



Spotlight on Global Mobility Pathfinders

Leaders unlocking the value in Global Mobility

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October 2024

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Introduction

The past few years have posed unique challenges and opportunities for global mobility professionals.

The pandemic all but shut down the international and domestic movement of employees, then ushered in a new era of remote and hybrid working. Today, the ongoing global talent shortage and growing geopolitical instability continue to impact mobility teams.

While the landscape has become less predictable, one underlying success factor remains constant. To deliver their service to the business, global mobility leaders rely on an interconnected ecosystem of internal stakeholders, systems and suppliers.

There are stakeholders throughout the organisation, who influence global mobility, and rely on services provided by global mobility. Top of the list are the cross border employees themselves, along with their families. But there are other, cross functional partners to consider, such as HR Business Partners, Talent Acquisition, Talent Development, Payroll, Finance, Legal and Tax. There are also the business leaders who influence the strategy for global mobility and select the final candidates.

In addition, global mobility depends on a diverse community of external suppliers, who provide everything from technology to tax advice, travel, shipping, accommodation, insurance services and more.

The most effective mobility leaders and teams – those we call the Global Mobility Pathfinders – integrate this complex web of partners into a single, close knit ecosystem.

Pathfinders blaze a trail into an uncertain future by continuously thinking ahead and being critical of their own programme to ensure it adds value to the organisation.

Global Mobility Pathfinders take a highly collaborative approach to working with their ecosystems. They create a “modern network of interrelated and interdependent stakeholders, processes and resources, which enable and support the mobility of employees across countries and regions for business purposes. By leveraging modern technology architecture, they facilitate simple but powerful experiences for all involved”. That’s how being a Pathfinder is described by Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Senior Director, Global Mobility at Microsoft.

Our research has identified seven Global Mobility Pathfinders. Based on our conversations with them, this report examines:

- How they connect with their ecosystems
- How they join up the necessary data sources
- How this integrated approach drives a best in class service
- What characteristics the Pathfinders share.

Read on to find out what the Pathfinders are doing right – and what mobility professionals can learn from them.



Introducing the Global Mobility Pathfinders

To identify the Global Mobility Pathfinders, we took our cue from KPMG's established HR Pathfinders research. This reveals the global HR functions that are navigating an unpredictable environment by focusing on six key priorities:

1. Delivering strategic flow
2. Being digital in thought, word and deed
3. Advancing analytics from insight to action
4. Unlocking talent globally
5. Making purpose real
6. Prioritising the person

On this basis, our global mobility experts discovered eight organisations that we consider to be Pathfinders. They are leading their peers when it comes to creating and integrating their mobility ecosystems; connecting their data to gather insights and tell their stories; and delivering strategic value.

The companies our research identified as Global Mobility Pathfinders – and the leaders who contributed to this report – are as follows:



General Motors

Julie Kozlowski
Director of HR
M&A & Global Mobility



Henkel

Marlin Hötting
Head of Global Mobility



Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Kerwin Guillermo
Global HR Compliance
Enablement



Microsoft

Juan-Carlos Gonzalez
Senior Director
Total Rewards & Global
Mobility



Phillip Morris International

Rosemary Barber
Head of Global Mobility



State Street

Chiru Koppula
Managing Director
& Head of Global Mobility



Vodafone

Cathryn Vose
Head of International
Mobility & Global
Employment Taxes

Naturally, the Pathfinders do not necessarily excel at all six priorities all of the time: our wide-ranging conversations with them reflected each one's particular strengths and capabilities. But between them, they're showing us the way forward in challenging times.

Prioritising the global mobility team

Pathfinders instinctively grasp the value that global mobility offers the business, and empower their mobility teams to deliver the best possible service and outcomes.

This is a key focus at General Motors. “There’s a tremendous emphasis on making sure we have the best team, and that they’re providing the best employee experience,” says Julie Kozlowski, the company’s Director of HR, M&A and Global Mobility.

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Julie Kozlowski
Director of HR, M&A & Global Mobility
General Motors

So how do the Pathfinders ensure that their mobility teams are best in class?

We identified three underlying success factors that they embed in their global mobility functions:

- Pride and purpose
- Progression and development
- Continuous evolution.



Pride and purpose

Pathfinders instil a strong sense of 'pride in their work' in the global mobility team; along with a clear understanding of, and conviction in, their purpose.

For Kozlowski, fostering pride began by taking a step back to appraise and challenge the team.

"We asked them: are we best in class? Are we aligned with the company's objectives? If not, why not, and what will it take to get there? We wanted to instill an awareness among the team that they have the ability to be the very best."

When it comes to purpose, "everything starts with the 'power of why'", says Kerwin Guillermo, Global HR Compliance Enablement at Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE).

"I started by figuring out what mobility is for at HPE," he explains. "Why do we send people abroad?"

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Kerwin Guillermo
Global Head of Employee Mobility
HPE

He discovered a number of business objectives: sales and revenue generation; technology installation and maintenance; client project execution; implementation of HR strategy; and the ongoing modernisation of a company that is more than 80 years old.

