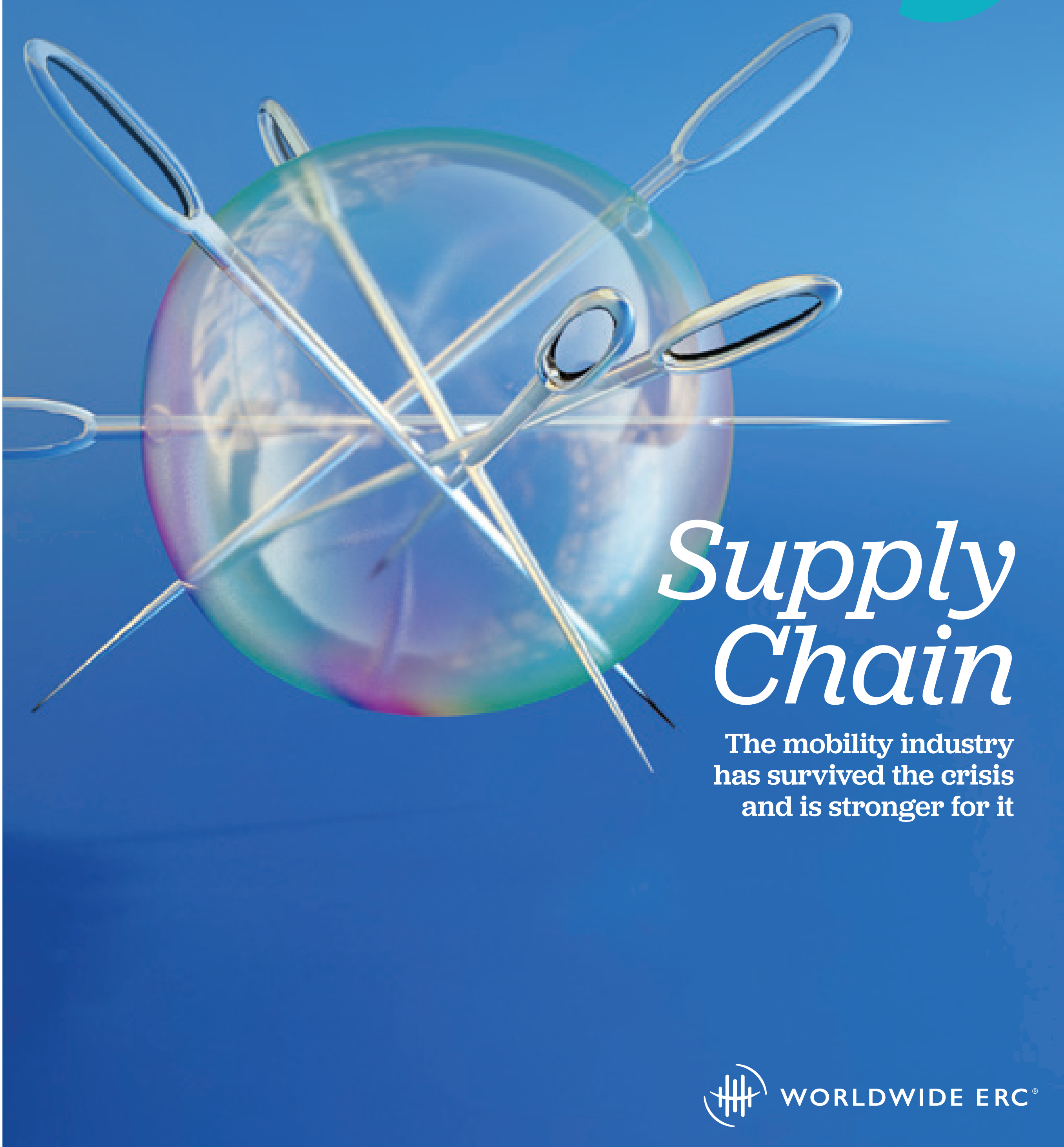
Issue 2 **2022**

Mobility™



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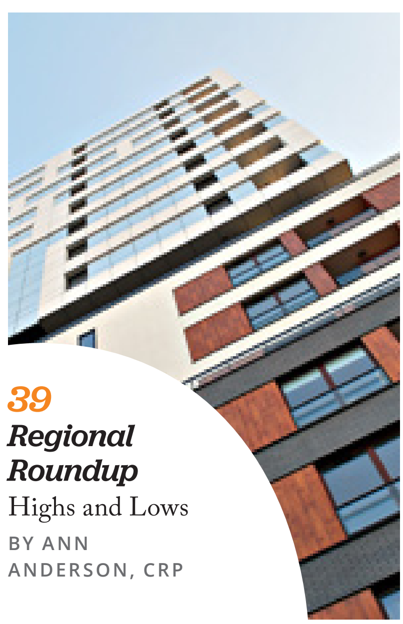
ISSUE 2 **2022**

Contents



Mobility™

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About Worldwide ERC®

Worldwide ERC® is the workforce mobility association for professionals who oversee, manage, or support U.S. domestic and international employee transfers. The organization was founded in 1964 to help members overcome the challenges of workforce mobility.

Our Purpose

We empower mobile people through meaningful connections, unbiased information, inspired ideas, and solutions.

WORLDWIDE ERC®

EVENTS Calendar

June 2022

EMEA Virtual Summit 2022
14 JUNE
Greenwich Mean Time
worldwideerc.org/events-conferences

LATAM Virtual Summit 2022
15 JUNE
Eastern Daylight Time
worldwideerc.org/events-conferences

APAC Virtual Summit 2022
17 JUNE
Singapore Standard Time
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October 2022

Global Workforce Symposium 2022
26–28 OCTOBER
Las Vegas, Nevada
worldwideerc.org/events-conferences

Read all about it!

