How to:
design policies for a global workforce

localyze

Table of contents

With the rise of digital nomadism and remote work, the accessibility of diverse talent across borders is more attainable than ever. As demands for global mobility increase, companies can improve talent acquisition, reduce employee turnover, and boost satisfaction by offering flexible work opportunities.

90%
of employers say they'll either sustain or increase their company's mobility scope over the next three years.
(Source: EY)

An increasing demand for flexibility from employees isn't the only factor shaping the future of global mobility. Businesses face added pressures, such as managing the bottom line, attracting and retaining top talent, increasing revenue, and staying competitive in the market.

The shift toward global mobility has been amplified by technological advances that dissolved the traditional barriers of communication and collaboration. Changes in government and immigration policies around the world have also made it easier for people to work across borders.

While the trajectory of global mobility is clear, organizations must carefully craft their mobility policies and practices to ensure they align with the evolving expectations of the new workforce.

Failure to do so could have significant implications for employee retention, as evidenced by *the Great Resignation of 2021*, which saw millions of employees leave their jobs in search of better work-life balance and flexible work arrangements.

91%
of expat workers who receive expat benefits are satisfied with their jobs, compared to 73% of their colleagues who stay local.
(Source: CNBC)

Failure to adapt could also lead to material cost implications encompassing reduced competitiveness and decreased revenue.

An analysis of more than 3,000 publicly listed companies showed that those with greater global diversity generated higher profits of 2.2 percentage points compared to the companies that did not prioritize global diversity. (Source: Boston Consulting Group)

The silver lining is that well-designed global mobility policies can mitigate these risks and yield positive outcomes. By embracing mobility as a strategic imperative, organizations can enhance employee retention rates,

increase innovation, attract high-caliber candidates, and cultivate a culture that champions diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I). The future of work will be more balanced, with a shift from working "for" a company to working "with" a company.

Through this report, we'll dive deeper into the current state of global mobility and explore the trends shaping its future trajectory. We will examine the types of mobility on the rise, those in decline, and the factors influencing these trends.

> **280 million people—3.6% of the global population—live in countries other than where they were born.**
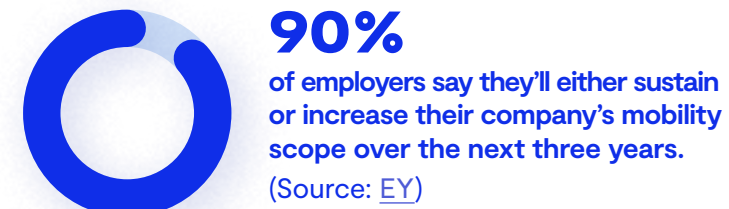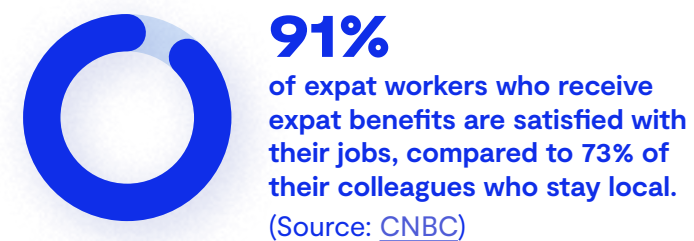> (Source: BCG)

Global mobility is a strategic business approach that enables employees to work and develop skills internationally by facilitating temporary and permanent relocations for remote, in-office, or hybrid work arrangements. Global mobility traditionally encompassed relocating senior-level employees for international assignments and arranging business travel as needed.

Now, in order to embrace the evolving needs of the modern workforce, it means much more.

Global mobility trends

Utilizing global mobility as a strategic approach, companies move and deploy employees across various countries and regions to achieve business objectives and support employee development. Global mobility encompasses a wide range of initiatives, including international assignments, relocations, business trips, visa changes, and office transfers. In today's highly interconnected world, global mobility plays a crucial role in driving organizational success, fostering innovation, and creating a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Impact of Global Mobility

Global mobility is no longer a "nice-to-have" aspect of talent management; it is a "must-have" that is integral to the future of work. However, navigating the complexities of global mobility requires specialized expertise, especially in areas such as immigration and compliance with local regulations. Below is a checklist of key benefits:

✓ **Access to global talent:**
Global mobility allows organizations to tap into a vast pool of talent from around the world to attract unique expertise and knowledge, overcome skill shortages, and enhance organizational capabilities.

