

# The Value Of Mobility Technology In The VUCA World

**Global Mobility professionals are not strangers to the VUCA world. Mobility has always been subject to Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity – simply by operating across every region, every possible location, there are natural disasters, wars, sudden economic changes and unexpected trends to deal with somewhere in the world. Mobility is never stable, nor is it predictable.**

However, the industry has been (arguably) slow to respond to such forces, looking to traditional areas such as package redesign or benefit updates as primary tools in battling changing demands. Policies remain the back-bone of the mobility service and typically organisations still carry out policy reviews every 3-4 years, involving mammoth data gathering exercises and detailed analyses taking hundreds of hours of mobility expertise.

It is becoming more accepted that great technology is required to support even the smallest of programmes, however, even past game-changers such as social media in the workplace, mobile technology and self-service initiatives still encounter resistance in many organisations. These are the very tools that aid the mobility professional in the fast-paced, confusing VUCA world.



In the VUCA context, the mobility programme is under even more pressure to move quickly and decisively – the VUCA world can feel like a threat – but what about the opportunities?

## Enable

The global mobility industry is better equipped than any to understand VUCA issues as a whole. Mobility has expertise in every region, access to information on every country and at every level of the organisation. However, successfully leveraging this advantage requires the right tools.

Technology is the enabler to understanding the business, industry and the economic environment. Technology has the power to make sense of the huge volumes of data we collect during the assignment lifecycle – demographics, cost, policy and movement over time, all of which must be analysed and visualised real-time to enable quicker, more informed decision-making for the business.

“With a common tool, I have the ability to create consistency, to bring efficiency to my global team, to have oversight on costs & risks and to subsequently put that data in the hands of anyone I need to influence or bring to a decision”.

*David Enser*

*Head of Global Mobility at Adidas.*

It is simply no longer possible to run a mobility programme without centralised, fit-for-purpose technology, providing real-time global access to information to stakeholders wherever they are. Not only is great technology necessary to deal with unexpected change and reduce operational sluggishness, but upcoming talent expects the latest tools to be available to them. Cutting edge technology is fast becoming as much a part of the war for talent, as are corporate brand and working culture.

## Inform

The key to getting ahead of the issues is knowing your organisation. Knowing exactly where your people are at any point in time is essential to mobilising in the event of a disaster; and knowing who they are and what they can do, enables the business to take advantage of new economic capabilities. Above all, knowledge of the programme as a whole helps to expect the unexpected, as well as uncover significant cost-savings and transformational opportunities:

“‘On-demand’ access to reliable and accurate International Assignment (IA) programme data has proved a game-changer for us. In recent times, our businesses have suffered the direct impact of the VUCA world. But with key programme data (assignment terms, volumes, cost and policy analytics) at the fingertips of the HRDs and Financial Controllers, Mobility has been able to adopt an agile and proactive position to aid the transformation and reshaping of our business and reduce IA programme spend by over 40% within the past 3 years.”

*Gareth Davies*

*Head of Mobility at Rolls-Royce*

Further, organisations like Rolls-Royce see increasing value in central access to skills and capabilities of their workforce – assignment experience, visa status, performance over time; using the information to measure return on investment. Identifying immediately available and viable candidates with the right skills and experience – candidates not at risk of triggering a compliance issue – can save a project-based organisation valuable time and recruitment costs in the event that they win an unexpected new contract, or have to mobilise in the face of a sudden economic challenge or natural disaster.

## Simplify

Advances in technology for specialist purposes call for smart consolidation. Many organisations use six or seven different tools, spreadsheets, HR databases, business traveller or talent databases, and performance management systems, often duplicating similar information. Even smaller programmes run by only one or two people require information consolidation – those six or seven systems are often represented by six or seven spreadsheets – and email, of course.

“Our Mobility technology gave us the platform to standardise the way we deliver compensation and payroll instructions around the globe. This has enabled us to utilise our resources more efficiently. We no longer have to run multiple highly differentiated processes to deliver payroll, for example.”

*Steve Salmon*

*Global HRIS Lead, BP*

To maximise value and ensure data integrity, all these tools need to speak to each other seamlessly. It is becoming

imperative that we integrate to facilitate the exchange of essential data and formulate the most accurate and informative picture of the programme within the wider HR context at any point in time. And standard integration is becoming the new 'norm' in the mobility world. Further, one integrated system allows division of responsibility by role and allocates responsibility for the tasks and integrity of the data associated with that role, minimising the administrative burden on the mobility team.

**Predict**

Utilising the best tools that are consolidated, integrated and provide real-time information directly to stakeholders adds a dimension of empowerment to the mobility leaders' arsenal – that of predictive capabilities. Beginning with cost predictive analytics, we see higher demand for help understanding cost trends within the context of movement, assignment success and benchmarked return on investment, facilitating better-informed investment decisions within the business.

“Predictive Analytics combined with the ability to perform “what-if” analysis of changes to your policy across your entire population of mobile employees will mean that enacting proactive changes and rapidly reacting to trends will become a reality for

mobility programs of the future.”  
 Mark Thomas  
 CEO, Equus Software

Organisations are moving towards an approach of core consistency with peripheral flexibility, enabling an agility never before achieved in mobility programmes. More frequent policy updates are driven by assignee demographic trends and expectations around future workforce changes. With the right tools, policy review no longer needs to be a major three yearly exercise. The data is informing and predicting real-time and these predictions are shaping the future of the support provided to mobile employees. True continuous improvement is finally achievable.

At Equus we welcome VUCA. VUCA challenges our innovations and forces game-changing agility to come up with the best tools in the industry. While others may fear what is coming next, we are already working on it. Mobility can do the same – with the right tools and the power of global knowledge, masses of data and a huge network of cross-industrial priorities, Mobility is absolutely in the best-placed position to drive the strategic direction of global workforce operations – now and far into the future.

*This article features in the 2016 RES Forum Annual Report: Beyond Uniformity A World of Opportunity. To view the report in full, go to [www.theresforum.com/annual-report](http://www.theresforum.com/annual-report).*



**VICKI MARSH**

Head of Operations, UK, Equus Software. More than 200 global organisations rely on cloud-based technology from Equus to support their talent mobility programmes. Equus technology allows programme managers to focus on adding value to their business by automating mundane, transactional work, while providing strategic insight to their business through data visualisation. Equus' clients are the happiest in the industry because of a track record of successful delivery, continuous innovation and a staff with deep experience in corporate mobility. Visit [www.equusoft.com](http://www.equusoft.com).

Equus is technical partner to the RES Forum. The RES Forum is an independent, highly engaged and international community of senior in-house International Human Resources professionals with membership in over 40 countries. Visit [www.theresforum.com](http://www.theresforum.com).



[www.teamrelocations.com](http://www.teamrelocations.com)

At Team Relocations, we do all the hard work for you so that your employees are happy with their relocation from start to finish






MEMBER  
**WORLDWIDE ERC**  
THE WORKFORCE MOBILITY ASSOCIATION