ABOUT WHAT? THAT'S OUR QUESTION FOR YOU! SEND YOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR TOPICS YOU'D LIKE TO READ ABOUT IN *MOBILITY* TO **MOBILITY@WORLDWIDEERC.ORG.**

Mobility (ISSN 0195-8194) is published quarterly by Worldwide ERC®, 4401 Wilson Blvd., Suite 510, Arlington, VA 22203-4195, +1 703 842 3400. *Mobility* examines key issues affecting the global mobility workforce for the benefit of employers and firms or individuals providing specific services to relocated employees and their families. The opinions expressed in *Mobility* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Worldwide ERC®. *Mobility* is printed in the United States of America. Periodical postage paid at Arlington, VA, and additional mailing offices. Worldwide ERC® members receive one annual subscription with their membership dues. Subscriptions are available to both members and nonmembers at $48 each per year.

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The Rules of the Game

Moving people around the world for work has always been challenging, but we used to know the rules of the game.

You don't need me to tell you that the rules have changed.

We've all been living it for the past two years. Mobility has been complicated a thousandfold by labor and housing shortages, the rise in remote work and its resulting immigration difficulties, plus supply chain snafus that are slowing down the flow of household goods. Not to mention an increasing focus on compliance, the challenges of new technology, and a heightened awareness of the essential role of sustainability.

And yet—there's common ground. It's us. All the many players in global mobility, coming together as one as we help each other find our way to the new future of work. We may not know all the right answers yet. But we can remain humble, curious, and generous in sharing what we know—and what we don't.

Community is about communication, and Worldwide ERC® is guiding our global mobility community in these critical conversations. We will continue to talk a lot about remote work because it has a direct impact on all of us. As traditional mobility begins to return to pre-pandemic levels, we're also talking about the biggest challenge faced by companies in every industry today—the supply chain.

"Over the past two years, every stakeholder in this relocation supply chain adapted existing processes and policies to meet the challenges of the pandemic," John Lambo writes in our cover feature, "How We Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Supply Chain," on page 22. "Many of these adaptations were temporary, but many will shape the way mobility is done in the future. The work of 2022 is to embrace the critical lessons learned from these challenges and adaptations, but it requires an evaluative look back."

In other words, the rules have changed. So, the question is: How do we manage expectations, collaborate, or even change our business models to overcome the current challenges of the supply chain?

It's a topic worth discussion well beyond the pages of this publication. This conversation also necessarily leads to a related topic: sustainability. We recognize that while employee relocation is a key business growth strategy, it has a large environmental impact. As a result, business leaders in every industry sector are looking inward and to their supply chains for collaboration and creativity on how to meet sustainability goals.

The global workforce mobility industry is committed to being a part of the solution. In March, Worldwide ERC® formed an industry-led Sustainability Advisory Council made up of 20 leaders comprising a diverse pool of experience, geographies, and demographics. Working together and with your input, this new council will help shape a common approach on sustainability for the relocation industry and will help workforce relocation teams be the best partners they can be in advancing sustainable business practices.

Yes, the rules are changing, and external forces are affecting what we do day by day. But the work we do here together is helping us shape the strategies that will guide our future in our workplaces, in our profession, and in our world. Much has changed, but mobility has always had a spirit of curiosity and a willingness to rely on one another during the tough times. Together, as one, we can rewrite the game.

Lynn Shotwell, GMS
President & CEO
Worldwide ERC®

The Puzzlement of Preschool Policy

BY ELIZABETH SAWYER, CEO, AND TIM DWYER, PRESIDENT, BENNETT INTERNATIONAL

Few things are more bedeviling to mobility program managers than creating and implementing a global preschool policy that is perceived by stakeholders—i.e., parents—as fair and rational. While many variables can be considered, three particular factors add complexity to the preschool policy equation:

- The range in compulsory schooling ages in different countries.
- The ambiguity of preschool versus “child care” and how to *define* preschool.
- Differing cultural norms regarding early childhood education in various countries.

The age at which different countries provide publicly funded education varies enormously. Therefore, it’s possible that an employee whose child has been attending school in the home country may arrive on assignment to discover that the child is not yet eligible for school in the host location.

It’s generally accepted that an employee who experiences increased education costs as the result of an assignment should receive some form of assistance. But many situations are ambiguous; for example, how does an employer distinguish between babysitting, child care, and preschool? And should support be decided based on the assignee’s home-country or host-country norms, or neither?

Add to this complexity the varied legal requirements regarding compulsory education around the world. Even within Europe, laws regarding required school enrollment vary significantly. While about half of the nations on the European continent set a maximum age of 6 to begin schooling, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden, among others, set the age at 7. Meanwhile, Northern Ireland requires children to be in school by age 4, while the rest of the U.K. uses age 5. But for parents considering preschool, is the age at which children *must* be enrolled in school really the point?

Arguably, more important than the age of compulsory education in a given country is the cultural norm. According to a study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the U.K., more than 90% of 3-year-olds are enrolled in early childhood education. In the U.S., fewer than 50% are.

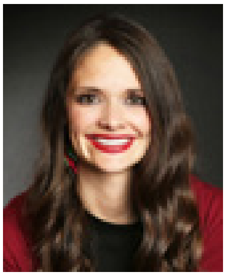
The OECD also points out that the OECD average for government spending on child care for toddlers is US$14,500 per child; the U.S. spends only $500 per child. Despite this, professional families in the U.S. expect to provide their children with some amount of classroom education at the preschool age. Worldwide, this expectation is all the greater if a family comes from a country where preschool would have been publicly funded.

Corporate practice reflects this complex landscape. In a recent study of corporate mobility programs, Bennett International asked employers to describe their practice regarding the support of preschool in the host location. Not surprisingly, responses varied immensely. Eight percent indicated that they followed host-location practices, 4% said they followed home-location practices, about one-third said they used a global minimum age, and another third said they didn’t pay for any preschool expenses. The remainder decided on a case-by-case basis.

