

Data Mastery is a Key Global Mobility Challenge

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How companies are exploiting – or not - the benefits from the identification and visualisation of global mobility information is one of the key challenges facing global mobility professionals according to the 2017 Annual Report from The RES Forum, the world's largest and most active independent community for GM professionals.

All companies use data to inform their global mobility approaches – and mobility generates a lot of data - although the actual level and sophistication that is used or needed, varies. The RES Forum set out to canvas opinion from its membership - of more than 1300 members from over 700 organisations in 40 countries - in order to assess the status quo and potential developments in the field of global mobility data use and analytics.

Albert Einstein warns us that “Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.” While there can be a temptation to shy away from the potentially difficult arena of data analytics, what this research has clearly shown is that most companies see a variety of benefits to discovering and visualising useful global mobility information, which allows a multinational to arrive at evidence-based conclusions and improve decision-making.

Key findings from the research show that many multinationals are not using the full spectrum of IT opportunities and IT integration mechanisms that may reduce their costs and may lead to a more standardised, possibly higher quality global mobility service provision. Currently, only 15% of firms have assignment software in place with which they are satisfied. While about a quarter of organisations (27%) are not looking to put global mobility in place right now, this leaves almost 60% of firms who are either looking to implement global mobility software for the first time or are seeking a superior IT solution. The existing quality of assignment software is seen as mixed

In the next three years, 87% of companies regard general data analytics as important or very important. Data analytics would allow them to compile and consolidate data effectively, visualise it and gain insights from which to build evidence-based decisions.

With regard to predictive analytics, organisations plan to decisively move forward in terms of analysing overall assignment success (48%), retention (40%) and performance (38%) in order to predict success elements and

patterns. In addition, 49% of global mobility professionals aim to predict future assignment compensation and reward trends, 46% want to predict costs, 44% strive to predict assignment types and movements and 40% want to draw up lists of identified future global mobility candidates.

Global mobility teams will also concentrate on starting to report on performance trends (61%), nationality and the ethnicity breakdown of assignees versus the general employee population (45%) and will also concentrate on compiling breakdown by age of assignees (44%).

There is obviously a wide range of things that organisations want to achieve with better data. While there are well-known and old favourites such as assessing ROI and establishing a better link to talent management, there are also more ambitious plans to integrate mobility data management with wider workforce planning, career and performance management and the use of data to support a better understanding and ability to motivate the right kinds of behaviours. This clearly has a strong connection to the new evolving role of global mobility departments where they are linking more closely to talent management teams with the aim of understanding more fully the drivers and motivations of global workers as part of a broader move to create more strategic value for the organisation. In the next three years specifically, the biggest growth is expected to be in the assessment of ROI (+44%), retention after (+40%) and during (+35%) global assignments, career progression post assignment (+ 37%) and early return of assignees (32%).

Global mobility technology is improving rapidly and the development of the mobility ecosystem is expected to gather significant momentum in the near to medium-term future. For several years now, mobility systems have been integrating with HR databases to exchange employee demographics, job and company data and compensation details, all of which facilitates data consistency and provides insights into sophisticated mobility demographics and costs. The mobility ecosystem 2.0 will bring standard integration across mobility, HR, talent, reward and vendor systems, consolidating and sharing appropriate data and facilitating smooth communication between departments as well as management of assignment logistics. The ecosystem will provide real-time visibility of move status, compliance, costs and programme demographics, consolidated with performance, KPIs and assignee skills and experiences. The possibilities are limitless and this new environment will both accelerate and enhance advanced analytical insights to the mobility world.

The data analytics journey for many of these multinational organisations has four distinct phases. And, whilst most organisations are still starting out, some of them are rapidly moving into stages three and four of the journey, with technology and media organisations leading the way.

1. **Beginning with the Basics - Data Integrity**
 - Collate data
 - Integrate systems
 - Analyse gaps

2. **Building the Foundation - Data Visualisation**
 - Collaborate with the business
 - Make improvements and savings
 - Meet company goals

3. **Taking it to the Next Level - Predictive Analytics**
 - Model trends and multi-factors
 - Identify future risks/costs
 - Plan effectively

4. **Pushing the Boundaries - Social Analytics**
 - Mine external sources
 - Rate employees
 - Socialise skills and experience

The global mobility data analytics field is still immature and we have seen that it is currently relatively neglected within companies. However, the field is gathering energy, speed and focus. We expect many interesting developments and trail blazing activities in the near future in this area.