This need for clarity of purpose is echoed by Rosemary Barber, Head of Global Mobility for Philip Morris International (PMI).

"It's important that the team understands what they're here for – which is to mobilise talent in support of our strategy to achieve a smoke-free future. We have to communicate that, and make sure it gets heard."

Her efforts to get that across are reflected in PMI's regular employee pulse survey. The mobility team routinely scores highly for the question: 'Do you understand the purpose of your role, and where it fits into the greater scheme of the company?'

Barber believes that clarity comes from the top. Global mobility leaders must understand what their purpose is, what they're aiming to achieve, and which direction they're going in. "You can't possibly motivate your team unless you have that clear purpose yourself," she says.

"As a global mobility leader, you can't possibly motivate your team unless you have a clear purpose yourself."

Rosemary Barber
Head of Global Mobility
Phillip Morris International

Progression and development

Progression is vital to keeping people motivated in their jobs. But offering a career path can be a challenge in the mobility space, where there may be a perceived 'ceiling' at the head of function level.

Yet the reality is that there's plenty of room for development in mobility roles. It's an extremely varied job, which demands a wide – and transferable – skillset. Pathfinders capitalise on this diversity to give their mobility teams as many experiences as possible.

"There are so many opportunities in global mobility," affirms Chiru Koppula, Managing Director and Head of Global Mobility at financial services provider State Street.

"You work on tax, compliance and payroll. You work on long-term moves, short-term business travel, and remote and alternative arrangements. You work with immigration, suppliers and much more."

The message he gives to his mobility team is: nobody will be limited to their current job and skillset. "You'll have the chance to learn new things, to be challenged, and to develop and grow. That's something that we encourage."

"There are so many opportunities in global mobility. Our message is: nobody will be limited to their current job and skillset."

Chiru Koppula
Managing Director & Head of Global Mobility,
State Street

HPE's Guillermo goes out of his way to introduce a broader set of skills into the mobility team.

"I look for people who want to do more than mobility," he affirms. "I never hire candidates who tell me they want to be in mobility forever. I've taken on many recruits with no mobility experience at all: analytics experts, workforce planning and management professionals, and so on.

"They bring different abilities and perspectives, which benefits the team as a whole. Then when they move on, they fly the flag for mobility, as they know the value it provides."



Continuous evolution

Adapting to a changing landscape – while continuing to deliver a great service – isn't easy. It takes leaders out of their comfort zone. It may mean reorganising teams, and potentially offshoring or outsourcing some activities. That comes with risks: what if it fails?

To Pathfinders, however, moving with the times is business as usual. They continually adjust the mobility team structure and delivery model, as market conditions and business requirements shift.

That demands what Barber of PMI calls a “mindset of continuous evolution”. She’s constantly asking herself: what should the team look like? What’s the optimal structure, and where should it be located? What activities will we be taking on in the future? What skills and expertise will we need as a result?

“One of our priorities is to evolve and reshape the team – adapting to whatever the business needs, and to the external environment,” she explains.

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Head of Global Mobility
Phillip Morris International

Kozlowski highlights the need to do more with less as a driver for continuous change at General Motors. “Our next journey is to deliver high-quality services even more effectively, while reducing costs. That will mean restructuring our service delivery model.”

At HPE, Guillermo has worked to strengthen his team’s capabilities by unbundling them. “We examined our core strengths as a programme to see how we could separate them out, and use them as instruments to attract, retain and develop talent,” he recalls.

The KPMG Perspective

Prioritising the global mobility team should be an early step in the strategic optimisation journey. Yet the team and people aspects are typically not given priority until later in the process. In some cases, they are little more than an afterthought.

Truly effective change can only be achieved by highly motivated and engaged individuals with a strong understanding of their business. This, combined with the focus the pandemic has placed on people and wellbeing, makes the global mobility team a great place to start. Global Mobility Pathfinders are empowering their teams to shape the continual evolution of their mobility programmes.

Going forward, global mobility teams are likely to need less traditional, transactional skillsets. Instead, in demand data and digital capabilities will come to the fore, along with softer skills like creative thinking, and interpersonal and influencing abilities.

Global mobility leaders must anticipate what’s coming next, rather than reactively adapting to the next big initiative. As they do so, focusing on the shape, skills and needs of their team should continually be a top priority.

Engaging with internal stakeholders

Global mobility cannot operate in a void: its purpose is to serve the organisation.

Doing so requires mobility teams to stay close to their internal stakeholders. And that means the whole organisation: mobile employees can come from anywhere across the business.

“My recommendation is to get close to your stakeholders, as close as you can,” says Marlin Hötting, Head of Global Mobility at chemicals producer Henkel. “Give them a voice in your decision-making.”

Chiru Koppula at State Street agrees: “Mobility definitely gets a seat at the table. We’re closely aligned with the HR function and business partners; we have a lot of traction there.”

The first step in connecting with the stakeholder ecosystem is to map it out – an exercise that Barber has been through at PMI.