At Bennett, we encourage our clients to default toward a more generous preschool policy approach when possible. Nothing is more sensitive to international assignees than the welfare of their children. Knowing that their children will receive a good education while on assignment is often what balances their hesitation to uproot and relocate them. *m*

Send your article ideas, letters, and feedback to **mobility@worldwideerc.org.**

Executive Spotlight



Caroline Salcedo

Joyce Schneijdenberg

Mandy Janzen-Westerburgen

Patti Wasson

SALCEDO JOINS CWS

Caroline Salcedo has joined CWS Corporate Housing as director of business development over the San Antonio market. Salcedo has 10 years of experience within the corporate housing industry, and she leverages this in combination with her ability to think collaboratively and innovatively to provide exceptional customer service to her relocating clients.

"Caroline has an impressive record of maintaining strong client relationships, implementing effective sales strategies, and staying on top of trends within our industry," says Elizabeth Hotze, vice president of sales and marketing. "We pride ourselves on our commitment to excellence, and this value is furthered by the addition of Caroline to our team."

In addition to Salcedo's breadth of experience, she has discovered a passion for continued education. In 2012 Salcedo became a licensed REALTOR®, in 2015 she became a Certified Corporate Housing Provider, and over the course of her tenure she has been able to share her knowledge with both clients and prospects through quality content webinars that are applicable for continued education credits.

"I am excited for the incredible opportunity I have been given by CWS and look forward to contributing toward the excellence they deliver to each client," says Salcedo. "I will leverage my experience and talent for effective collaboration to facilitate seamless client communication and leave a lasting impression of excellence with our guests."

CIBT APPOINTS SCHNEIJDENBERG AND JANZEN-WESTERBURGEN

CIBT has announced the promotion of Joyce Schneijdenberg to vice president, global key accounts and the appointment of Mandy Janzen-Westerburgen as managing director, Benelux.

In her newly formed role, Schneijdenberg is responsible for developing, fostering, and growing strategic relationships across a targeted portfolio of key companies.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for CIBT and for Joyce as she takes on this expanded role," says Florent Frapolli, excecutive vice president, EMEA. "I have watched her grow in the company, gaining experience and becoming a truly inspiring leader."

Schneijdenberg joined CIBT in March 2012 and previously served as managing director for the Benelux region.

Mandy Janzen-Westerburgen steps into that role. As managing director, Benelux, she leads CIBT's entire business for Benelux, taking responsibility for CIBTvisas' business teams located in The Hague and Brussels, as well as the Newland Chase immigration team located in Amsterdam.

"We are delighted to welcome Mandy to our thriving Benelux team," says Frapolli. "Her background and deep industry awareness will ensure our clients experience an unrivalled service to achieve their travel and global mobility needs."

A specialist in international labor law and immigration law, with a particular focus on labor migration, Janzen-Westerburgen is a recognized leader in Dutch immigration. She was admitted to the *Who's Who Legal of Lexology* as a future leader in corporate immigration in the Netherlands and she also received the *Client Choice Award* in 2021 for corporate immigration, as the first ever in the Netherlands, due to her outstanding client management.

WASSON NAMED GRAEBEL'S CHIEF PEOPLE AND ETHICS OFFICER

Patti Wasson will lead Graebel's global human resources team, including employee relations; diversity, equity, and inclusion; talent management; learning and leadership development; and total rewards.

Wasson has been recognized for her ability to align people and business strategies and brings nearly 30-plus years of strategic human resources experience and leadership to the role.

Wasson previously served as the head of human resources and ethics officer at Assurance IQ, a Prudential subsidiary, with expertise in leading workforce development, accelerating inclusion and diversity efforts, and developing high-performing teams.

ODYSSEY RELOCATION MANAGEMENT NAMES SEVERAL APPOINTMENTS

Odyssey Relocation Management recently announced five new senior-level appointments.

Amie West was appointed senior director of client relations, where she will focus on strategic client support and new service implementations, along with client mobility projects. Prior to joining Odyssey, West held similar positions, with comparable responsibilities, at two well-known relocation management companies. "With our global landscape changing in fast forward, we need to be at the forefront of adaptability with the capacity to support clients and be a change agent whenever needed. This flexibility is what will drive mobility forward," says West.

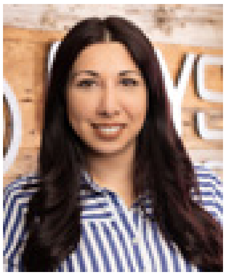
Candice Elnashar was named senior manager of client solutions, where her responsibilities focus on new client and new service implementations, policy design and consulting, research and benchmarking projects, development and enhancement of internal and external processes, and helping establish formalized project management practices. "More than ever, clients are now realizing a need to re-evaluate their goals and strategies of their mobility program," says Elnashar. "The changing talent acquisition and retention climate in our industry requires quick reaction, and it's critical for companies to understand where they sit in the employer marketplace. By working with Odyssey, our clients can implement innovative solutions to transform their business, while also maintaining a competitive relocation program. This ensures their ability to hire and maintain key talent."

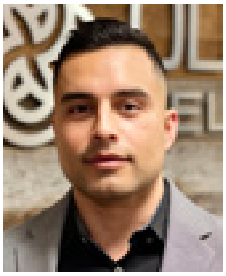
David Toledo was appointed director, global business development. His responsibilities encompass new client acquisitions, sales strategy, brand awareness, new sales and marketing channels, and helping strengthen Odyssey as a market leader in relocation employee experience and innovation. "Global mobility as an industry is going through an incredible period of transformation," says Toledo. "How will companies decide how to attract, retain, engage, travel, and move their people? What will future mobility programs look like? What will companies do in the meantime? These are some of the important questions being answered today. Odyssey has an incredible reputation and track record for helping clients through these challenges with its customer-centric approach. We are primed for some explosive growth as we continue to hire talent and expand our reach, and we can't wait for the industry to see what we've got in store."