✓ **Business agility:**
Global mobility gives organizations access to real time, on-the-ground regional insights to make better decisions, and quickly adapt to market changes, strengthening an organization's international presence.

✓ **Innovation and creativity:**
The exposure to different cultures, markets, and ways of thinking that come with international teams fosters an environment of creativity and innovation. This leads to the development of innovative solutions and products.

✓ **Employee growth and development:**
Employees gain the opportunity to take on new challenges, acquire new skills, and broaden their horizons through learning a new culture. In turn, organizations attract top talent because of their global mobility practices.

Types of mobility on the rise

The constantly evolving global landscape presents challenges and opportunities for organizations to tap into a diverse and talented workforce. Amid this transformation, several emerging global mobility trends are shifting the conventional boundaries of the workplace.

Work-related travel is on the rise

Work-related travel, including business trips, offsite events, meet-ups, and workcations, are all rapidly gaining momentum. These travel activities facilitate face-to-face interactions, foster negotiations, and promote networking opportunities.

In 2020, the business travel industry was worth $700 billion and is expected to grow 186% by 2028. (Source: Statista).

Companies are now recognizing the importance of integrating traditional business trips with other work travel initiatives into their strategies, as they not only enhance team building and collaboration but also contribute to a more flexible, adaptive work environment.

Relocating new and existing employees

95% of employers surveyed have encountered a tech skill shortage in the past year. (Source: Hays Recruitment)

As organizations compete for top talent, relocating new hires has become a viable strategy for attracting and onboarding highly skilled individuals from around the world. Especially in sectors with critical skill shortages, such as IT, hospitality, healthcare, blue-collar jobs, and

many others, increasing search parameters to include international candidates can close the gap for companies.

By offering comprehensive relocation packages, employers can enhance their appeal to prospective candidates and provide a smooth transition to their new roles.

Digital nomads are here to stay

The rise of remote work has given birth to the digital nomad lifestyle, in which employees work remotely from various locations around the world. Often, one employee will work from multiple countries and locations throughout a given period.

There are 35 million digital nomads internationally, and that number is only growing due to technological advances, changes in international policy, and the desire for a greater work-life balance.

In the US alone, the number of people who consider themselves to be digital nomads increased by 131% between 2019 and 2022. (Source: mbopartners)

European countries are actively embracing the digital nomad global trend, positioning themselves as highly desirable work destinations. Countries such as Germany

and Portugal have gone so far as to create specialized visas for digital nomads or freelancers, allowing them to reside within the country while legally working.

Flexible remote work policies that enable digital nomads to work from any location help attract and retain talent that may otherwise seek employment elsewhere.

Consider supporting digital nomads by facilitating their visa applications, as this can be a crucial factor in setting your company apart from competitors and attracting top talent.

International work assignments

As the global landscape becomes more competitive, businesses are challenged to develop and retain top talent capable of steering a company through international challenges. Employees of all seniority levels want the flexibility to work internationally, meaning companies that cater to this will gain a competitive advantage.

50%
of workers are willing to take up jobs abroad.
(Source: Boston Consulting Group)

As an example, HSBC, a banking company with staff in more than 80 countries, offers two mobility programs.

One is for junior talent who can relocate for six months to a different region. Georgina Hawkes, the bank's head of mobility, recently told a conference organized by EY, "The short-term one is the most popular."

The long-term program allows senior staff to relocate for two to three years and is "designed for the top 1%," Hawkes said.

It's not only large companies that offer flexible and international work as a benefit. Many smaller and medium sized businesses do too.

A study by Allied found that smaller to midsize companies most commonly relocate their employees compared to larger businesses, with 64% of those employees receiving compensation packages for their work-related moves. (Source: Allied)

By offering structured international work assignments, organizations demonstrate their commitment to employee growth and development, while creating a pipeline of future leaders equipped to navigate the complexities of global business.

