very serious when it comes to attrition rates.”

And personal choice is now playing a larger role in relocation. It used to be that the employer would facilitate an employee moving somewhere for strictly business reasons, but now, in the post pandemic world, it’s just as likely to be the employee who decides where they’re going.

The pandemic changed the way companies think about employee mobility, confirms Audrey Carroll, director and head of global mobility at biopharma giant GSK. “Previously, mobility was all about [how] the business needs you to move somewhere. There was very limited engagement about what individuals had a choice in doing.” Now, she says, there’s a greater effort to strike a balance on what a business needs and the “personalisation and individualisation” needs of an employee.

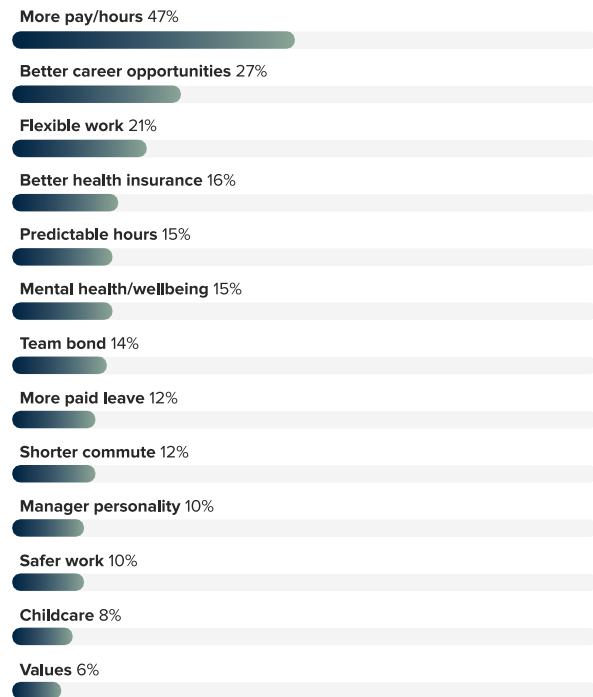
This isn’t just for the mega-firms to offer as a reward: good flexible work policies are also helping some smaller companies, too. Many small and mid-sized employers have introduced policies to enable periods of international work. Initially, these policies were responses to the pandemic, but as hybrid working has taken over, relocation cases have increased for companies.

 **Global mobility is democratising across the company — adjust/expand existing programmes as needed.**

 **Retain talent by enabling workers to individualise their assignments.**

## Flexible work is a top 3 motivator for finding a new job

~12,000 workers say remote option now essential



Source: McKinsey poll (almost 12k workers interviewed), 2022

## THE ‘GRAND COMPLIANCE PIANO’

Employees appreciate this increased work flexibility but it’s undoubtedly messier to manage. HR heads have been sprinting to catch up on all the rules around shorter-term assignments, whether it’s the small print on a digital nomad visa or rules around the extended working vacations that have become the norm in many companies.

“A lot of topics — like social security [in different countries] — were unknown to me, but I had to dive in,” says Colette Sloet tot Everlo, senior people business partner at Otrium, a Dutch ecommerce site. Oftentimes, HR managers found themselves navigating laws written a long time ago for very different working circumstances.

HR managers like to say the new office is flexible — within reason. “We have to protect our employees

but also the company,” one HR manager tells Sifted. “Because the moment your company decides to relocate people to different countries, it’ll come up against a bunch of new hurdles.”

UK-based Payroll, a platform to help companies recruit and pay distributed teams, describes the risks of relocating employees to new countries as “a grand compliance piano” hanging over employers.

Undoubtedly, there have been mishaps as companies have figured out the new working world. According to one HR head at a big European startup: “We had an employee who moved to Spain and he didn’t get paid for two months because we didn’t work out the local process in time.”