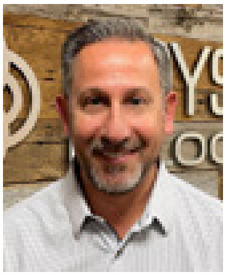
Josh Hyatt was named vice president of sales and marketing. His responsibilities encompass driving new client acquisitions, leading the sales team, accelerating revenue through expanding Odyssey's presence in new geographies, developing new sales and marketing channels, and helping establish Odyssey as a market leader in relocation employee experience and innovation.

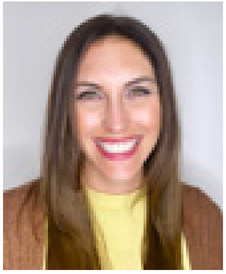
Kelsey Higgins is the new director of client relations, where she will focus on strategic client support and new service implementations, along with client mobility projects. Higgins previously held various positions in global supply chain, service delivery, and client relations at a well-known relocation management company. *m*


Amie West


Candice Elnashar


David Toledo


Josh Hyatt


Kelsey Higgins

YP

Retention in the New Age of Work

Record-breaking numbers of resignations are leading companies to reevaluate how they can retain and engage employees—specifically parents, women, and millennials—who may be desiring better work-life balance or seeking remote work opportunities. So, we asked: **From the perspective of a young professional, can you speak to specific ways companies can better engage and retain the loyalty of these employees, especially in this new age of work?**

Right now, employees want to feel valued and respected. Having a culture of openness and transparency in your management team really helps with this. At my employer, RESIDE, we hold weekly companywide meetings where our leadership team keeps us informed about everything going on in the organization and the industry and how this will affect us. They're open about tough topics, like the COVID-19 pandemic, and in doing so, this has created a more personal connection between us all. Seeing our company leaders be vocal about work-life balance internally and on LinkedIn can be inspiring for employees, too.

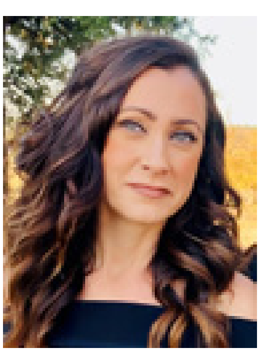
Companies should be constantly thinking about how to empower their employees. Help them be free to express their ideas, and give them opportunities to chart their own career path. This will help with employee engagement and satisfaction and will no doubt benefit productivity at the same time. Tools to facilitate this include making time to have regular check-ins with managers, appointing mentors, and suggesting training sessions or industry events.

ALVARO GARCIA
Sales Development Representative
RESIDE Worldwide Inc.
Woodinville, Washington

If we have learned anything from the last two years, it's that life is precious, and anything can change in an instant. Everyone wants to be valued in the workplace and know that their mental health and happiness matter. During the pandemic, many people realized that they could do their job more efficiently at home, cutting out commute times and distractions from the office. It also provided a sense of work-life balance because they could get tasks done at lunch around the house that generally cannot be done during the workday and spend a little extra time with family members and pets.

Keeping millennials engaged is especially important because they are currently the largest generation in the U.S. workforce. They often feel happier working from home because of lower stress levels and a greater sense of freedom and flexibility. One of the simplest ways an employer can make an impact on a millennial employee is just by asking how they are doing. Other ways are focusing on diversity within the workplace, supporting the personal and professional development of employees, staying up to date with new technology, and offering a competitive salary. Millennials are said to be some of the hardest workers, and they thrive in a workplace that values them.

ALEXANDRA KESSLER
Global Category Manager
Global Supplier Development
Graebel
Richmond, Virginia



I believe that companies who are competitive in the marketplace and are good at attracting new talent embrace these key concepts:

Work-Life Flexibility. Much like relocations, not all personal lives are created equal. Companies that support the flexibility to create work-life balance succeed every time. Their employees are happy and productive. They meet their goals and deliver results.

Compensation. We all know there is a company-employee balance that needs to take place on this topic; total compensation and career advancement opportunities are two ways employers can increase employee engagement and recognize employee contributions to the organization. Companies that recognize this have better retention and employee satisfaction.

Great People Managers. This makes all the difference and is right up there with compensation. Managers who connect with their employees have a team that will walk side by side through the good times and the tougher ones. These kinds of managers inspire their employees, which in turn creates loyalty.

MONICA NEVITT
Director, Client Development
BGRS
Burr Ridge, Illinois

As a single parent, working for an employer that values the flexibility of work-life balance is essential. It allows me to be there for my 14-year-old son when he needs me, while also letting me get my work done in between. This flexible aspect of our company culture was the most important consideration for me when interviewing for my current role.

In today's market, employees also look for more than just competitive compensation. Rewards and recognition matter as well. Feedback on good performance can have a positive impact on employee morale. This is especially true in the new remote environment most of us find ourselves in. Celebrating employee accomplishments can help individuals feel more a part of the team. A few encouraging words—from management or peers—can have a huge impact.

Having a structured plan to address personal and professional growth is also paramount to retaining employees. This gives employee assignments greater purpose and may ultimately make employees happier and more productive. *m*

DANA WHITMAN
Director, Global Business Solutions
CapRelo
Wallingford, Connecticut

Collective Wisdom

To help keep you in the know on many of the topics or questions that are top of mind for Worldwide ERC® members, here are some of the items currently being discussed online.

What Constitutes Cause?

We are finalizing our relo repayment policy/agreement, and a question came up regarding "termination for cause." How does your company determine whether someone must repay the amount spent to relocate them if they are terminated "for cause"? Does it differ depending on the cause (e.g., theft vs. performance)?

Global Mobility Career Paths

Hope to find some resources here, as I need to gather examples around global mobility career paths to assist my team's development. What does it look like at large companies, and how do they structure and develop their global mobility teams? Thanks in advance for any help.

Retention of Relocation Files

Does anyone have information on how long you are required to maintain copies of relocation files and documentation? I have in our notes that it is 10 years, and that seems a little excessive in comparison to other HR document retention periods. Just looking for some insight on this topic for our records retention committee.

Intern Housing Allowance

We haven't increased our intern housing allowance for the past five to six years. Have others increased their intern housing allowance during this time? What do you currently provide?