Types of mobility on the decline

As new immigration policies influence the modern workforce landscape and societal trends, the traditional approaches to employee mobility are being challenged. Consequently, workplace demands are shifting toward a more flexible, personalized, and holistic approach to employee well-being.

To adapt to these changes, business leaders must stay informed and adjust their employee mobility programs accordingly.

Short-term assignments

Short-term assignments, typically lasting less than one year, present cost disadvantages compared to long-term assignments. Unlike other work-related travel, such as business trips, short-term assignments are intended to fulfill needs over an extended period rather than a brief, focused trip.

46%
of employees are only willing to relocate for less than 6 months without their family or partner.
(Source: Businesswire)

Traditional short-term assignments are offered when an employer has identified a specific need, whereas modern international assignments allow employees to take a more proactive role in shaping their work experience. Managing short-term assignments adds an administrative burden due to constant support and monitoring, especially if it's an employer-led trip. As employees rotate in and out of different locations or roles, companies must provide logistical support, visa arrangement, transportation, training, and other necessities.

As more companies explore expanding their remote work options, short-term assignments are considered less attractive.

The drawbacks of structured, one-size-fits-all programs

For years, structured mobility programs with standardized policies were the norm for many organizations. These programs often followed a rigid framework with predefined packages, benefits, and assignment durations.

While providing consistency and ease of administration, these one-size-fits-all programs overlooked individual employees' diverse needs, preferences, and circumstances.

From a company perspective, it is essential to align mobility programs with business objectives and talent development goals. Offering flexible and adaptable programs can increase participation, promote talent retention, and support the company's efforts to achieve success in a global marketplace. Companies should consider customizing mobility programs to address employees' individual needs, while also considering the financial, logistical, and strategic implications of each assignment. By doing so, they can maximize the effectiveness of their mobility initiatives and contribute to overall business success.

Limited mobility options

Historically, international assignments and global mobility opportunities were often reserved for upper management and senior-level employees. While this approach allowed organizations to leverage the expertise of experienced leaders, it inadvertently excluded a vast pool of employees from mobility experiences.

Expanding global mobility to include early and mid-career employees, rather than limiting it to upper management, unlocks opportunities for skill development and leadership growth, which fosters a diverse, inclusive workforce.

By offering global exposure and cross-cultural experiences to employees at all levels, companies can maximize the value of mobility across different roles and enhance overall organizational performance.

How to stay ahead

Companies are adopting more flexible approaches to build international workforces that address the diverse needs of their employees.

Consider the following to ensure your mobility policies are keeping pace with the latest trends to draw in and retain talent.

Personalization:
Design mobility programs that offer customizable options and benefits tailored to individual needs and preferences. This includes flexible assignment durations, support for family considerations, and personalized relocation packages.

Accessibility:
Ensure that global mobility opportunities are accessible to employees at all levels and in all functions. Create clear communication channels to inform employees about available opportunities and the benefits of international assignments.

Inclusive policy development:
Involve employees from diverse backgrounds in the initial stages of policy creation to ensure that their perspectives and needs are considered. Foster a culture of open dialogue and feedback to continuously improve mobility programs.

Leverage expertise:
Creating inclusive and flexible mobility programs is difficult for organizations, especially if they are starting from scratch. Seek out mobility experts and technology that help improve mobility processes.

Talent hubs across the world

Talent hubs are geographical regions with a high concentration of skilled workers who specialize in various fields. Understanding the dynamics of talent hubs enables companies to make informed decisions about locations for recruiting and provides deeper insight into the specific skills and proficiencies the regions have to offer.

When researching geographical locations, companies should consider factors such as talent pool size, skill specializations, and the region's societal and economic conditions. Resources like the Coursera Global Skills Report analyze data from millions of learners to identify global and country-level skill trends in business, technology, and data science, offering valuable insights for informed recruitment decisions.

In the report, countries are assigned rankings and categorized into four performance tiers:

- Lagging (25th percentile or below)
- Emerging (26th-50th percentile)
- Competitive (51st-75th percentile)
- Cutting-edge (76th percentile or above)

Emerging talent hubs offer companies the opportunity to access untapped potential, diversify their workforce, and gain a competitive edge from these rapidly developing regions.

