



Adjusting Talent Mobility for the World Ahead

Rebound, Reform, Recommit

What is the new normal for mobility and how can you prepare for it? This whitepaper explores those questions and offers strategies for adjusting to the world ahead.

The COVID-19 global pandemic clearly has taken a toll on global organizations. Border closings, travel restrictions, manufacturing shutdowns and supply chain disruptions are limiting companies' abilities to meet organizational goals and customer demands. However, with many countries beginning to scale back lockdown and workplace restrictions, we believe it's time to look ahead. And, following the process of the three Rs — rebound, reform and recommit — mobility will play a role in helping global companies get back on their feet.

Today, mobility managers are thinking beyond COVID-19 to the new realities of mobility. Your job now is to answer, "What's next?" While some have expressed concern about the future of mobility, we're confident in its ability to rebound.

It will look different and the road to recovery may be bumpy, but mobility will continue to be imperative because the drivers for our industry remain compelling:

A globally connected economy

An interconnected global economy is a reality and an important driver of business success and individual prosperity. Although the pandemic has temporarily paused the global economy, we're beginning to see it reawaken with the easing of restrictions and re-opening of some businesses.

Talent supply and demand

A job opening in one location doesn't necessarily



mean the most qualified candidate is in that location. For example, according to Tech Republic, there's a predicted 1 million computer programming-related jobs in the United States that are unfilled. Or, consider that the World Health Organization is warning that in 10 years there will be an estimated shortage of 18 million healthcare workers.

These examples demonstrate that in some countries there will be open jobs with not enough healthcare professionals or computer programmers to fill them. In other countries, there will be a surplus of workers with not enough job vacancies to absorb the supply. Mobility is the key to balancing workforce supply and demand.

Diversification

The pandemic has heightened corporate awareness of the risks of having operations and assets concentrated in too few locations. Global organizations will need to diversify their manufacturing locations to prevent supply chain disruptions resulting from a crisis in one area. Leaders with global experience, earned from international assignments, will be needed to manage this distributed global corporate footprint.

Rebound: Recognizing the New Normal

Among the top concerns for most mobility professionals right now:

Entry restrictions and quarantine requirements

Don't expect an employee arriving in a new city on assignment will be able to begin work right away. Entry regulations in many host countries may require assignees to quarantine. These new mandates may be in place for quite some time, until a vaccine or cure is found, so build them into your mobility policies, benefits, timelines and budgets.

Immigration

You may be fielding technical questions and managing anxiety around immigration. With COVID-19 closing immigration offices worldwide, many assignees are stuck in their host countries with expired visas. Extensions aren't being granted, and clear and timely responses for mitigation are hard to come by. When offices open back up, immigration officers are going to be overwhelmed by the number of cases, so expect to be managing immigration-related uncertainties for a while.

Green Card program

Global organizations hoping to relocate employees to the United States will have a harder time securing those placements in the foreseeable future. Green Card programs require an employer wishing to fill a position in the United States to first ensure no American workers are available. Given the high number of unemployed workers in the United States



right now, expect the number of applicants who employers must process and vet to rise from a few to hundreds, for each job.

Reform and Recommit: Adjusting to the World Ahead

While no one can predict when mobility will be fully operational, there are steps you can take now to prepare. Not only will this provide direction in a time of uncertainty, it will help global companies to hit the ground running when borders open and mobility resumes. In addition to the below checklist of five actions to consider now, global organizations will need to fold other social, political and environmental factors, such as Brexit, into their adjusted strategies.

1. Analyze immigration compliance

When consulates and immigration offices reopen, there's going to be a rush for their services. Take steps now to help your assignees be the first in line. Look at your company's data to understand assignees' current standing and determine who is non-compliant with visa and immigration regulations in host countries. For example, in the United States, H1-B visa recipients



can only remain in the country for 60 days without being paid. Given the sharp rise in unemployment, an analyst with Washington D.C.-based think tank Niskanen Center recently projected over 200,000 workers in the United States on H1-B visas might lose their legal status by June 2020. Make similar evaluations in each country where you have assignees.

2. Prioritize support

Together with business stakeholders, create a list that helps you prioritize who needs mobility support first. At the top of your list should be assignees who are non-compliant with immigration regulations —determine if they can extend their visas or if they need to return home. Some may want to go home and see their families while others may elect to remain in the host country. Then, evaluate your company's business needs to determine who should be next on the list. Based on those needs, figure out which employees need to relocate and to where. You can even initiate conversations about relocations with selected employees to get a head start on the process.

3. Get ahead of cost reduction directives

With an economic downturn in the forecast, companies are likely to seek cost savings across the board, including from mobility, as we learned from the Great Recession. Rather than waiting for a cost-cutting request, start thinking now about how you can strategize for savings, while still maintaining an exceptional experience for assignees. It may seem easy to simply cut benefits, but with the war for talent not slowing down, employees aren't going to relocate if they don't feel supported or if it's not a financially responsible decision for themselves or their families. Take the time to understand the cost savings requirement from [stakeholders](#).

What is the timing needed on the savings — is it immediate or over time? What are your mobility program must-haves – things that will impact the talent pipeline – versus things that can be sacrificed and provide cost savings without negative repercussions? Organizing your thinking around this and engaging with stakeholders to understand their needs will help you work smarter, not harder.

4. Vet supplier partners

Mobility requires partnerships with a wide variety of suppliers. In collaboration with your relocation management company and partners in security and procurement, it's part of your duty of care to properly vet these supplier partners, to ensure they meet heightened health and safety standards. For example, what airline should your assignees use? What aircraft is the airline using and what air circulation system do they rely on?



Then, look at what hotel chains employees can stay in. What are the hotels' cleaning procedures? Move step by step through the relocation process and engage with each partner to make sure your assignees will be healthy and safe.

5. Document procedures and needs

Some health authorities are predicting a second wave of COVID-19 later this year. If that happens, we might expect stay-at-home orders to be reinstated and the industry to slow down again. While that's certainly not what we hope for, you can prepare for the possibility by building on what we just learned. Document the specific steps you've taken this time around, including what was asked of you by company leaders and assignees, and operationalize your crisis plan and dashboard for turn-key readiness.

This also means reviewing your data and technology capabilities. Rather than scrambling to provide needed data at a moment's notice, customize your technology dashboards so you have up-to-date access to your data ([Graebel globalCONNECT®](#) can help you with this and we've adjusted reporting capabilities to track COVID-19

specific exceptions). Use all the information you've documented from this pandemic to build a crisis plan that will serve you during a potential second wave or other future disruption.

While the mobility industry has gone through a challenging time because of COVID-19, mobility professionals can learn from this experience, strengthen their programs and come through the crisis even better prepared to support assignees and your company's broader talent management strategy.

For help in determining which steps to take next – including assessing your technology needs, building a [mobility strategy](#) and crisis planning tips in a post-COVID-19 economy – reach out to Graebel for support in adjusting to the new world of global mobility.

For ideas and insights on how to respond to the challenges facing the mobility industry, visit our [Managing Mobility Through Coronavirus](#) resource center. In collaboration with clients and supplier partners, the resource center shares materials on everything from the [tactical](#) to the [strategic](#).

Our Graebel account managers and [mobility strategy](#) experts are here to provide customized guidance on how to adjust your mobility strategy to reflect the new normal, to support your talent management strategy and to achieve your business goals.