



Mobility Matters:

Is relocation still a tool for employee engagement?

Part 2: Mobility as a means of improving productivity



Foreword

We have tried, through this series of reports, to understand how HR managers around the world view the processes of relocating employees as a way of engaging and retaining them.

One of the broader themes that our survey's results uncovered was that the cost of relocations has increased, predominantly due to a rise in the cost of expatriate compensations, but that this has not affected the number of relocations a company is willing to make. Indeed, almost half of respondents claim that the number of staff their company can assign to work overseas has risen in the last 12 months, with 53% saying they notice an increase in employee retention increase after a relocation programme.

That statistic shows concisely, as this series shows more generally, that global mobility is unequivocally an essential employee engagement tool. This second section of our research concentrates on how mobility can boost productivity. We have previously seen how companies can use mobility as an engagement tool more effectively by addressing and alleviating employee hesitancy, while our third section covers the wellbeing of assignees as they live and work away from their home country.

We are grateful for the insight of Michelle Taylor, HR Director at a leading solutions provider in the in-flight entertainment industry, and the perspective of Nick Sutton, Vice President for Sales and Marketing at Crown World Mobility.

Jurgen Zyderveld

Group Vice President, Crown World Mobility

Introduction

The opportunity to travel with work is one that appeals to many. Employers are keen to deploy mobility as a means of both attracting and retaining talent.

In this series of reports, we explore how the global mobility landscape continues to evolve. The pandemic began a revolution in ways of working and the approach to work, both of which have been key contributors to the frequently cited ‘Great Resignation.’ With that in mind, we wanted to learn more about how mobility can be used as a way of attracting and retaining talent today.

We asked 251 HR professionals in the United States, the UK and Ireland, Singapore, France and Germany, 26 questions about assigning employees to a project overseas:



Each respondent held the title of either Senior Manager, Director/VP or C-level/business owner



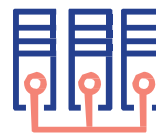
62% of respondents were male, 38% were female



The most common age group of respondents was between 25-years-old and 44-years-old



The most common aggregated revenue of respondents' companies was between \$201m-\$500m



The most common sectors in which the respondents' companies worked in were accounting and finance, IT, and manufacturing and distribution

We asked respondents a series of questions surrounding their business's practices around relocation and its effects on employees. Analysis of the survey's results has identified that employee mobility should, and does, play a key role in engaging and retaining employees. Our series explores different facets of mobility and employee engagement. In this report, we look at how mobility can be a means of improving productivity in assignees. In other reports in the series, we examine these topics:



Assessing suitability and tackling hesitancy

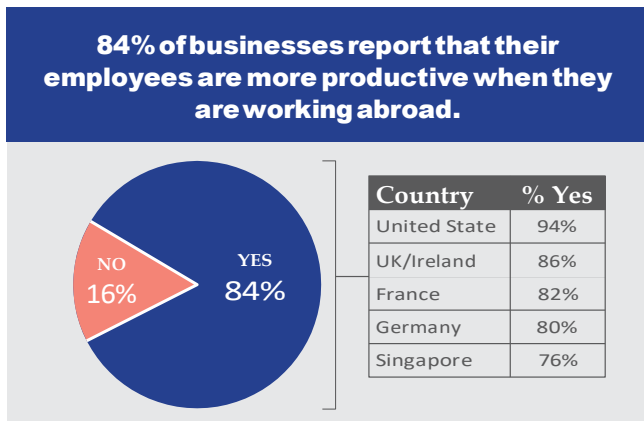


An assignee's wellbeing: balancing an improved quality of life with mental health challenges

Mobility as a means of improving productivity

Why productivity increases on assignment

It is not unreasonable to assume that after spending significant sums of money on an employee’s relocation – especially with costs on the rise – companies want to make sure that assignees are working at their optimum levels while on an assignment.



Why wouldn’t it, when you have a highly engaged and motivated employee who wants to capitalise on the opportunity provided to them?” adds Nick Sutton, Global VP Sales and Marketing at Crown World Mobility.

“More than eight out of ten respondents said their employees are more productive when working on assignment.”

More than eight out of ten HR decision makers report that employees are more productive when they are on assignment than when they work in their home country. “Working overseas, an employee may have less going on in their social life which makes them more focused on their work. They may also see the relocation as an opportunity provided by their employer and ‘thank’ them for it by working harder,” says Michelle Taylor, HR expert.

“When any organisation selects the right people to send on assignment and offers the right level of support through that journey, it’s very common to see productivity increase in that individual.

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Global VP Sales and Marketing,
Crown World Mobility

Enthusiasm boosts productivity

Our survey reveals that relocation is generally met with enthusiasm by employees. It is a fresh start with exciting possibilities, which could define how their careers progress over the next few years.

