

How Small To Medium-Sized Mobility Programmes Can Utilise Technology To Transform Their Approach And Add Value To Their Business

Despite some economic uncertainty in 2017 and beyond, we are still seeing many companies looking to increase the amount of business they do internationally. For us as mobility professionals, this is likely to mean a continued rise in overall assignee numbers. However, planning and managing international assignments is fast becoming more complex. Stricter compliance rules, changing immigration laws and increasingly complex tax legislation mean companies face newfound legal and regulatory scrutiny at every turn. At the same time, assignees expect higher levels of personalised service, with their family's safety and happiness in the forefront of their mind.

Global Mobility teams are having to take a more strategic approach to managing their programmes so they can meet the increasing expectation that they act as advisors to the business at this time of rapid change. To facilitate this, we are seeing an increase in the adoption of technology solutions to make the assignment lifecycle more efficient to administer through automation and process efficiencies, reduce compliance risks, enhance the employee experience and enable better decision-making from the business as a result of access to insightful data and analytics.

The good news is even companies with small to medium-sized programmes can now use solutions similar to those large multinationals have been using for years. Tasks ranging from cost estimate generation and electronic assignment authorisations, through to reporting, taxes, vendor management and repatriation can be handled more efficiently and cost-effectively using today's global mobility management technology.

An All-Too-Common Situation

Larger mobility teams, those handling thousands of assignees per year, typically bring a sophisticated and consistent approach to the process, managing the

assignment lifecycle efficiently, with clearly defined procedures.

Smaller teams, say, those managing 150 expatriate assignments or less, often find the assignment lifecycle more cumbersome to manage and more manual to administer, thus potentially increasing the compliance risks for their programmes. In addition, these teams sometimes have their roles split between Global Mobility and other areas of HR, such as Reward or Resourcing, so often have to juggle additional responsibilities.

Yet all companies, regardless of team size and financial resources, are subject to the same international laws and regulations. This puts smaller teams at greater risk of non-compliance and may bring punitive consequences, the cost of which would be felt to a far greater extent in organisations with smaller budgets. In addition, manual, repetitive tasks, errors in data entry, time-consuming (and expensive) cost estimates, and the need to juggle multiple spreadsheets take time away from counselling assignees and the broader internal stakeholders.

Still, relatively few small to mid-size mobility programmes are taking advantage of today's affordable technology offerings. Either they are not aware these options exist, or they believe investing in technology also means adding headcount. Or they hold the opinion that only larger programmes can afford today's solutions.

Utilising SaaS In Global Mobility

Fortunately, today's SaaS (Software as a Service) technologies can help even the smallest global mobility teams leverage data. They can improve processes to eliminate mundane tasks and create more time to support assignees' needs and manage compliance, without adding to headcount. Cloud-based software, with its rapid development, deployment and easy-update capabilities, makes an investment in global mobility technology a great fit for mobility programmes seeking more control, better consistency and added value to key stakeholders.

For example, the time taken to generate

cost estimates becomes quicker than making a cup of tea, and being able to produce these accurately, at speed, will enable the business to make quicker and more informed decisions about international assignments and headcount planning. This is equally relevant to project-based businesses to support the bidding process for new international work and ongoing project budgeting. Also, enhanced communication capabilities through the technology solution can result in employees being better informed, and therefore more engaged in the relocation process.

As well as cost estimates, the previously time-consuming work of obtaining management approvals, generating assignment letters, maintaining payroll balance sheets, and managing vendor services can all be done through a single web-based system, containing one true source of assignment data and security-controlled user interfaces for key stakeholders. With more built-in efficiencies, small teams can do more with less, and do it all faster and with less room for error.

How Can Current Trends In Mobility Be Supported By Technology?

Global mobility programmes are being affected by important trends impacting the marketplace. Understanding these dynamics can help small to mid-size teams transform their programmes to become more strategic and productive.

Accountability: The number of expatriate assignments is on the rise, but along with this increase comes a clear need to be more accountable about each individual case. More companies are using technology to get better visibility of their expat population so they can manage their programme more strategically and consistently, to meet their duty of care.

Compliance Challenges: The number of required administrative tasks is increasing to maintain programme compliance, and penalties for non-compliance can be severe. Companies are adopting technology to keep details of every assignment secure and help them to manage these tasks efficiently through automation and tracking. This is

critical both for the safety and security of expats and to protect the employer itself.