The pandemic changed a lot, but some things remained the same: if you want to send employees to a tech hub like Canada, the UK or the US, for instance, you’ll face labyrinthine visa processes. Even giant companies struggle with compliance requirements. “Aspirations are great until you put a dollar figure beside them,” says Brian Madine, director of global benefits and mobility at fast food chain McDonald’s. “One of the questions I get [from colleagues] on a regular basis is: can’t you just make it so I can send anybody wherever I want and we don’t have all this cost and compliance to deal with? So after consulting with Tinkerbell I come back and tell them that’s not going to happen.” The company has fewer than 50 employees on foreign assignments right now, Madine says.

“It looks very easy. It’s far more difficult to implement,” says HSBC’s Hawkes. “We can’t just say, ‘hey David, go work where you want and you’re responsible for your own taxes’. Ultimately we have a corporate responsibility.”



**The cost of relocation will never be zero. But the business wins if the right people are in the right places.**

## RELOCATOR HELP FOR THE MASSES

The other challenge is that HR managers, no matter the size of the firms they serve, have plenty of other things to deal with these days. The pandemic elevated the HR role, making the job more vital and dynamic, and now HR/people managers — depending on the size of their company — might be overseeing everything from recruiting, onboarding, training and maintaining a happy ship to performance management, conflict resolution, firing and exit management.

Against that backdrop, global hiring and mobility and navigating the ensuing visa and housing challenges, while vital, are distractions. It’s time to enlist help.

So HR managers are turning en masse to so-called employers of record companies and relocation specialists.

**“At the beginning, it took us a week or two to onboard someone; now it’s less than two days on average.”**

*Job van der Voort, CEO and cofounder of Remote*

Employers of record companies, like Remote, accept legal liability as the on-paper employers of global hires. Legally, they are the employer of your employee. You, the client, hire your people, set the pay scale and determine the employment agreement. The employer of record handles everything from taxes to insurance.

“At the beginning, it took us a week or two to onboard someone; now it’s less than two days on average,” says Job van der Voort, Remote’s CEO and cofounder. The founder estimates that his company, which has just under 1,000 employees, has already helped hundreds of thousands of people around the world get paid.

Other specialist global mobility platforms, which are challenging the traditional big consultancies for business — examples in Europe include Settly, Jobbatical and Localyze — help with the many tasks of



moving employees and settling them into new countries. They promise to rapidly speed up the visa application process, helping growing tech companies hire quickly, and get newly relocated employees bedded into their new countries.

Scooter company Tier, logistics company Forto and fintech TransferWise are just a few of the many European tech companies availing themselves of these talent management services.



**It's tricky to manage all aspects of mobility work in-house.**



**Companies of all sizes are turning to specialist services.**

## REDUCING THE FRICTION, TESTING THE WATERS

If companies are reluctant to relocate employees, it's because there are a lot of moving parts to doing so. Getting a visa, probably the most onerous step, requires a fair bit of legwork. Tech players are helping companies by doing candidate screening to determine the likelihood they'll be approved for a work permit or visa. They're also offering task management systems, to break down long processes into step-by-step tasks, and automation features, like the ability to e-sign and pre-fill documents, to cut some of the time-consuming and repetitive aspects. For the employees who are doing the actual moving, these platforms typically offer a database of resources, articles, FAQs and other information relevant to their destination country.

Companies want to spend the least possible amount of money and effort to relocate people. Some companies prefer to hire talent via employers of record services as a first step; then, after assessing an employee's performance over a period of time, they'll think about relocating, if they consider the employee to be worth

the effort and cost. Relocation specialists give you the flexibility "to test the waters" in new countries, says Personio's Procter. His company managed 165 employee relocations in 2022 alone.

These services could be particularly useful for any founders who want to make a rapid move into new countries, says Kim Goddard, director of talent at Point Nine, a Berlin-based VC firm that invests in early-stage companies. "I've seen a lot of after-the-fact-thinking," he says, referring to startups that moved into a new country and then bumped into compliance and hiring challenges.

Using a talent relocation company, you can hire a bunch of people in the US, for example, and see how that works out before deciding whether to open a permanent base. Hiring bit by bit like this is also a good way to manage costs. If you're a European company and you're suddenly paying salaries to US employees — who typically command bigger pay cheques than Europeans — it can "become very painful, very quickly," Goddard adds.