“It’s a question of working out who your stakeholders are, who you need to influence, and piecing it all together like a big jigsaw puzzle,” she explains. “Then investing time in meeting with individuals and listening to them.”

With that foundation laid, mobility leaders can set up the mechanisms that will drive engagement and cooperation with their stakeholders.

These are “the communication channels, systems, tools and procedures to facilitate cross-charging agreements through the global mobility team.” So says Cathryn Vose, Head of International Mobility and Global Employment Taxes at Vodafone. Something as seemingly simple as cross charges requires trust, communication and collaboration.

These mechanisms allow Vose and her team to work “as frictionlessly as possible” with the corporate tax and transfer pricing teams. “Together, we look at the implications of the international moves being proposed, and remove any potential barriers, such as tax costs and risks.”

Taking an integrated approach enables Pathfinders to align the services they provide with their organisation’s strategy, because it gives them the ability to:

- Understand what their stakeholders need
- Match the right talent to the right opportunities
- Focus on their mobile employees
- Demonstrate the value they deliver.

“Get as close to your stakeholders as you can. Give them a voice in your decision-making.”

Marlin Hötting
Head of Global Mobility
Henkel

Understanding stakeholders' needs

Delighting customers is key to achieving any business strategy.

Pathfinders value stakeholder inputs and aim to deliver a service that meets the needs of mobile staff and the business customers they serve. That's not possible without forging close connections with internal stakeholders.

It's a responsibility our Pathfinders take seriously. Guillermo interacts with as many HPE stakeholders as possible. "We met with different focus groups and personae, to cover the different use cases we handle," he recalls. "I met with HR, resource managers and employees who'd been through international assignments. We asked them what they valued, what was painful, and what they felt was lacking."

When the pandemic changed the mobility game almost overnight, stakeholder engagement became an urgent priority for Pathfinders. They reached out to understand how they could continue to help their customers in these unprecedented circumstances. They ensured that their services were still meeting their customers' needs, and are still continuing to do so following the pandemic.

In many cases, the outcome has been an evolution of the role of the mobility function, as PMI's Barber explains.

Covid halted but then threw the spotlight on all people movement for every company, large or small. The purpose of Global Mobility teams has since expanded to support smart or hybrid working, remote working, establishing new or expanded locations; essentially anything that involves staff either crossing or working across a border.





Matching talent to opportunities

As a core part of their role, mobility professionals are expected to implement the policies and processes to facilitate cross-border work; and give mobile employees the right support, depending on the posting's objectives. This requires deep collaboration with the talent team.

But as Vodafone's Vose points out, mobility functions can be "disconnected from the talent team, or quite transactional in how they work with them."

Pathfinders avoid falling into that trap. Barber at PMI stresses the need to be "aligned to the talent agenda, so that individuals going on international assignments can achieve what they're sent out to do."

In her view, this requires long-term thinking about how to deploy talent around the globe in ways that will underpin and complement company strategy. "It takes a mature global mobility programme to do that properly," she says.

A good example of this alignment is Vodafone's Grow Experiences initiative, which is a cooperation between the mobility and talent teams. The scheme allows junior employees to spend 20-40% of their time, for up to four months, working in another team – usually virtually and often in other countries.

Vose explains: "We said to the talent team: if this is something you want to introduce, then we'll take ownership of the governance, and put the framework in place to support it."



Focusing on mobile employees

The mobility function's primary role is to provide a great experience for employees working internationally. Pathfinders prioritise that in everything they do.

Examples of this hyper-focus came through time and again during our conversations with the Pathfinders. Vose describes Vodafone's team as "really good at looking after our assignees and movers, and making sure everyone is okay."

Similarly, State Street's mobility team reaches out regularly to international assignees to understand what Chiru Koppula calls their "pain points." And he recalls how they went the extra mile to enhance the employee experience while creating a global mobility Center of Excellence (CoE) in India.

"The most important thing was to ensure consistency during the transition from a traditional operating model to a CoE; employee experience had to remain exceptional," says Chiru Koppula. "The move had to be seamless. That was a big challenge."

PMI takes the same approach when changing its mobility policies or practices.

"We're always thinking: can we make efficiencies in ways that will benefit the company, but that our assignees won't suffer? Better still they benefit. How would I feel about the change if I was the assignee?" says Barber.

"We try to be as mindful as possible about the impact of what we do and the changes we make."

Demonstrating value

All supporting functions must be able to articulate the value they bring to the business.

Global mobility is no exception. However, mobility teams often struggle to pull themselves out of the day-to-day operations required as part of their busy, often global, roles.

Leaders should engage with stakeholders to find out what measures they would find most helpful; and encourage the business partners on their teams to do the same.

This is a key focus for Guillermo of HPE: “We ask our stakeholders: what do you value? What can we change? And how can we make mobility competitive?”

For Barber, communicating mobility’s value means conveying its purpose to the company, so that everyone knows when to engage with them, and what they’ll deliver.

Of course, that purpose goes further than facilitating global moves. At PMI and State Street, for example, mobility has been instrumental in supporting the cost agenda.

