

The Unknown And Forgotten Global Mobility Challenge

In a Global Mobility Team it is often said that every day is different from the next, but the majority of activities the Global Mobility Team undertake fall within a prescribed range. However, the prescribed range of activities to be undertaken can disappear when the Global Mobility Team are required to prepare for, or be involved in a merger or acquisition...

In the last twelve months I have had varying levels of involvement in a merger and three acquisitions, including being a former employee of an acquired company. The aforementioned merger and three acquisitions have posed and still pose challenges that, along with my worldwide colleagues, I look to resolve on a daily basis, in conjunction with my business as usual activities.

Involvement in a merger or acquisition for many Global Mobility Teams may not be an activity that they will be required to be involved in. However, as companies invest worldwide, the easiest way to achieve success is to merge or acquire a company who is strong in that market or business sector. It is my belief that whilst you may not have experienced a merger or acquisition within your Global Mobility Team, it could be an activity that you will soon become involved in.

The Global Mobility Team Selection

Within a Global Mobility Team the prospect of involvement in a project which will require continuous focus for at least one year is an overwhelming prospect. Most Global Mobility Teams are under resourced, with limited capacity to be involved in or lead a project. However, selection of the project team does not need to be based on seniority, but who is best placed to provide support throughout the planning and involvement of the merger or acquisition.

If an acquired company focus on sending employees into one country, then the Global Mobility Team members within that country should take the lead. This team will understand the requirements to send employees on Assignment there, and will be best placed to navigate any challenges, as they will either have the knowledge already, or know the stakeholders who can assist.

If you do not have a Global Mobility Team presence in this country, an alternative is to utilise the Global Mobility Team members from the acquired company. It is important to not discount any new team members and the expertise they could bring. Often these members will understand Global Mobility within the acquired company and help you get up to speed far quicker than if you did not work with them.

The above works for an acquisition, but if you are involved in a merger, then who leads and is involved in the project requires Global Mobility Team members from both companies. This will help ensure the success of the new Global Mobility Team and minimise one company feeling unheard or uninformed.

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The Global Mobility Team Activities

The activities the Global Mobility Team are required to be involved in for a merger or acquisition, in my experience, are very similar. However, whilst both sets of activities are

similar, what the Global Mobility Team will need to do varies with each company and is influenced by how Global Mobility is operated. To ensure success of the project there are key steps that all Global Mobility Teams will be involved in.

At the outset of the project it is fundamental to undertake a deep dive into how Global Mobility operates within both companies. This will help write the activities required for the project plan. A strong project plan, with an independent project manager, will keep the project running on time and help guide the Global Mobility Team on how to prioritise and ensure completion of their activities.

If Global Mobility is operated in a similar manner within both companies, the change management required will be easier and will see a relatively unchallenged implementation. Unfortunately, Global Mobility does not adopt a similar approach between companies, making it essential that the implementation phase of the project is strong and far reaching. All stakeholders require communications and training presentations prepared by the Global Mobility Team advising how the merger or acquisition will impact them.

The Global Mobility Team Stakeholders

When involved in a merger or acquisition, the Global Mobility Team approach to implementation is of fundamental importance, and to be successful requires awareness of who and what activities your stakeholders are involved in. The stakeholders will vary from company to company, but the key stakeholders the Global Mobility Team will need to partner with, are the departments who they currently work closely with. For the majority this will include Human Resources, Finance, Business Managers and the Employee on Assignment.

Understanding your stakeholder's direction will help shape the direction the Global Mobility Team will take and help minimise any challenges that may arise throughout the course of the project. Some of the challenges you may not expect, so it is important to engage early with stakeholders to ensure Global Mobility is considered before decisions are made on behalf of the Team. Global Mobility is often not considered when decisions are being made and from my personal experience this

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can lead to unnecessary and far reaching complications that will continue to affect the Global Mobility Team for months after the completion of the merger or acquisition.

The Global Mobility Team Opportunities

Once the key activities have been determined for the merger or acquisition project, the fun can really begin. A merger or acquisition should not be feared but relished as an opportunity to look at how the Global Mobility Team operate within a company and any improvements that can be made.

It is easy when merging to replicate how one Global Mobility Team operate, or when acquiring a company to combine Global Mobility operations, but this is not necessarily the right thing to do. When acquiring a company you can look at the operations of both Global Mobility Teams and potentially replicate the best practices undertaken. This could create a more efficient, strategic and best in class Global Mobility Team that has fixed the challenges that both Teams may have faced previously.

Allowing a Global Mobility Team to be involved in a merger gives further opportunity for improvement, and can provide the chance to replicate the best practices of each Global Mobility Team or start afresh. A merger creates a new company that operates with a new strategy, which the Global Mobility Team should look to accommodate and align to. Developing and implementing new policies, processes and vendors will ensure the Global Mobility Team operates in line with the new company strategy and can be seen as a partner to work with the business managers and increase revenue in line with the new company strategy.

When preparing for or being involved in a merger or acquisition, it is easy to focus on the challenges and how hard the activities required can be on an already overstretched Global Mobility Team. Yet whilst a merger or acquisition will test the capabilities of any Global Mobility Team, it will also be one of the most rewarding projects that the Team will undertake. Through my experience at undertaking both a merger and acquisition I have learnt so much about my capabilities, which in turn has help add to both my skill set and confidence as a Global Mobility Manager.

I know more about my company and its principal business objectives, and how the Global Mobility Team can work strategically to achieve them with the business managers. I have enhanced my relationships and knowledge of other departments and been able to advise them of the capabilities of Global Mobility and when we should be involved. Most importantly I have bonded with existing and new Global Mobility Team members, helping to create a harmonious working relationship which makes me feel part of my new Global Mobility Team.

It would be easy to say that our preparation and involvement for both mergers and acquisitions were flawless, but it wasn't and for the majority of companies it never will be. However, within Global Mobility you need to do what is right for the Global Mobility Team, despite what other departments may be undertaking as their approach. Remember Global Mobility is unique and sometimes the treatment during a merger or acquisition needs you to follow your own path and not that of anyone else internally or externally.



HOLLY MARIA CREED

Holly Maria Creed graduated with a BA (Hons) in History and upon graduation undertook a graduate scheme in US and UK expatriation tax before moving to Ernst and Young to specialise in global mobility. Over the next 18 months Holly ran a FTSE 100 client account and undertook her first Assignment to India. Upon Holly's return from India, she moved into Global Mobility consulting before undertaking the role of project manager to help the Head of Global Mobility establish a new operating model for an international energy company. This role saw Holly and her colleagues receive considerable industry recognition and named as runner ups within the EMEA region for team of the year. Holly currently works as a Global Mobility Manager responsible for Europe within a large technology firm. Along with her worldwide colleagues she is currently working towards the harmonisation of the Global Mobility Function following a merger. Holly's role as part of the harmonisation project is to lead the Vendor Services and Communication activities, a role she has been relishing for the last seven months. Holly is fast gathering a reputation within the industry and in 2016 was nominated and shortlisted for Global Mobility Rising Star within the EMEA region.