**Specialist third party services help companies size up possible candidates for relocation in a fairly cost efficient way.**



**Employer of record services help companies expand experiment with expansion.**

## MORE RELOCATIONS, LESS LAWYERS

UK startup Raft develops software to automate freight management tasks and uses a relocation service to move employees around different parts of the world, from the US to India to the UK.

"Previously we've had to work with lawyers on this, and lawyers are 1) expensive and 2) not automated," says Scott Leishman, the company's chief people officer. For him, a good relocation effort "takes away anything that distracts an employee from getting up to speed", and

using a relocation platform means "spending less per case, [which] is a big consideration," he explains. The cost of these services vary but can start at about £500 per relocation.

"It's also important to keep up to date with all the changes going on around the world — be it the war in Ukraine or something else, and finding a lawyer that covers all this is never easy," Leishman adds. Russia's attack on Ukraine in 2022 sparked one of the biggest employee relocation efforts ever seen in Europe.

Companies are turning to specialist help because relocating is "one of the most stressful things you'll ever do," Leishman says. "It's not [even] so much immigration that's a hassle; it's the settling in, the [finding] a bank and housing." One thing he likes to do at Raft is create a one-pager for new hires, with information on the nitty-gritty of living in London; tips for how to get a travelcard and open a bank account, for example.

German tech consultancy Diconium saw fast growth in 2022, onboarding a "three-digit number of employees", according to Philip Schröder, the company's director of people and organisation. Schröder also uses a relocation service to help move employees around because, having lived in South Africa, the Netherlands and now Germany himself, he knows personally the pain of packing up and going to a new country.

Newly relocated staff to Germany need help with "the really weird" aspects of living in the country, he says. "If people feel taken care of from the beginning, people have a much longer stay [at our company]," he says.



**Relocation services helping reduce company spend on lawyers and other specialised agencies.**



**They're also giving assignees softer landings in their new countries.**

## KEEP IT INTERESTING

Edita Lobaciute, chief marketing officer at Remo Workspaces, a company started by two Ukrainians to offer employee offsites in fancy locations, predicts the trend of working remotely will only grow, as cities become more expensive to live in. "Rising prices are making more people think about relocating. We're not looking at metropolitan areas to expand in: we're looking for nature, a beach, a forest; something like that so people can really have a quality work day." Countries including Croatia and Greece are only too happy to jump on the bandwagon, developing special visas for sun-starved workers.

Employees want to know: will my company let me skip off to the coast for a few weeks every year? A ranking published in early 2023 by Flexa, which helps jobseekers find the tech companies with the most flexible work options, reveals there are still many companies willing to give workplace flexitarians the freedom they want.

There's Zopa, for example, a digital bank that allows staff to work for up to 120 days abroad with no change to their compensation. It offers employees their pick of 13 locations across Europe, the US and Asia where there would be no impact to tax arrangements. Payments company Paddle, meanwhile, lets staff work from anywhere for six weeks a year — with the added benefit of £250 worth of Airbnb credits towards the cost of doing so.

Flexa says the number of jobseekers searching for "remote-first" roles — where staff spend most but not all of their time working remotely — more than tripled between January 2022 and December 2022. During the same period, the number of workers expressing a preference for roles with "fully flexible" working hours increased by 23%.



**Work flexibility is sure to remain a key benchmark for job seekers.**



**Employers will compete on who can deliver the most flexible perks.**

## HR founders are flush with VC cash

Two of the 10 most funded HR tech companies in Europe specialise in global mobility services (starred).

### jobandtalent



A \$500m Series E in 2021 — the largest funding round for a European HR-tech company — made the temporary staffing startup Spain's third unicorn. It raised another \$250m in 2022.

### Personio



This Berlin-based HR software firm for small and mid-sized businesses raised \$470m through its Series E in 2021 and 2022 to drive expansion.

### multiverse



\$220m was raised by the London-based apprenticeship startup in a Series D in 2022, less than a year after closing its \$130m Series C.