“When the company is looking to reduce costs, we need to stick our heads above the parapet and say: ‘mobility can help’. We must let people know how we can create value for the business,” says Barber at PMI.

To maximise value, Microsoft and State Street have both created a global mobility centre of excellence (CoE) – changing their whole delivery models in the process.



“Microsoft, as a technology company, has a vision to digitise the mobility experience while placing mobile employees, including our own team, at its core,” explains Gonzalez. This vision necessitated a complete redesign, beginning with understanding the latest market trends and, crucially, formulating key objectives for the next 5-10 years.

“This process involved re-evaluating our delivery model, including policies, processes, and procedures. It’s an iterative process, and over the years, we’ve continually improved and evolved our approach, staying true to our initial team dream of becoming a talent differentiator.

“Our ultimate goal is to elevate Global Mobility to the level of any other widely provided benefit, making it a key pillar of our company. Despite its challenges, this journey has been immensely rewarding for all of us, as it showcases our unwavering commitment to innovation and an employee-centric design.”

To that end, State Street changed its entire delivery model. The result was one of the first global mobility CoEs to be established in India.

“We took a step back and looked at the different opportunities,” Chiru Koppula recalls. “We asked ourselves: how can we tap into a new talent pool, rethink the way we bring strategic value to our stakeholders and deliver cost effectiveness at the same time?”

The CoE also enables State Street’s mobility function to be a more strategic partner to the business. It means they can attract people with the skills not just to do the operational work; but also to liaise with and advise senior stakeholders and leaders across the organisation.

At HPE, meanwhile, Guillermo tries to communicate the value of mobility in language and criteria that will resonate with his stakeholders. For instance, by calculating how much time and money a transfer will save the company – compared to using a headhunter in the local market, and then having to onboard a new recruit. And by highlighting the cultural advantages of filling a vacancy with a current employee.

The KPMG Perspective

Even the best ideas need validation and support. This is why engaging with internal stakeholders is the best starting point for change. It’s essential to understand their perspectives, which may be different to those of the global mobility team.

However, mobility leaders do not always go out of their way to engage with the stakeholders who will influence the success of their new approach, or who will be affected by it.

Involving stakeholders from the beginning gives them a vested interest in the outcome of any changes. That way, they’re more likely to support and adopt the enhancements; and advocate for the programme and for global mobility.

The most successful initiatives place a central focus on close stakeholder engagement. This guarantees that they have maximum impact, and that the investment is not diminished or lost before the initiative has even taken off.



03

Connecting with suppliers

Global mobility is a multifaceted operation, and depends on a long, diverse and complex supply chain.

Mobility teams must partner with a host of technology suppliers, relocation management companies, payroll providers, destination services providers, tax and immigration compliance consultants, business travel agencies, and more. Each of these may have their own technology system, user platform, data sources and processes.

At HPE, for instance, Guillermo taps into “every available resource”. That’s not just ‘traditional’ mobility partners; but also human capital consultants, and thought leadership and HR philosophies from the wider people space.

“I’m looking for ideas from beyond mobility,” he says. “What do the global people consultants offer that we can use? I want to see what I can learn that will enable us to go further, faster.”

“I’m looking for ideas from beyond traditional mobility. I want to see what I can learn that will enable us to go further, faster.”

Kerwin Guillermo
Global HR Compliance
Enablement
(HPE)

Failure to effectively connect this network of suppliers can lead to disjointed, inefficient and unsatisfactory service. It may also risk compliance shortcomings.

Above all else, linking to the external ecosystem means finding ways to connect the various suppliers' systems and data. These connections should account for the company's current ecosystem and architecture, any missing data, and how suppliers' systems supplement data needs.

It's a massive technological undertaking. It's fair to say that even our Pathfinders are still on this journey.

The journey towards technological advancement is filled with unexpected twists and turns. At Microsoft, Gonzalez and his team initially envisioned a technology blueprint for the new mobility CoE. This blueprint aimed to build the necessary platform using Microsoft's internal engineering resources, tools, and technologies. However, they encountered a roadblock in the form of an initial architecture that did not allow for direct integration with their suppliers' technologies. This limitation became more pronounced as the team's need to grow and advance was hindered by the capacity of their internal engineering team.

Inspired by their CEO's message to "empower our partners to do their jobs and place them at the centre of what they do best," the Global Mobility team revised their architecture. Instead of building internally, they empowered their specialist partners to create the best platforms that could be leveraged using Microsoft technologies and tools.

"Our vision is to leverage cutting-edge technology and strong partnerships to transform the way we work, fostering an ecosystem where everyone can excel."

Juan-Carlos Gonzalez
Senior Director
Total Rewards & Global Mobility
Microsoft

As Gonzalez explains, "we simplified our processes to align with market standard offerings, transitioning from full customisation to full configuration of standard platforms."

As part of their evolution, Microsoft requested their group of partners to adopt the Microsoft Global Mobility Team identity, fostering an inclusive and unique experience. To enhance the connection with and between external partners, the mobility function and its suppliers created a 'One Team' identity.