Developing a global mobility policy while utilizing talent hubs for hiring enables companies to create a more competitive international workforce and provide existing employees with opportunities for international assignments.

By understanding the types of mobility set to increase and tapping into global talent hubs, organizations unlock the full potential of an international workforce while positioning themselves for future success.

Here are the top five emerging countries across each competency:

Business:	Technology:	Data Science:
Pakistan	Columbia	Columbia
Thailand	Malaysia	Georgia
Kenya	Thailand	Costa Rica
Jordan	Taiwan	Turkey
Romania	India	Romania

Designing global mobility policies

An inherent connection exists between global mobility policies and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) initiatives. By developing policies that address cultural inclusion and industry-specific nuances and labor trends, organizations can harness the power of DE&I to drive innovation and growth. In fact, organizations with diverse management teams have a **19% higher revenue** from innovation compared to those with below-average diversity scores (Source: Boston Consulting Group).

75%
of job seekers say that a diverse workforce is an important factor in evaluating companies and job offers.
(Source: Glassdoor)

62%
of mobility managers report that family support has helped sell assignments, while 33% reported improvement in job performance throughout assignments.
(Source: Mercer)

84%
of workers said they would be willing to relocate for work, and 46% were willing to relocate internationally.
(Source: Businesswire)

By weaving DE&I principles into the fabric of mobility policies, businesses can create an environment that caters to employees' unique needs and ultimately drive innovation, productivity, and employee retention.

Policies that account for the evolving definitions of family, minority inclusion, and diverse talent pools lead to more productive, innovative, and engaged teams.

Crafting global mobility policies is not a simple task. It's a process that involves navigating legal, societal, economic, and industry-related factors, while balancing employees' needs and interests with those of the business.

In the next section, we outline important aspects to consider when developing a global mobility policy that is inclusive to employees while considering external factors such as industry requirements.

Industry-specific policy designs

Each industry presents a unique set of considerations for global mobility. Let's dive into key factors for four major, global industries: healthcare, construction, hospitality, and tech.

Healthcare

According to a study by the World Health Organization, **15% of healthcare workers globally are working outside of their country of birth**. A number of the world's most renowned healthcare employers rely on emerging and fast-growing talent markets to support their workforce needs. By utilizing global talent pools, healthcare providers increase their capacity to provide high-quality care, while limiting their talent shortage and avoiding employee burnout.

In the UK's National Health Service (NHS), international workers comprise 16% of the workforce, while in the United States healthcare system, **18% of workers are sourced from abroad.**
(Source: NHS, Migration Policy)

Mobility policies in healthcare must address stringent regulatory and licensing requirements, language proficiency, and the need for continuous professional development. International rotations and knowledge exchange opportunities can enhance clinical practice and improve patient outcomes.

Healthcare talent differs based on specialty and niche. Germany, France, and India excel in producing doctors.

On the other hand, the largest number of nurse registrants on the UK's Nursing and Midwifery Council come from Nigeria. (Source: Yahoo, RCN)

Construction

By 2025, it's projected that the global construction output will increase by 4.4% and, by 2030, the global **construction market is predicted to be worth $8 trillion**. (Source: MarshMclennan)

In Europe, the construction industry represents 9% of the total GDP, while China has the top 5 leading construction contractors in the world. (Source: EBC) (Source: Finances Online)

67%
of companies state that skilled labor shortages are the top construction industry challenge.
(Source: Finances Online)

In North America, the construction industry will need to attract almost 600,000 additional workers to meet labor demands in 2023. By 2024, the industry will need to bring an additional 350,000 on top of that. (Source: International Construction)

Utilizing international talent is essential to providing construction businesses with the skills and people necessary for growth.

Furthermore, construction projects are typically time-bound and location-specific. Mobility policies must be agile, allowing for quick deployment of talent to project sites, while providing adequate support for temporary accommodations, travel, and work permits.

Malaysia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Kenya, Uganda, Poland, Mexico, and the Philippines are emerging as reliable sources of construction talent. (Source: Infomigrants) (Source: Monitor, Werk)

Hospitality

The hospitality industry thrives on exceptional service and cultural sensitivity. There are more than 187,000 hotels in the world, and companies need to ensure they are fully staffed in order to provide a quality experience to guests from across the globe.