### Beamery



A \$50m Series D in 2022 made this London-based, AI-powered talent platform a unicorn. It helps clients (including several of the Fortune 500) manage their workforce.

### factorial



A \$120m Series C round at a \$1bn valuation in 2022 will be used to expand their HR management platform tech and product line for small and mid-sized businesses.

### omnipresent \*



The London-based talent management platform, with services ranging from global hiring and through to payroll and benefits, raised a \$120m Series B in 2022.

### anywr \*



Formerly named Cooptalis, a \$108m funding round in 2022 will be used by the international recruitment and job mobility operator to support expansion plans.

### malt



The Paris-based freelance consulting marketplace for developers and designers raised €80m at a €400m valuation in 2021 to develop its offerings.

### ZENJOB



In 2022 the job matching marketplace helping people find temporary side jobs — popular in its home country of Germany — raised a \$50m Series D to scale its platform.

### MEDWING



The Berlin-based recruitment marketplace for healthcare workers — currently available in Germany and the UK — raised \$47m in a Series C in 2023.

## Chapter II

# Why tech can't fully replace humans

A successful global mobility plan still depends on many human factors

HR teams are having to do more with less manpower. A poll of 1,000 HR managers, carried out by software company Humaans in the US and Europe and published in March 2023, discovered almost 60% of people teams had experienced layoffs recently, despite over 50% of respondents saying the role of the HR professional has grown more complex.

Amid these staffing challenges, HR teams have had to adapt very quickly to new realities, says Michael Ephgrave, head of global mobility at Swiss pharma giant Novartis. "The expectations of people have changed. How do we remain relevant? We need to offer choice, flexibility [and] we must remain compliant and attractive."

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## 35%

of global mobility & HR bosses are still using Excel spreadsheets to manage their programmes.

*Source: Equus 2023*

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You can automate more and more parts of the HR function and still hit brick walls. For Remote, which helps companies hire global talent, the biggest task is getting employees hooked up with visas, so the company works with Localize on this. "It's the hardest one to solve," says van der Voort. Tech can't reach inside immigration ministries and extract answers. "All the cases are truly unique and out of our hands. We do our work in short order, then we submit [to immigration], and we just have to wait for a reply."

Startup Settly estimates that relocating staff takes 3-5x more time from a HR team than their ordinary functions due to laborious repeatable tasks and employee queries. Digital platforms, realising there will be occasions when tech alone won't cut it, complement their offerings with case management experts, who HR bosses can call up to talk them through a specific issue they're having with their relocation.



**HR is already busy, and their teams are shrinking. Tech can pick up some — but not all — of the slack.**

## WHO GETS TO GO MOBILE?

Big companies, meanwhile, are still figuring out how to be consistent on mobility across all their bases post-pandemic. "We're trying to come up with a global policy," says Juan Carlos Gonzalez, senior director global mobility at Microsoft.

And while HR managers have more tools and data than ever to support and evaluate their work, it remains difficult to create mobility programmes that give equal opportunities to employees. Ideally, foreign assignments would help companies reach their diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI, targets, says McDonald's Madine. "How can I have someone sitting out on assignment for nine years, prohibiting other people from having that development opportunity?" he adds.

But while some companies may use mobility plans to boost inclusion, data firewalls within organisations can make planning tricky, as Gonzalez explains. "It has been really challenging for us [at Microsoft] to cross reference our mobility data with our HR's [DEI] data, which is extremely confidential," he says.

**“Our mobile team is the future leadership of [our] company and we want to have a 50:50 split.”**

*Tom North, manager of mobility at Rio Tinto*

Other HR managers admit that there's a gender divide in their relocation programmes that they badly want to fix. "It's heavily weighted towards men," says Tom North, manager of mobility at mining group Rio Tinto, explaining his company's mobility challenges. "Our mobile team is the future leadership of [our] company and we want to have a 50:50 split."