This identity, represented through a unified set of colours, templates, images, and signatures, is adopted by all new suppliers joining the network. This unified 'look and feel' not only fosters a sense of community within the ecosystem but also provides mobile employees and their families with a more consistent experience.

The KPMG Perspective

With change moving at a blistering pace, global mobility functions must be more agile than ever.

To foster that agility and manage the ever increasing day to day complexities of global mobility, Pathfinders are increasingly turning to external vendors for support. These providers are expected to act as a seamless continuation of their team.

For suppliers, this means taking the initiative to develop highly integrated, user friendly solutions. Global mobility leaders are increasingly pressing for these through their Requests for Proposal (RFPs) and vendor selection processes.

In a highly competitive global mobility market, the most successful suppliers will be those that prioritise these imperatives, and offer a clear and connected value proposition for organisations to partner with them.



Linking data and harnessing technology

The data integration imperative

The need to join up data systems and sources goes beyond the supply chain. It applies to all systems – internal and external – that mobility functions rely on.

Again, this is a highly complex task – one which even our Pathfinders are grappling with.

“Different data might be in different systems, but it can’t be impossible to marry it together and spit out something that’s easily understood,” says Vose at Vodafone.

“I want to see what data we have, and how we can join the dots,” she adds. With good reason, as getting to that single source of the truth will have powerful advantages for mobility teams. It will give them access to eye-opening new insights which, for example, will help them match talent to international opportunities even more effectively.

Henkel is working to connect its providers’ systems into an integrated data platform, where the team can track all global moves and mobile employees. The aspiration being to have all the relevant data in one place.

“That will help us make the right decisions,” says Hötting. “We can check whether we’re choosing the right people for assignments, and whether they’re developing in the way we’d expect.”

It will also help them to monitor their policies and ensure that they’re meeting business needs. “For example, if we need to send somebody to the US, do more junior or senior people tend to fare better? Is someone from Europe or from Asia likely to be a better fit? Do our practices reflect these trends?”

And perhaps most importantly, it would allow Henkel’s mobility team to track the commercial value it is generating – a critical success factor for mobility functions (see section 2). “In a cost-constrained climate, we want to be able to calculate the return on what we’re paying our international employees.”

“Having our data in one place will help us make the right decisions. We want to evaluate whether we choose the right people for assignments... and calculate the return on what we’re paying our international employees.”

Marlin Hötting
Head of Global Mobility
Henkel



Integrating data systems means understanding where the most reliable datasets are; then connecting them to all of the relevant internal and external systems.

It's something that HR Pathfinders (as distinct from Global Mobility Pathfinders) are proactively exploring. Our Next Generation HR report found them consolidating cross-platform data into data lakes, at a functional or enterprise level. This enables them to take advantage of data analytics and visualisation tools, driving insights that can inform decision-making.

For their part, Global Mobility Pathfinders aren't yet at that stage – as Hötting acknowledges. “We're not there in terms of combining and balancing our data. It's an ongoing process, and a very long journey.”

Microsoft has made considerable progress in the field of business travel, yet there is still potential for further enhancement.

Their objective is to facilitate direct and uncomplicated integrations with their primary systems, all the while reducing internal intermediation. The present model lacks scalability due to the finite number of internal engineers juggling conflicting HR responsibilities.

Gonzalez further elaborates, “Our ultimate aim is to streamline the user experience. We prioritise security to guarantee effortless data navigation with suitable access controls. Furthermore, we are positioning the employee at the heart of decision-making processes concerning data sharing across all ecosystems.” This approach underscores Microsoft's commitment to creating a more efficient, secure, and user-centric environment.

For the other Pathfinders, using data and analytics optimally is moving up the mobility agenda.

“A medium-term priority is to ensure we use our data as effectively as possible,” says Hötting at Henkel. “We need to challenge ourselves, and see what we can do better. We're on that journey.”

The KPMG Perspective

Data is the piece of the puzzle that most mobility functions are yet to solve. Even the simplest questions can be complex and time consuming to answer, such as “what data do I need, what do I already have?”.

The data sources required will be many and diverse. They're likely to include global and country level information on all move types, from international assignees to domestic employees and remote workers. When done well, integrated mobility data is cross referenced with human resources information system data (talent and compensation specifically) to get a full view of the employees in the mobility programme.

More teams are recognising the importance and value in being able to answer these questions, and our Pathfinders are on their own data journeys.

Data needs to be considered from a number of perspectives. For example, it should take into account what internal stakeholders need from the mobility team, as well as operational and employee experience insights. Taking it a step further, using predictive analysis to inform business and talent leaders' decisions is now more within reach with the integration of data and generative AI.

Getting smart about data will enable teams to tell the mobility story within their organisations, and create the business case for any investments they might need. This will ultimately put them in a strategically critical position.

The promise – and limitations – of AI

Like all businesses and supporting functions, global mobility teams are discovering how artificial intelligence (AI) and generative AI (gen AI) can make service delivery more effective and efficient.