“Often, individuals will see assignments as an opportunity to develop, learn and grow but also in many ways to prove themselves; not only because they want to perform in their current role, but also knowing it’s not forever and there is a future beyond it,” says Nick.

“By its very nature, an assignment is a defined period and many will understand that the ways in which they perform will strongly influence what comes next in their career journey. Having been on assignment myself, you feel special, trusted and supported by your company to carry out an important role.

“All of these aspects have a positive influence on your behaviour, outlook and motivation while you’re on assignment. People intrinsically want

“Assignees may see a difference in work ethic in the country to which they have relocated and replicate that”

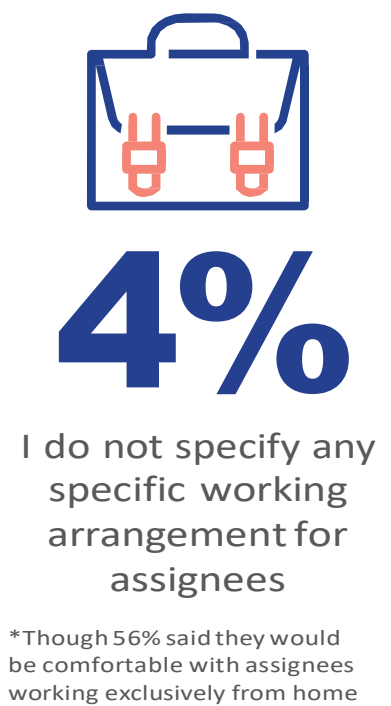
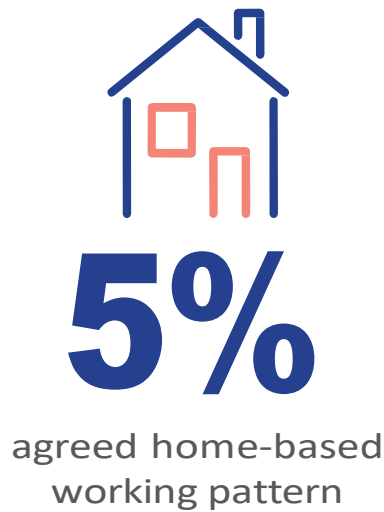
Michelle Taylor
HR Director at a leading solutions provider in the in-flight entertainment industry

to do a good job and be successful. When it comes to assignees, I think that motivation is ever present,” he adds.

The employee might also take a direct cue from the new, wider culture in which they find themselves. “They may see a difference in work ethic in the country to which they have relocated and replicate that,” says Michelle.



Importance of working patterns of assignees



During and after Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns, evidence pointed towards the success of homeworking, despite prior concerns surrounding productivity. As restrictions eased, employers adapted by offering hybrid working. Candidates now increasingly look for this in jobs – including while on assignments. As such, two-thirds of respondents said they have agreed hybrid working policies with assignees.

Interestingly, 56% of HR decision makers said they would be comfortable with their employees working from home full-time while on international assignment. Michelle says: “This may be related to the need to have someone working in a specific time zone, even if they are not in the office. It allows for more informal communications, like traditional, pre-pandemic ‘watercooler chats’. These can get lost if you are not in the same place at the same time. They help people learn their roles faster.”

Career advancement issues

Despite the increased productivity of employees, 65% of respondents agreed it is challenging to identify whether candidates qualified for promotions while they were working on assignment . “I think a lot of this depends on the company’s criteria for promotion and their organisational structure in the relocation country,” says Michelle.

“The challenge is to set expectations for the assignment and the work that will be carried out, then create measures for the performance and being able to evaluate it objectively,” she continues.

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Measuring performance

Although it is interesting to see that productivity does not suffer – indeed, it can thrive – as an employee is on assignment, this needs to be balanced with appropriate performance assessment.

“The challenge is to set expectations... then create measures... to evaluate it objectively”

“My experience has been to relocate people to countries where we have an office, so there are local managers and peers who can provide input on an individual’s performance,” comments Michelle.

“This then feeds into and may inform any decision on promotion or other forms of advancement. If the person tends to be remote while they work on assignment, then the manager needs to have a clear measure of the employee’s performance to evaluate it.”

Conclusion

Despite the hesitancy some employees may feel towards relocation, as covered in part one of our report, HR leaders can see an advantage in mobility programmes because the productivity of employees displays their levels of engagement. Combined with how relocation programmes retain employees, there are clear benefits for companies who use relocation as a means of engaging their workforce.

If global relocation is a process that you would like to include in your company’s offerings to current and potential employees, Crown World Mobility will be happy to discuss opening this world of possibilities.

Crown World Mobility helps corporations manage global talent and talented individuals perform on the global stage.

We work with all stakeholders to find the right solution, implementing a global mobility program that is successful for everyone. Services include research and consulting, assignment management, immigration services, compensation administration and employee and family support.

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