

Overcoming a Critical
Language Barrier:

Balancing Employee Needs with Agile Processes

Graebel partnered with a pharmaceutical company to break down a critical language barrier — boosting satisfaction and efficiency for Japanese-speaking employees.





When unexpected challenges emerged for Japanese-speaking assignees, a swift and strategic response led to meaningful changes for a more supportive relocation experience. The resulting enhancements set a new benchmark for cultural sensitivity and process dexterity in global mobility.

Project overview






Following go-live, Japanese assignees repatriating from the U.S. to Japan encountered difficulties managing household goods moves in English. The issue, not flagged during implementation, surfaced post-launch and impacted the overall employee experience. Graebel's Implementation Services and Supplier Development teams responded by adjusting supplier capabilities and process design to better support evolving needs.

Methodology and strategic insights

To address the challenge and optimize the relocation experience, the project focused on four key areas:

	Approach	Key Findings
 Supplier Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluated multiple household goods partners for Japanese language support. 	<p>Secured two partners offering Japanese-speaking support for both relocation and repatriation.</p>
 Process Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruited destination agents in Japan to act as origin agents in the U.S. 	<p>Enabled Japanese language support across time zones and retained bid process integrity.</p>
 Employee Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered native language support for assignees. 	<p>Reduced stress and improved satisfaction for Japanese-speaking employees.</p>
 Agile Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapted supplier network quickly based on post-launch feedback. 	<p>Demonstrated Graebel's agility and commitment to cultural sensitivity.</p>

Strategic Business Impact

-  Built assignee trust by providing culturally aware support.
-  Developed a scalable model for multilingual support, allowing faster rollout across language communities and regions without restructuring the program.
-  Strengthened supplier ecosystem readiness through clear communication of language-support expectations.
-  Maintained program agility without major structural changes, showing how targeted adjustments can create significant impact without disruptive redesigns.
-  Positioned the program to reduce cycle times by minimizing clarifications and improving first-pass understanding.

Conclusion: Culturally Aware. Strategically Agile.

Graebel's swift response to assignee feedback resulted in impactful enhancements to employee satisfaction and operational efficiency. This case highlights Graebel's commitment to cultural sensitivity, strategic agility and business outcomes, setting a benchmark for future international assignments involving multilingual assignee populations.