Though AI and gen AI offers powerful automation and content generation capabilities, getting the most from these technologies demands human oversight, input and judgement. This is particularly true in mobility, which will always require an element of the ‘human touch’.

A traditional international assignment is possibly the most personal (and costly) experience a company can offer an employee. A thoughtful, intentionally designed approach is therefore crucial, with the right level of human intervention at the right moments. Even with a lot of thoughtful planning and extensive technology configuration, emotional intelligence, empathy and active listening can not be delivered through a technology system.

AI can, however, augment the time and resources global mobility teams have to spend on delivering a human experience – as Hötting makes clear.

“We want to spend as much time as possible giving our employees that personal touch. Time saved on tasks like copying and pasting data, which don’t add value, means more time to care about our employees, and work on the employee experience. That will provide better value.”

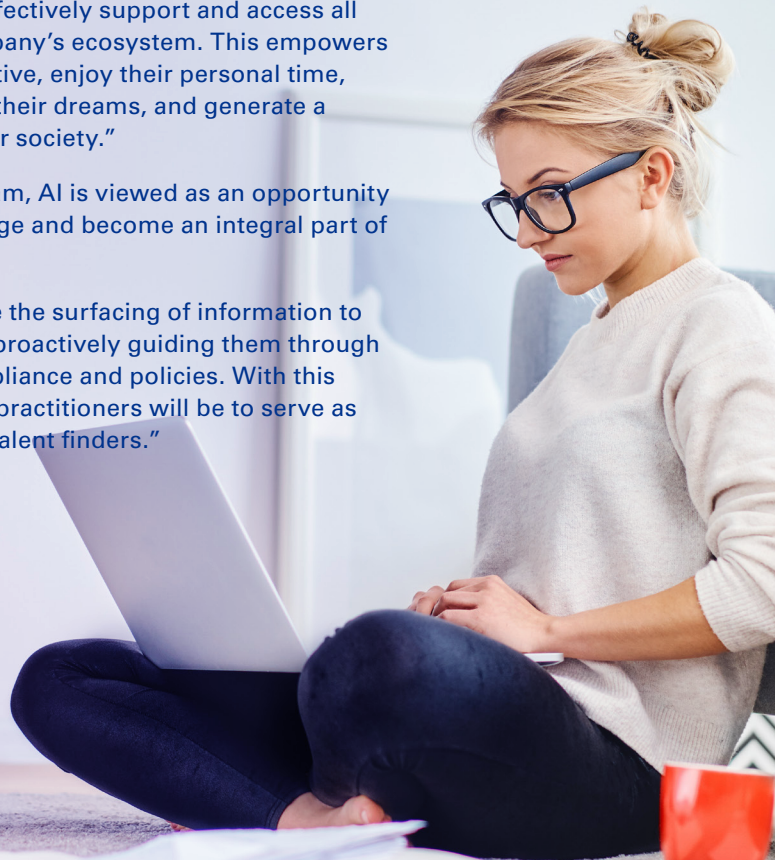
“It’s a mindset shift the team had to go through – realising that increased automation means better employee care.”



Gonzalez shares that “At Microsoft, AI is the cornerstone of future HR experiences. The goal is to augment our employees, provide necessary support, eliminate manual non-value activities, and become a companion that can effectively support and access all information available in the company’s ecosystem. This empowers the employee to be more productive, enjoy their personal time, leverage our company to realise their dreams, and generate a significant, positive impact on our society.”

In Microsoft’s Global Mobility team, AI is viewed as an opportunity to enhance the programme’s usage and become an integral part of the ‘hire to retire’ journey.

Gonzalez predicts, “AI will enable the surfacing of information to our employees at the right time, proactively guiding them through complex processes such as compliance and policies. With this approach, the Future of Mobility practitioners will be to serve as consultants to the business and talent finders.”



The KPMG Perspective

An effective global mobility service needs the right combination of AI driven delivery, process automation, simplification, a compelling user experience – and that all important human touch, designed with intention.

The ideal balance will look different in every organisation. Mobility leaders must have a strategy that includes the best way for mobility professionals and technology to work together, so as to deliver the best outcomes for mobile employees and the business.

They should also consider the wider impact of generative AI on the future of work, and be at the centre of their organisation’s strategic response to its impact on the workforce.

To that end, connecting with the talent team will be more critical than ever, as global mobility will need to play a pivotal role in acquiring, developing and retaining key talent as jobs evolve faster than ever.



05

Pathfinders' defining traits

What can we learn from the Global Mobility Pathfinders? What do they prioritise in order to connect their networks, systems and data, and deliver best-in-class service?

We discovered a number of factors that help to make them leaders in their field. On the whole, Global Mobility Pathfinders are more likely to:

- Display resilience in changing environments
- Show empathy to their teams and mobile employees
- Focus on making the most of their organisations' talent
- Be strong leaders who are willing to push the envelope.

Resilient teams

As we've seen, global mobility teams have endured some exceptional – and extremely challenging – circumstances over the last few years. Fast forward to today, and they are now operating in a dynamic environment of change that shows no signs of slowing down.