Offer Letter Versus Contract

Our current practice is to issue contracts for new hire offers. However, due to COVID-19, we have had to change the start dates for new hires repeatedly, and we are wondering if other companies provide an offer letter (intent to hire) and then a contract (upon start)? And do you take a different approach in different locations, and if yes, what is it and why? (For example, in the U.S., we provide an offer letter, while in all other locations we provide an employment contract.)

Wall-Mounted TV Removal/Installation

I'm evaluating my domestic policy and would like to benchmark with our community. Does your company household goods policy cover the expenses to *remove* wall-mounted TVs at departure and *reinstall* at destination, or is this something considered "lifestyle" and covered by the transferee/miscellaneous expense allowance? If your company does cover removal and/or installation of wall-mounted TVs, is there a limit on the number? I'm tired of receiving this as an exception request with every move, so want to see if it's really an exception within our industry any longer. Thoughts or justifications for why it's covered or why not would be appreciated, too. m

Join the conversation in Worldwide ERC®'s LinkedIn groups focusing on U.S. domestic relocations, global workforce mobility, or Young Professionals.

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Here to Stay

BY TRISTAN NORTH

As our industry continues to weigh in on issues regarding the global workforce, particularly remote work, I had the recent opportunity to sit down with Nino Nelissen, SGMS-T, for a virtual discussion of the future of work, anticipated challenges, and possible solutions.

Nino is founder and managing director of Executive Mobility Group (EMG)—a Netherlands-based provider of comprehensive global mobility services—as well as chair of the Worldwide ERC® Global Forum, which tracks non-U.S. government-related public policy issues that impact the cross-border transfer of employees.


Nino Nelissen

TN: Obviously, changes such as the ever-growing use of remote work are not without their challenges. How do you see employers and employees navigating the different laws and regulations when the employee is working in a different country from where the office is based?

NN: My perspective is that this is an area where legislation is not necessarily in touch with reality. Immigration laws are a well-known example where the definition of working does not necessarily fit with the person who opts to go to a sunny country to sit at the beach and work there for two months from a hotel room. But tax is also a case where we see a mismatch.

The big concept in tax is that the country that provides the corporate tax relief—by allowing a deduction for salary cost—is entitled to levy income tax on employment income. This is then further explained in the 183-day rule: You are taxed where you worked—except when you are present in the guest state for 183 days or more, remuneration is not paid by or on behalf of an employer in the guest state, and remuneration is not charged to a permanent establishment of the employer in the guest state.

That is where I really see some issues arising because we're basically trying to squeeze a square peg into a round hole. The tax treaties and a lot of other laws we work with were drafted at a time when remote working wasn't really an issue, when people tended to go to a certain fixed work location from 9 to 5 and remain there from the start of their careers until their retirement. Only *then* did they move somewhere else. So, to facilitate this desire to do things differently, I think we have to reinvent the legal framework.

TN: Where do you think the line will be drawn in terms of laws and regulations covering remote work—with the country where the employer is located, or the country where the employee is working?

NN: Right now, the line is being drawn at different moments in time depending on which part of the law you look at.

For tax, we typically look at 183 days. That is often black and white, but when you look at immigration law, in many cases you have much less time or maybe even no time to work remotely. When you look at social security, you're looking at different timelines globally. And when you look at employment laws, there are also different timelines until you are treated as a local. So, you see many different points after which the host country's rules become applicable.

> [Companies] are not laying the groundwork to allow people to work from wherever they want to work, for however long they want to work.
>
> —NINO NELISSEN

To ensure that things remain manageable for employers in the long run, it might be good for policymakers to look at a more employer-based approach. As an employer, it is your obligation to make sure that the employee is compliant, so having a simple set of rules would be much better than having to govern that from, say, 20 different jurisdictions when you're based in one country. For example, given the work-from-anywhere principle, it may be much better justified to have income taxed in the country where an employer is based—and perhaps coming to a different definition of the permanent establishment concept, where often a corporate presence may be required, and a *de minimus* presence of a worker is insufficient.

TN: What characteristics are employees finding attractive in the countries where they want to work remotely? Who are the workers most likely to want to work remotely?

NN: One of the things you see is that people move away from the more expensive areas. You don't typically hear people say they would love to spend 10 months in Tokyo or some other city that's high on the list of expensive places to live. Here in Europe, for example, you see a lot of people who want to work from Portugal for a certain period of time—it has a nice climate and a good cost of living. So, we're tending to see them move away from the locations where traditional assignees would go and going instead to places that offer a good work-life balance.

As far as the types of people who are doing this, it's mostly either people at the beginning of their careers or empty nesters. Both have the flexibility to move, but the issues they face are somewhat different, as are the adjustments they have to make and the time they want to be away. Young people typically go for a limited period of time, but the empty nesters might want to be there for much longer periods of time. To make that work, you've got to find a fit with the regulations.

TN: Traditionally, corporations have moved employees closer to the physical location where they're needed, but some of these remote workers are actually moving farther away from an office or a facility. Do you see corporations covering those relocations?

NN: What I see is that the demand is typically employee-driven, where the employers, if they choose to, facilitate this demand not with packages or anything like that, but by being supportive and by allowing the employee to do some remote work for a certain period of time.

As far as policies are concerned, we are very much at an early phase, where steps are being taken very carefully. What I've come across a lot, especially within the European market, is that upfront approval is required, and in order to make sure that they don't run into permanent establishment issues or any other areas where remote working becomes a problem, they tend to restrict that approval to something like being in a specific country for 30 to 60 days. They are willing to be flexible, but they are not laying the groundwork to allow people to work from wherever they want to work, for however long they want to work. *m*

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The Numbers

Work From Anywhere

Despite the widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccines, employees have little interest in returning to the office full time. Today, the freedom, technology, and autonomy to work from anywhere is central to the ideal employee experience. Still, policy and compliance challenges remain. Topia's third annual Adapt study explores attitudes toward remote work, the drivers of an exceptional employee experience, and the value of mobility. Conducted by CITE Research on behalf of Topia, the study surveyed 1,481 full-time office workers between 22 December 2021 and 11 January 2022. The participants, all employed by international firms, were evenly split between the U.S. and U.K. and included 299 HR professionals.

