

# TRENDS IN GLOBAL MOBILITY



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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stuart Jackson is an account director at Sterling Lexicon with 19 years' experience of working with multi-national organisations to manage complex global mobility programmes. A trusted advisor, Stuart is recognised for excellence in execution, collaboration and with a track record of designing and implementing successful, innovative mobility solutions.

## ENGAGING WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND BUILDING THE GLOBAL MOBILITY BRAND

The global mobility function, by the very nature of the services it provides, needs to engage with a broad spectrum of different stakeholders. For many, the global mobility brand has struggled to gain visibility and can be either misperceived or even poorly perceived. Some of the common restraining factors to stakeholder engagement organisations identify are:

- Mobility being seen as an additional cost to the company
- It can be difficult to explain what mobility does on a day-to-day basis
- Mobility is not prioritised by the organisation
- The compliance aspect of global mobility can lead to a perception that mobility is hindering rather than helping its stakeholders to achieve their objectives

The global mobility function is, however, becoming increasingly more successful at getting a seat at the top table. Global mobility professionals have a number of top tips for engaging stakeholders and building the global mobility brand:

### ***Understand the diverse needs of your different stakeholder groups.***

Human resources practitioners have very different objectives and speak a different language to managers within the business who have much more pragmatic requirements. Global mobility professionals need to be multi-lingual when it comes to managing diverse stakeholders. For example, the human resources and talent functions will take a stronger interest in discussions around talent pipeline, succession planning, the impact of non-compliance on ability to hire talent, employee experience, and mobility as a talent attraction and a talent retention tool.

The finance department on the other hand is much more likely to respond positively to facts and figures. Of course, this isn't always going to be the case. Getting to know all of your stakeholders individually rather than pigeonholing them should always take precedence.

### ***Maintain a regular ongoing dialogue with stakeholders.***

The environments both internal and external to the organisations change and evolve rapidly. Global mobility professionals need to be regularly checking with stakeholders whether or not they are still on track to achieve their objectives or whether or not the goals have changed. As the external environment changes, organisations have to react and evolve. There are countless examples of the very purpose of an organisation changing as its markets are impacted by changes in the macro environment. The evolution in sophistication of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Robotic Process Automation (RPA), to name but two factors are changing the business environment and forcing businesses to change. As a result the skills required by the organisation are simultaneously changing as the organisation evolves its corporate strategy. Global mobility professionals should be in tune with the organisation's requirement for changing skillsets and be ready to adapt accordingly.

### ***Understand where your global mobility objectives sit as a priority to the organisation and develop strategies to push different aspects of your agenda at a different pace.***

For example, the compliance risk created by short-term business travellers may be high on your list of issues to address, but if the organisation is not aligned there is little point in running into a brick wall. Better to develop alternative strategies which allow you to keep the issue on the table. Equally, if the culture of the organisation isn't to focus on employee experience, it may be just as well to focus on different aspects of your agenda.

### ***Bring the data, bring the evidence.***

Ultimately, if you want to enact change, you're going to have to build a solid business case which lays out why you believe the organisation needs to adopt a given approach. Tracking key data and being able to benchmark against similar organisations will undoubtedly support the case for change.

### ***Understand where the power lies in the organisation and how global mobility is structured in relation.***

Is the organisation managed as an HQ centred, top-down hierarchy or does autonomy sit within individual business units or country locations? One global mobility professional we spoke with recently admitted that the CFO and the finance function were by far and away the most powerful players in the company. The relative standing and structure of the global mobility function in relation to that is equally important. Is the function centralised or decentralised? Does the function sit in human resources, talent or compensation and reward?

### ***Form alliances.***

Many voices singing in harmony make a more persuasive argument than just one voice alone. If you can enlist other departments as supporters and advocates of the change you envisage, there is a much greater probability of succeeding.

### ***Make time for stakeholder engagement.***

One of global mobility's perennial retorts to the argument that stakeholder engagement needs to become more of a priority is that there simply isn't the time to do so once all of the multifarious transactional and compliance related activities have been executed. One global mobility professional and strong promoter of stakeholder engagement we spoke with recently simply doesn't accept this rebuttal. In her view, stakeholder engagement isn't simply a nice to have but a necessity. She overcame her global mobility team resourcing issue by having everyone make a detailed activity log to show how and where the global mobility team were spending their time, allowing her to successfully make the case for additional resource. This approach may not be one which can be exactly replicated in all organisations, however it can be used to identify and highlight displaced activities such as stakeholder engagement which are ultimately necessary to run an effective global mobility function.

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