"Traditional mobility no longer exists," says Chiru Koppula at State Street. "There's remote and hybrid cross-border working to support and new legislation is introduced around the world continually - so we have to help our organisation navigate the growing number of work arrangements and changing regulations.

"Global mobility teams are having to take ownership of all that, while continuing to support the talent strategy."

"Traditional mobility no longer exists. There are remote and hybrid cross-border arrangements to support, and new legislation is introduced around the world continually. Global mobility must take ownership of all that – while still supporting the talent strategy."

Chiru Koppula
Managing Director & Head of Global Mobility
State Street

It takes resilience to keep delivering an excellent service in such conditions. But Pathfinders are doing more than that.

They are addressing the changing day-to-day landscape and demands of stakeholders. And they are looking to the future. They are thinking about what's coming over the horizon, and prioritising strategic initiatives that will allow their teams to adapt to changes quicker.

An empathetic approach

Pathfinders excel at supporting mobile employees – and their own teams – with that all-important, sympathetic touch (see section 3).

It's a strength that truly comes to the fore at difficult times. For example, Kozlowski at General Motors recalls her team's "heightened focus" on the company's mobile employees during the pandemic.

"We made sure we were doing everything we could to support our expats, such as holding monthly town halls with our senior leader in China, where most of them live."

For State Street, sensitivity was crucial to support the mobility team itself, when the company was offshoring global mobility services to India.

"It was a sensitive time: we were moving teams. We had to gain their trust, which took time," says Chiru Koppula. "Being empathetic towards those who were impacted by the change was a big focus for us.

"An open, honest dialogue with the team was vital in establishing that trust.

"Those conversations aren't easy. We made sure we acted with sensitivity. We respected the individuals involved and put in the effort to make them feel comfortable."



A focus on talent

As we've seen, there can be a disconnect between mobility and talent teams – despite the fact that mobility should be a critical enabler of an organisation's talent strategy.

Our Pathfinders never lose sight of this objective. They stay focused on their companies' talent requirements as they go about their day-to-day-jobs.

At Vodafone, for instance, Vose says her team have been "relentlessly, enthusiastically participating in talent projects over the last few years." That has allowed them to work towards making the company's talent more mobile – the Grow Experiences initiative being a case in point (see section 2).

Vodafone also has made available a plan for virtual working. "The scheme opens up cross-border opportunities to a much wider audience, including those who can't relocate for family or health reasons," Vose enthuses. "It strengthens participants' international working agility, by giving them a feel for what it's like working with a team from a different market."

As a result, Vodafone can develop, engage and retain talented individuals who want to experience working globally.

For General Motors, meanwhile, focusing on talent has meant working with a new Chief People Officer to drive a high-performance culture. And it's meant collaborating with the Head of Talent Acquisition to hire hundreds of software engineers around the world.

"We're tying that into what we're doing going forward," says Kozlowski. "We're determining how we can best serve the business's needs."

"Our team has been relentlessly, enthusiastically participating in talent projects over the last few years."

Cathryn Vose
Head of International Mobility &
Global Employment Taxes
Vodafone

Strong leadership

The global mobility functions at Pathfinder organisations typically have strong and ambitious leaders.

Würth's Jessberger encapsulates this mindset: "We want to bring the global mobility team's culture and spirit to the whole organisation globally," she affirms.

What's more, the mobility leaders at our Pathfinders refuse to accept the status quo. They keep pushing, and take risks to improve their operation.

PMI's Barber calls this "seeking forgiveness, not permission".

"You've got to push it a bit," she affirms. "With the new, post-pandemic ways of working, there are always new things we can do to look after our internally mobile population – and my team."

This drive for continuous improvement is what led to State Street's India based global mobility CoE. "We're always looking at how to bring value to the company, colleagues and shareholders. It's part of our DNA," says Chiru Koppula.

"I am fortunate that State Street's culture encourages my team and I to 'do better every day' and challenge the status quo. We wanted to see whether it was possible to reimagine how our mobility function advises the business. The business was willing to take that risk."

The KPMG Perspective

It is perhaps no surprise that the Global Mobility Pathfinders have certain characteristics in common. For the most part, they are the qualities of any successful business leader, regardless of discipline – resilience and pushing boundaries being good examples.

Empathy is, in our view, particularly vital. Mobility professionals are keenly aware of how personal an international posting is, given the impact it can have on the individual's life, family, finances and overall well being. Yet it's all too easy to forget about that when under the strain of delivering day to day operations – often adhering to strict Service Level Agreements and Key Performance Indicators.

The most effective and valued mobility teams provide the personal touch when employees and their families need it most. Meanwhile, the best global mobility leaders take time to understand their team members' priorities – including those beyond their working lives. And they go out of their way to provide the flexibility and development opportunities their people need.



Conclusion: How to position for the future

“The best way to predict the future is to create it.”