The global hospitality industry was worth more than $4.6 trillion as of 2022 and is only expected to increase, as 78% of millennials say they would rather spend their money on experiences than things.

Despite massive growth, the hospitality industry is facing labor shortages. In the US alone, **94% of hotels are understaffed, with 50% of those hotels reporting "severe" shortages**. (Source: HospitalityNet)

By taking advantage of international hospitality workers, companies can bridge the hiring gap and provide their guests with the positive experiences they are looking for.

France and Switzerland are two examples of countries that have invested heavily in hospitality talent through large expansions of their hospitality schools. (Source: HospitalityInvestor)

" **By taking advantage of international hospitality workers, companies can bridge the hiring gap and provide their guests with the positive experiences they are looking for.**

Tech

94% of employers surveyed in a Hays Recruitment study have encountered a tech skill shortage. James Hallahan, a Hays director specializing in tech, said, **"Tech skills gaps are intensifying as we continue to see fewer young people engaging in tech careers each year."**

The fast-paced tech industry demands constant innovation and adaptability. Mobility policies that support remote work, digital nomadism, and international collaboration can foster creativity and attract top talent in this highly competitive sector.

70%
of global digital leaders feel that they can't keep up with tech trends because they lack skilled workers.
(Source: Nash Squared)

According to Coursera's Global Skills Report, prominent emerging tech talent markets include Columbia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Taiwan. While already established but yet-to-be-realized talent hubs are located in Spain, South Korea, Austria, Israel, and Brazil.

Structuring policies for remote vs. in-office work

The question of remote work vs. in-office has been in the spotlight as the modern workforce continues to change. "Remote work" is not a one-size-fits-all concept and includes a wide range of working arrangements.

Mobility policies need to be adapted to address the diverse scenarios that come with offering employees the option to work flexibly.

54%
of employees say that if they aren't offered the flexibility they want in a job, they're likely to quit.
(Source: EY)

Common types of remote setups include:
- Timezone-specific
- City-specific
- State/Province-specific
- Based in home country
- Nomadic, or work from anywhere
- Hybrid, or part time-in office, part-time at home

With 60% of today's knowledge workers following some form of hybrid work model, global mobility strategies must clearly outline the concept of remote work and the implications of each available option. (Source: The Conversation)

Companies planning to employ remote workers in different countries usually require an Employer of Record (EOR) or an established entity to ensure adherence to local labor laws, tax regulations, and management of payroll and benefits specific to the country's demands.

Additionally, organizations must balance addressing employee requirements and aligning their workforce with business goals.

In developing global mobility strategies that demonstrate an awareness of the advantages and challenges associated with both remote and in-office work, *consider the following factors:*

Define remote work parameters: Establish the specific types of remote working arrangements available for employees.

Outline eligibility: Clearly outline roles and responsibilities eligible for remote work and those that require an in-office presence.

Set expectations: Establish clear performance expectations, communication protocols, and work hours for remote employees.

Foster collaboration: Leverage technology to facilitate virtual collaboration, team building, and engagement for remote teams.

Address legal compliance: Consider tax, employment law, and data security implications for remote work across jurisdictions.

Policies for different work arrangements

It's clear that flexibility in the workplace boosts overall productivity and fosters collaboration between teams and departments. The goal is to strike a balance between operational and business requirements while prioritizing the employee experience. By offering multiple work options that align with business goals, companies show their commitment to providing flexibility while maximizing innovation and success.

Here are some common work models and best practices to include in a global mobility policy:

Remote work: Provide employees the flexibility to work from a location of their choice, supported by technology and virtual collaboration tools.

Offsites: Organize offsite meetings and retreats to foster team building, creativity, and strategic planning.

Workcations: Enable employees to work while traveling, providing them with the autonomy to explore new cultures and experiences.

In-office work: Design flexible, ergonomic workspaces that promote collaboration, innovation, and well-being for employees working in the office.

Co-working spaces: Explore partnerships with co-working spaces to provide employees with an alternative work environment.

Business trips: Facilitate strategic business trips that allow employees to engage with clients, partners, and teams in different locations, while providing support for travel logistics, accommodation, and safety.