In 2022, Traditional Global Mobility Is More Alive Than Ever

76%

of employees would consider moving abroad for an overseas assignment.

66%

agree that international experiences are critical to career growth and mobility.

Experience Matters More Than Location

81%

of employees agree that companies should focus on finding the right talent wherever it might be in the world.

80%

agree that teams should be built on experience and skills, not location.

78%

agree that teams in the future will be agile, and it won't matter if everyone is in the same location.

Although

82%

of employers have a remote work policy,

48%

of employees feel that mobility policies are in place just to make remote work applications easier to reject, and

39%

would like to work remotely but say their company makes it too difficult.

91%

of employees say they are comfortable with their employer tracking their location at the city level, which is enough granularity for HR and finance departments to ensure tax and immigration compliance worldwide.

Compliance Challenges

40%

HR professionals who discovered employees working from outside their home state or country

66%

Employees who admit to not reporting all the days they work outside their home state or country

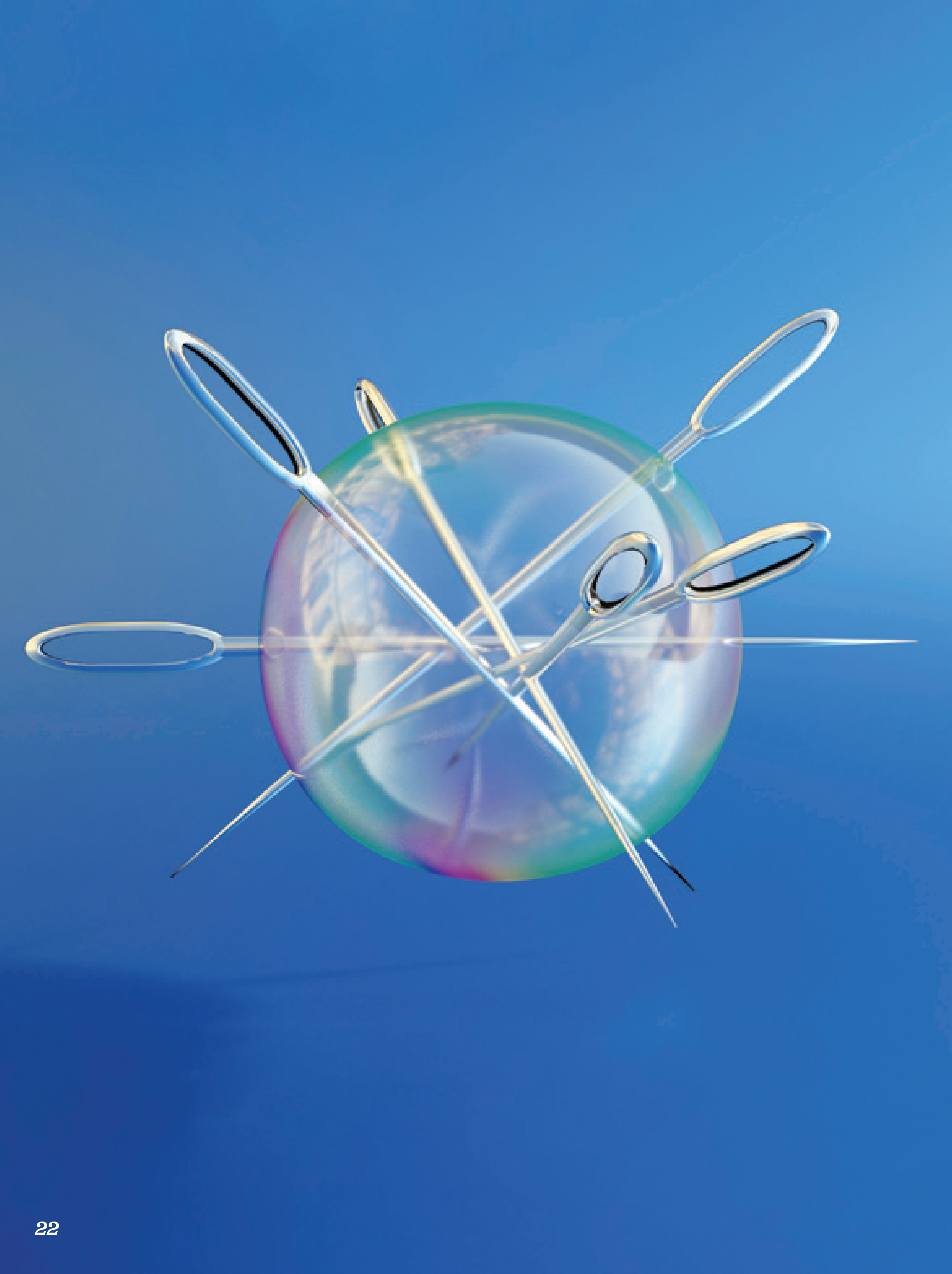
90%

HR professionals who are confident that employees will self-report such days

In 2021,

60%

of HR professionals were confident they knew where most of their employees were located. That number fell to 46% in 2022.



How We Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Supply Chain

Crisis is an excellent and fearsome teacher, but the mobility industry has survived the lesson and is stronger for it

BY JOHN LAMBO

Academics, journalists, and thought leaders embraced the concept of "supply chain" in the 1980s and '90s as standardized intermodal cargo containers greatly reduced the cost and increased the speed of international trade. Competition to reduce consumer costs and enhance stakeholder profits led corporations in every sector to deliver production, distribution, and inventory around the globe.

Emerging technologies allowed more manufacturers and retailers to refine just-in-time supply chain practices, significantly reducing the need to store excess materials in local warehouses. In the past 15 years, the most successful companies leveraged big data and the Internet of Things to closely choreograph the complex machinery of the global supply chain, creating a taut line from raw materials to consumer purchases. Critical assets were no longer warehoused nearby; they were in the supply chain, where they would move directly to point of sale or point of use.