Peter Drucker
Educator and author

Pathfinders are a rare species. Based on our three years of research on Pathfinders in HR broadly, we believe they make up about 10 percent of all HR functions, including Global Mobility. They share powerful capabilities, specifically:

- they prioritise the global mobility team by focusing on their development and career progression and valuing a sense of pride and purpose that acts as a rudder for the team during times of uncertainty
- an intentional focus on engaging with internal stakeholders to ensure there is a strong alignment between business and global mobility objectives
- focus on connecting with suppliers to ensure the full ecosystem, which supports one contiguous global mobility service, is operating as a unified unit
- a desire to integrate data to tell the global mobility story, harnessing technology to drive innovation, automation and an exceptional experience
- they build resilient teams that withstand changes and challenges and are willing to push boundaries, be courageous and take calculated risks.

Why are the efforts of Pathfinders important to review?

The efforts of the Pathfinders matter to every global mobility organisation, as the world of global mobility is under significant pressure fueled by digital technologies and a rapidly changing global landscape. Traditional mobility is giving way to new ways of working, including remote work and virtual assignments. Work is more dynamic than ever, and this means that global mobility's priorities and the way it operates must be dynamic as well. Mobility leaders should consider not just organisational needs, but also wider societal, economic, political and environmental considerations – meaning global mobility needs to demonstrate that it is listening and responding to these concerns.

The capabilities that are considered important for future success, such as integrating data for better insights and optimising technology, are not the areas where many global mobility functions excel. Pathfinders demonstrate how they are positioned for future success and how they are solidifying the immense value of the function beyond process relocation transactions.

Pathfinders are reimagining the entire Global Mobility operating model

Below are the KPMG Target Operating Model layers which any organisation looking to optimise its HR or Global Mobility programme should address.



Operating model layers



Process: This frames your world. Everything you do can be described in terms of process.



People: Who does what, the reporting lines, required skillsets, roles and responsibilities.



Service delivery model: What will get done and where. Identification of what capabilities are delivered and how.



Technology: The environments, applications and integrations that enable and automate your processes.



Performance insights and data: What will be reported and how. Defines the information requirements, Key Performance Indicators, data structure and governance to drive business insights and optimised decision making.



Governance: Determine who has decision-making rights. Defines segregation of duties, internal controls and policies that should exist.

How to get your global workforce programme to Pathfinder and beyond

Target Operating Model for Global Mobility

Define your operating model of the future to support an AI enabled ecosystem



Process

- **End to end** process design by integrating tech platform and off platform steps.
- Embracing **automation** to empower mobility professionals for flexibility, agility and strategic focus.
- Using **process analytics** to enhance process efficiencies and deliver impactful results.



Service Delivery Model

- **Strategic outsourcing** based on capabilities and priorities. Outsourcing certain broader transactional global mobility tasks, especially in the absence of automation.
- This enables an **agile and 'always on' model** and one where external suppliers' technology can be leveraged as a different automation route.



People

- **New skill sets are emerging** in line with technological advancements. Pathfinders prioritise analytics, employee experience and digital capabilities.
- **Future thinking teams** leverage emerging capabilities, data and insights for innovative initiatives. Priority is purpose, wellbeing and a strong Employee Value Proposition.
- Senior leadership **recognise the value of the Global Mobility team** in contributing to business strategy.
- Embrace agility and utilise Global Mobility business partners as **problem solving 'squads'** with business, talent strategy, process and technology knowledge.
- Driving **cross-business initiatives** to support strategy, e.g. integrated into talent marketplace efforts and championing ESG.



Technology

- Leverage **different technologies** which are connected and accessed through one interaction point. **A centralised source of accurate data** is a critical enabler of this.
- Embed cross border cost and compliance considerations in domestic **talent marketplaces** to create a global approach to skills matching.
- Encourage **re-skilling** to drive talent retention.



Performance insights and data

- Trusted, connected and **dependable data** is foundational to data-driven decision making. Pathfinder organisations ensure data is trusted by **governing data quality** throughout the employee lifecycle.
- **Digitally literate Global Mobility business partners** are able to uphold data-driven conversations with business stakeholders.
- Analysis and visualisation of **connected data** empower management by placing the user at the centre rather than the platform landscape.
- Ensure data is limited to those that require access via **role-based permissions**.



Governance

- **Governance of data** from a privacy and ethics perspective is key to enabling innovation while maintaining trust and mitigating risk.
- **Compliance monitoring** and adherence to applicable laws and regulation.
- **Independent audit** functions to regularly assess and evaluate the effectiveness of Global Mobility processes and controls.



Contact Us:

EMA



Demetra Marcantonio

GMS Director
KPMG in the UK
demetra.marcantonio@kpmg.co.uk



Thomas Efkemann

GMS Partner
KPMG AG
tefkemann@kpmg.com

Americas



Katherine Avery

GMS Principal
KPMG US
katherineavery@kpmg.com



Travis Wyczawski

GMS Senior Manager
KPMG US
twyczawski@kpmg.com

ASPAC



Craig Robinson

GMS Partner
KPMG Australia
crobinson12@kpmg.com.au



Alben Ngo

GMS Director
KPMG Singapore
albenjaminngo@kpmg.com.sg

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MADE | MDE200278 | September 2024