Relocations: Offer comprehensive relocation packages for employees taking on international assignments, ensuring a smooth transition, cultural integration, and support for family considerations.

Best practices for implementing these work arrangements include:

Align with business objectives, and ensure each work arrangement aligns with the organization's strategic goals and operational needs.

Empower employee choice: Empower employees to choose work arrangements that align with their personal and professional preferences, while respecting operational requirements.

Maintain clear communication: Establish clear communication channels and protocols to ensure effective collaboration and coordination across different work arrangements.

Foster an inclusive culture: Foster an inclusive organizational culture that values and respects all employees' diverse work arrangements and contributions.

Evaluate and adapt: Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of work arrangements and gather feedback from employees to make necessary adjustments and improvements.

Effective global mobility policies unlock new business **opportunities and stimulate innovation**. Organizations can create a working environment that attracts top global talent by offering the work arrangements that best suit their industry and employee needs.

Mobility policy checklist

As organizations navigate the complexities of global mobility, a structured, comprehensive policy template or checklist can be a valuable tool for HR managers. The following template outlines key components to consider when designing global mobility policies, ensuring they're adaptable, inclusive, and aligned with organizational goals and employee preferences.

✓ I. Policy overview

Purpose: Define the objectives and scope of the global mobility policy.

Eligibility: Specify the criteria for eligibility in the global mobility programs and assignments.

Mobility Types: Identify and document the types of mobility programs offered.

✓ II. Assignment planning & logistics

Duration: Outline the duration of assignments, including options for short-term, long-term, and extended assignments.

Relocation Support: Detail the support services provided for employee relocation, including housing, travel, and family considerations.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance: Describe the process for obtaining work permits, visas, and compliance with local employment laws.

✓ III. Compensation and benefits

Compensation Structure: Define the compensation structure, including base salary, allowances, and incentives.

Benefits: Specify the benefits offered, such as health insurance, retirement plans, education support, and other benefits your organization may provide.

Tax Considerations: Explain the tax implications and any support provided for tax compliance.

✓ IV. Employee well-being & support

Health and Safety: Outline measures to ensure employee health and safety, including medical support and emergency assistance.

Cultural Integration: Provide resources for cultural training and language courses to support employee integration in new locations.

Work-Life Balance: Promote work-life balance and offer flexible work arrangements to meet employee needs.

✓ V. Performance and development

Performance Management: Define the performance management process for employees, including goal-setting, feedback, and evaluations.

Career Development: Highlight opportunities for skill development, training, and career progression as part of the global mobility program.

Repatriation: Outline the process for employees returning from assignments, including reintegration support and career planning.

✓ VI. Diversity, equity, & inclusion (DE&I)

DE&I Commitment: Emphasize the organization's commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive global workforce.

Equal Opportunity: Ensure that global mobility programs are accessible to employees of all backgrounds, genders, and levels.

✓ VII. Monitoring and evaluation

Policy Review: Establish a process for regular review and updating of the global mobility policy based on feedback and changing needs.

Metrics and Evaluation: Define key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of global mobility programs.

This template serves as a starting point for HR managers and global mobility managers as they design global mobility policies that align with the needs and expectations of the modern workforce

Harnessing the power of global mobility

Global mobility plays a crucial role in shaping the future of work, offering both opportunities and challenges for organizations navigating today's changing workforce dynamics.

Organizations that proactively design mobility policies that align with the expectations of the new workforce will be better positioned to attract top talent, improve retention rates, and drive global innovation. Strategic planning and careful consideration are required to accommodate diverse work arrangements, industry-specific factors, and employee preferences when creating these policies.

35%
of business leaders believe a globally mobile workforce is key to meeting strategic objectives.
(Source: Relocate Global)

Embrace the future of global mobility with confidence, and be part of the transformative journey that lies ahead.

At Localyze, we're reimagining how people move around for work by bringing together seamless technology, transparency and unrivaled service.

We believe in a world where companies can operate from anywhere— and employees can live and work where they want. By simplifying global mobility, Localyze has helped companies move thousands of employees across borders throughout Europe and North America.

visit **localyze.com**