If there's homework for companies to do here, it's probably to think more about how DEI and mobility can intersect, as the two issues "are generally disconnected within organisations," according to a 2021 Deloitte study. Talent experts will tell you: promoting a diverse

group of colleagues to plum foreign postings will make a business more attractive to a wider job market. This insight is also found in studies, like the 2019 research from BCG surveying over 16k people worldwide, which cited "visible role models who represent diversity in leadership" as one of the top ways an employer could support women, people of colour and LGBTQ+ employees.

## Only 1 in 5

international assignees are female, even though women represent more than 40% of the workforce.

*Source: Deloitte 2021*



**Strive to avoid biases. Only human intervention can ensure DEI goals and mobility goals are aligned.**



**Arm yourself with the right data to ensure your mobility plan is inclusive and equitable.**

## SELLING MOBILITY TO YOUR CEO

Before HR managers can implement their mobility plans, they have to win at office politics and sell their vision internally.

But with companies closely watching the pennies in 2023, Leishman says he's suddenly hearing about a "lot of pushback" from companies on relocating employees. "A lot of companies are looking at relocation now and going: should I really need to do that? There's a lot of talent out there. There's a lot of talent in-location," he says.

With budgets tightening, HR managers will have to further push the case for global mobility, says Tassu Shervani, professor at the SMU Cox School of Business

in Dallas. “You have to educate your workforce on why mobility is a good idea. You have to design a mobility programme that shows how it’ll benefit [employees] and their families. Your children could become bilingual, [for example] and gain experience of a new culture,” he says.

If HR managers are in need of bottom-line-boosting arguments to sell mobility plans, they should look at some of the studies around talent hoarding. The practice of allowing managers to keep their top performers from moving anywhere else in the company is generally bad for overall performance, research shows.

## “You have to educate your workforce on why mobility is a good idea.”

*Tassu Shervani, professor at the SMU Cox School of Business in Dallas*

McKinsey this year studied 1,800 companies, looking at how much they focus on developing human capital and whether they financially outperform their sector peers. The consulting firm found that companies that develop and manage talent well perform the best financially. Companies stood out for having “a higher share of internal role moves and more training for employees,” the report says. At these companies, 42% of employee moves are internal, and by creating these opportunities for staff to learn in different posts, these employers are deemed better at nurturing their employees’ interest in staying.



**Even amid budget cuts, mobility strategies gain executive support when they align with business goals (e.g. expansion, retention, employee satisfaction and DEI targets).**

## THE HUMAN TOUCH IS NEVER OUT OF FASHION

Companies are very aware that a bad relocation can harm retention. Raft’s Leishman recalls a colleague in a previous job whose productivity suffered because his relocation to Stockholm was so stressful.

“We discovered [how] he was struggling to find a place to live in the city. He had decided to stay in a hostel boat on the river — and this was around Christmas time. He was not getting any sleep at all because people were partying through the night,” Leishman says. If employees have upheaval in their personal lives, they can’t be at their best in work, he adds.

It’s important to have tech to help take care of logistics; it’s just as important to have humans to follow up with relocated workers to make sure they’re doing alright.

Another time, Leishman had a colleague who relocated to Tallinn and the first evening they slipped and cut their arm badly in the shower. “We then thankfully had someone [nearby] able to bring them to hospital.”

It’s not just dramatic life events: people need help with “all kinds of things that get forgotten, so human contact is also important,” says Diconium’s Schröder. It might just be a reminder to go to your embassy to hand in a tax form. “They appreciate knowing when to be where,” he adds.



**Arm yourself with good tech, but keep the in-house humans central and available to staff.**

## Chapter III

# The checklist for managing mobility in the new workplace

Tips for setting up a hassle free mobility programme

A minority of CEOs really want to shutter the new office. This group is not having much luck because flexible work — which has stabilised at well above pre-pandemic levels — is surely here to stay. In fact, pollster Gallup expects fully remote work arrangements to nearly triple compared with 2019 figures.

After being cooped up for so long during the pandemic, employees are bursting to experience new things; they want to get out and see some of the world and grow their careers in different countries. This work-from-anywhere mentality means companies have to shape up and compete in a totally different dimension now. Managing people on the move has become the new expectation, but many HR managers admit to struggling with the question of how to keep their team spirit alive across spaces and timezones.