The modern supply chain was celebrated as a marvel of efficiency—until it wasn't. As the COVID-19 pandemic surged around the world in early 2020, borders closed and links all along the chain broke. The complicated choreography came to a near standstill.

This supply chain directly impacts the mobility industry, but there is another supply chain including service providers and other stakeholders involved in relocating an employee from one location to another. This chain includes household goods movers, real estate companies, corporate housing providers, mortgage companies, immigration firms, pet carriers, the hospitality industry, and expense management firms, to name a few. Internal partners key to the transferee experience include HR, legal, procurement, IT, vendor management, and accounts payable.

Over the past two years, every stakeholder in this relocation supply chain adapted existing processes and policies to meet the challenges of the pandemic. Many of these adaptations were temporary, but many will shape the way mobility is done in the future. The work of 2022 is to embrace the critical lessons learned from these challenges and adaptations, but it requires an evaluative look back.

Mistaken Assumptions

When the pandemic struck in early 2020, businesses across the globe temporarily halted production and closed their doors as states issued lockdown orders. By June 2020, more than 7 million American workers had lost their jobs or been temporarily laid off. The magnitude and speed of the economic recession was the worst since the Great Depression, almost 100 years earlier.

It was a safe assumption that demand for goods would drop, but the assumption was wrong. A more complicated situation unfolded.

As consumers around the world entered a prolonged quarantine, the travel, hospitality, dining, and entertainment sectors bore the initial brunt. But conversely, demand for products did not decrease as most expected—it increased. In a classic black swan event in which unforeseen events have profound impacts, consumers—denied many of their accustomed spending opportunities—took their money elsewhere.

Aided partly by social safety nets and greatly reduced expenditures in their typical lifestyle, consumers turned to the internet with enthusiasm. Whether setting up remote work environments, investing in home improvements, or just spending for entertainment, the consumer consumed.

Demand that would ordinarily have gone to local merchants went largely online. Click by click, the collective will to spend demanded valuable new space in containers for products purchased online. Demand increased exponentially just as the supply chain struggled with the fragility that just-in-time efficiency had wrought.

Overwhelmed and overworked truck drivers, already in short supply before the pandemic, could not keep up with incoming containers. Rail yards struggled with the overflow; trains were backed up as much as 25 miles (40 km) at one point at a key Chicago facility. The cost of shipping skyrocketed, even as speed and reliability faltered.

By October 2021, the cost of moving a single container from China to the port of Los Angeles had risen to more than US$20,000—twice what it had been just three months prior, according to the Freightos Baltic Exchange Index. At that time, despite a historic amount of goods being imported through the port, 73 container ships lay moored off the California coast waiting to dock.

The slow lifting of travel and relocation barriers came as a welcome relief to the mobility industry.

But exponential growth in relocation demand met only incremental improvement in the supply chain, and the ability to move people greatly exceeded the capacity to move household goods.

Mobilizing talent quickly with as little disruption in the process as possible, while still controlling costs, schedules, and duty of care, is the gold standard. But with so much disruption in the supply chain, the challenge for relocation professionals is how to provide pre-pandemic service levels to clients and customers.

Managing Expectations

One of the many great things about the mobility industry is that employer and employee expectations have always been high, says Debbie Woodley, vice president, global supply chain–corporate housing, Dwellworks Living.

That level of expectation is now being applied against an environment that is vastly different—if only temporarily. Even reasonable expectations based on pre-pandemic experience cannot be reliably fulfilled at the same pace, cost, or level of satisfaction.

However, there are things that supply chain stakeholders can do to manage expectations for the company and employees:

- **Anticipate potential issues:** Seasoned relocation professionals know what, where, and when things are likely to go wrong in the process. Identify those potential issues, and stay especially close to the process during those times.
- **Be transparent with both client and employee:** Transparency ensures that customer expectations are met, because they know what to expect or what could happen. It also provides an atmosphere of trust, honesty, openness, and quality. If there are reasons why services will not be delivered as expected, make sure all concerned parties understand them. Then, if mistakes happen, communicate the information quickly. The sooner you address the issue by solving the problem or giving a concession that they can live with, the sooner you can move on. Acting quickly to remedy a mistake and taking steps so it will not happen again is the message you want the client to hear.

> “
> The Reuters report *Where Is My Stuff? Enhancing Supply Chain Collaboration Beyond Tier 1 Suppliers* identifies mistrust as a significant hindrance to effective collaboration in the supply chain.

Enabling Collaboration

Transparency in the supply chain also begins with collaboration. According to Don Briggs, vice president, supply chain management, at Cartus, collaboration and continuous communication among all stakeholders involved in an employee's relocation is critical to managing current supply chain challenges.

Both internal stakeholders (HR, legal, accounts payable, employee, etc.) and external stakeholders (movers, real estate professionals, corporate housing providers, RMCs, etc.) involved in an employee's relocation should integrate, share data, and combine the capabilities of their resources across multiple business and department boundaries, so that they are used for the best interest of the supply chain and the transferring employee. This is where resiliency and agility can be realized, since:

- Suppliers working in independent silos can create friction that may diminish service levels and increase costs.
- Collaboration does not have to compromise a company's competitive information.

- As in any relationship, the key ingredient in successful collaboration is trust.

The Reuters report *Where Is My Stuff? Enhancing Supply Chain Collaboration Beyond Tier 1 Suppliers* identifies mistrust as a significant hindrance to effective collaboration in the supply chain. In the report, John Tamayo Valdivia, senior supply chain leader at Procter & Gamble, says supply chain stakeholders need to look deeper into what they share and how they share information. He says that supply chain stakeholders currently "share just what is needed right then, not what we need to truly understand the supply chain. I think this is an ongoing challenge that we always face."