High Employee Expectations: Technology can help elevate global mobility to more of an advisory role by automating the mobility coordinator's routine tasks, freeing up their time to focus on more value-add activities such as counselling employees, providing them with a great relocation experience.

Data Analytics and Looking Forward: Increasingly, management teams are looking for more insight into the workings of their businesses. Being able to provide meaningful reports and analysis quickly is key to supporting the global mobility team's role as an advisor to the business. Today's technology solutions do much more than export programme data, they can collate data from multiple platforms and turn it into meaningful information that can enhance decision-making within the business.

Today's technology solutions can support mobility teams to adapt their programmes to accommodate these and future trends.

Better Global Mobility Management Adds Value

By leveraging technology solutions, global mobility teams can improve the overall assignment experience for assignees, HR, vendors, management and other key stakeholders. Companies save time and money with lower risk and less frustration by:

- Automating all critical tasks related to every aspect of an assignment
- Freeing staff from mundane, repetitive tasks so they can truly be advisors to their stakeholders
- Personalising the entire experience by putting the focus squarely on the individual assignees' needs.

Gone are the days of one-off document creation, isolated spreadsheets, confusing and uncertain calculation tools and multiple data sources. Now, centralised technology platforms and, because many multiple stakeholders can use the same system, so visibility of the programme improves across the organisation:

- **Assignees** are kept informed and engaged with the process through communications and automated reminders sent through the software solution so they keep up to date with the status of their move
- **Finance/Payroll** teams can be given access to see budgets, estimates and payroll balance sheets to better measure programme costs and potential savings
- **Corporate Security** teams know who is where at any given time, ensuring greater safety and security for employees in the event of international issues
- **Internal Audit** teams can trust the reports the data generates, knowing they have a visible audit trail showing activity within the mobility team and with every vendor at every stage of each assignment

- **Global Mobility** can expand the programmes without having to add headcount. Existing staff can do more to advise assignees, manage partners, counsel colleagues, and nurture and retain talent
- **Senior Management** can discern the cost/benefit of every assignment and have a real-time overview of the assignees in their organisation.

All companies demand and deserve value from their technology investments. Today's global mobility solutions can be pre-configured or customised, easy to implement and receive frequent upgrades. It all comes down to strategically increasing the programme's overall value to the business.

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Choosing The Technology Partner That's Best For You

When selecting among global mobility management software providers, companies wanting a more strategic global mobility programme that adds value to their organisation should look for the following in any potential partner:

- Proven corporate mobility experience – has their team worked in-house in your position before and therefore truly understand your requirements?
- Predictable business performance, with consistent profitable growth
- Category leader that is active in the industry
- A clear product vision / roadmap for the future
- Loyal, satisfied customers -
 - How long have they been customers?
 - If they've lost customers, why?
- In-house implementation and client services teams with proven experience in global mobility
- Continuing education and training capabilities
- Ongoing client relations/communication programmes

- An extensive partner network comprised of stable, reputable companies
- Global reach with regional offices in locations important to your business
- Fair and competitive pricing and a clear explanation of the value provided.

Summary

By leveraging today's software technology, mobility programmes of almost any size can introduce workflow, costing and task management solutions that increase staff productivity, improve the experience for assignees and minimise risks to the business. Such an approach saves time, reduces costs and delivers increased value. Partnering with an experienced technology provider can help global mobility professionals remain on the front foot as trends and compliance legislation change - there has never been a better time to embrace mobility technology!

To learn how Equus Software can become a proven, stable partner to your business, visit www.equusoft.com.



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Tim is VP, Technology Solutions at Equus Software. Based in London, he helps organisations across EMEA to solve global mobility problems and increase operational and strategic effectiveness through the adoption of technology. He is a product owner of Assignment Pro Core, an Equus Software solution for small to medium-sized mobility programmes. He also supports larger programmes using the full Assignment Pro solution as well as organisations looking to track their short-term business travellers through PinPoint, another Equus solution. Much of Tim's 17 year career in global mobility has been spent managing regional and global mobility programmes in-house for well-known multinational organisations in the financial services, consumer goods and technology sectors. He also has experience consulting in the Big 4 environment, as well as working as an independent consultant for the three years prior to joining Equus. Tim's particular area of interest within mobility is in how it's used to facilitate talent development – this stems from his MSc degree in Strategic Training and Development from the University of Surrey.