Furthermore, the talent a business needs won't always be where the business is located. Freight software company Raft, for example, has its main base in London but needs people with great knowledge of ports (for this reason, Rotterdam is a particularly good talent-spotting and talent-developing ground). The lesson here can be applied broadly: sometimes you have to move employees — or move employees to you — to get the

best for your company. The same holds true for large corporates, like HSBC, which see the value in sending their employees from A to B to nurture their “top 1%”.

With so many companies turning to tech for help to make sense of post-pandemic hiring and relocating, and to help boost talent retention and satisfaction, it's a great opportunity for startups with shiny talent management systems to sell.

Because downturn or not, workforce planning, and all the tech that comes with it, is something HR leaders can't ignore. “One of the top pain points for business is the struggle to attract and manage talent,” says Robin Godenrath, founding partner at Picus Capital, an investment firm in Munich. “This is not going to change and you're going to need tools to keep up with this.”



**Relocating employees is sometimes the best way to get the skills your company needs.**

# Top tips for managing mobility in the new workplace

Sifted talked to the people people and gathered their top do's and don'ts.

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## Do...

### **Hire a head of mobility**

There's only so many ways the people manager can divide their attention. A dedicated, in-house person to look after mobility and act as a point person for travelling employees is no bad thing.

### **Outsource, outsource, outsource**

Let's face it: it's a tall order for anyone to figure out tax or employment rules in (for example) France or Germany. So your team is going to benefit from outside help (i.e. specialist SaaS and tech platforms and providers) on this one.

### **Refine your mobility plan**

The majority of companies are letting their employees embark on different kinds of temporary or permanent remote work, or hybrid cross-border work. Now might be the time to review this activity and see if it still makes sense, or needs a tweak.

### **Bake mobility into career paths**

Workers are restless, data tells us, with many opting into the great resignation. If companies want to boost job satisfaction and retention, they should think more about how mobility can be integrated in overall talent strategy, benefits packages, setting development and career milestones before, through, and beyond a deployment.

### **Ask questions**

Find out what your employees like and don't like about your company's mobility plan. "Sometimes leaders can make assumptions about what people need," says Personio's chief of people Ross Seychell, a big fan of using surveys to constantly refine his strategy. Surveys are good but one-to-ones will likely deliver more interesting results, he adds.

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## Don't...

### **Let managers talent hoard**

Department heads naturally want to hold on to their superstars, but HR leaders should push top performers to help the company by taking foreign assignments.

### **Forget to sell the DEI angle to your CEO**

Hitting diversity, equity and inclusion, or DEI, targets is another good argument for global mobility and helps keep the conversation in top management circles, talent experts say.

### **Forget to buddy up**

When an employee relocates to another country, they benefit from a local buddy or mentor to help them get up to speed and overcome any language difficulties in their new home.

### **Neglect your tech**

Consolidating your HR apps to the essentials can reduce the time and resources spent juggling data from multiple systems, and help manage tricky tax and immigration compliance. "If instead of people messaging me all day asking me 'where's X?', I could point them to a central place where everything lives, well, that'd be great," a HR manager tells Sifted.

### **Over-engineer**

You can't be too rigid. Distributed working on today's scale remains new territory for most people, so keep experimenting. "Set the parameters, empower employees to make decisions and focus on the results. Just let it happen," advises Tanya Channing, chief people and culture officer at cloud company PipeDrive.



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Localyze is on a mission to help millions of people immigrate across borders, one relocation at a time. Localyze helps companies easily access international talent and mobilise their workforce globally. To date, Localyze has helped hundreds of companies and thousands of employees relocate across the world. CEO Hanna Asmussen, CRO Lisa Dahlke, and CTO Franzi Löw founded Localyze in 2018 after personally experiencing the pain of relocating from living between a combined 15 countries. After going through Y Combinator (S19) and raising investment from Frontline Ventures, Blossom Capital, General Catalyst Localyze's all-in-one software now simplifies the relocation process for HR leaders at leading enterprise companies across Europe and North America.



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