In addition to becoming knowledgeable about each other's businesses, supply chain partners should also become familiar with all aspects of an employee's relocation policy, not just those relative to their role in the process. The goal is that the overall performance of the supply chain will be greater than the sum of its parts.

Developing a New Supply Chain Mentality

A supply chain "orientation" can be helpful to ensure that everyone along the supply chain collaborates effectively. One approach implements management practices using "systems thinking." Companies with this approach:

- Have the capability to deliver on the promises they make.
- Are willing to accept short-term risks on behalf of others, are committed to others, and invest in others' success.
- Work with, rather than against, their partners to achieve goals.
- Have management with the vision required to act to benefit the entire supply chain in the short run, so the company can enjoy greater success in the long run.
- Are effective at conducting and directing supply chain activity.
- Have management practices that reflect a highly coordinated effort between supply chain firms or across business functions.

Reviewing Relocation Policies Regularly

Reviewing relocation policies every 12 to 18 months may not meet the current needs of a volatile market. The ability to make real-time adjustments is necessary for agility and will also increase resilience in the long term. Changes should be validated against employee experiences and current relocation benchmarking studies. Policy components to review may include revisiting lump-sum payments:

- **Lump-sum payments:** Lump-sum policies have always been somewhat controversial regarding effectiveness and cost savings. They are beneficial in terms of flexibility but lack support for the relocating employee. Considering that a transferring employee and family still have a lot of uncertainty ahead not only in terms of relocating but also in daily life, more structure and support may be in order.
- **Incentivizing the relocating employee to move fewer items:** A cost comparison between items shipped versus the amount of a miscellaneous expense allowance may result in an increased allowance if items moved are below a certain weight. Further incentives may include limiting the age and monetary value of automobiles and making arrangements for items to be donated.

Reviewing Business Models

Workarounds were necessary during the pandemic, and any that were successful should be considered for implementation in ongoing business practices. The pandemic also revealed outdated and cumbersome business practices that should be revised or eliminated.

Nathan Sanders, president and CEO of Brook Furniture Rental, agrees that there's a need to rethink business processes and procedures. There was always a logistical checklist of what had to happen during a relocating employee's move. However, pre-pandemic, Sanders asserts, the list was somewhat predictable. As one or two issues came up, they were dealt with swiftly. Now, every aspect of the list is being challenged, including housing availability, furniture availability, schools, real estate, and household goods moves.

Mobility service providers now realize that the just-in-time inventory model may not be in the best interest of relocating employees. Kathy Gramling, EY Americas consumer industry markets leader, says that in today's environment, the just-in-time model is "just not good enough."

In fact, due to its level of unpreparedness, this model may increase costs and degrade service to clients and customers. Maintaining greater inventory levels should be part of all stakeholders' business models. This could take the form of hiring more employees, holding on to more shipping containers, or retaining more apartments. More inventory will increase short-term costs but will ensure better service to transferring employees.

Other business model changes and enhancements may include expanding supplier networks beyond contracted suppliers. "With supply chain challenges continuing, most organizations have had to open their willingness to work with new vendors and purchase outside of contracts to procure needed goods and supplies," says Corey Coll, senior enterprise client executive at Varis, a technology company focusing on supply chains. "This is becoming more common regardless of industry and product needs. Purchasing is continuously more interested in available supply and less on pricing."

In Retrospect

There were sufficient warnings about the fragility of the supply chain prior to the pandemic. The pandemic was a stress test that the system failed, but it is also one that points the way to a more resilient future. But that future depends on stakeholders systematically codifying the larger lessons.

Speed and efficiency are values the mobility industry shares with the business world at large, but ultimately, for this industry more than most, customer experience is the measure of long-term success. Mobility is about establishing relationships and trust in short order and doing what you say you will do.

Be a Part of the Change

Plan today to come to the Global Workforce Symposium, 26 to 28 October in Las Vegas, and network with the companies and professionals who are drawing the map to the future of work and mobility. Visit *worldwideerc.org/events-conferences.*

In this environment—in every environment—that means knowing what the supply chain is capable of, managing expectations, and making a difference everywhere you can.

Worldwide ERC® has considered many elements of resilience in the mobility industry over the past few months. The supply chain, both globally and specifically within the mobility industry, was a conspicuous part of what drew the association's attention and sense of urgency. But resilience cannot be limited to our management of the supply chain. Lessons learned must guide us to becoming more resilient in every aspect of business. Finance, technology, operations, and communications are all critical infrastructure to the practice of mobility, and each has unique risks.

More importantly, resilience is as much about opportunity as it is about risk. The market and the world around it were changing at a dramatic tempo before the pandemic hit. Mobility professionals under the age of 40 today will be leading a far different mobility industry before their careers are over.

The crisis may have grabbed us by the lapels and forced rapid adaptation, but many aspects of that change were already possibilities. Some were long overdue, but many represented competitive advantages that would have gone to the early adopters who were already investing in those changes. *m*

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NOT YOUR TYPICAL (GROUP) MOVE

WITH WORLDWIDE M&A ACTIVITY ON TRACK FOR ANOTHER STRONG YEAR, TALENT MOBILITY PROFESSIONALS SHOULD REV UP FOR A SIMILAR RISE IN GLOBAL GROUP MOVES

BY THOMAS A. PATON, GMS

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 was a record year for mergers and acquisitions, and 2022 is on track to be another strong year in global M&A. Because such deal-making is often linked to subsequent group moves, HR and talent mobility stakeholders should be busier than ever.

Responsibility for *any* group move can be intense, but *global* group moves are special situations with unique challenges. So, how do they compare to other group moves, and how can stakeholders best prepare to manage them?

Group Moves, and Then Some

Group moves typically entail moving employees from an origination point(s) to a new destination within the same country—an "intracountry" or domestic move. *Global* group moves entail moving employees from one or more countries to a single new one. Thus, global group moves are characteristically more complex and resource-consuming. They also involve greater distances and—for projects developing from a confidential M&A—receive little to no advance notice.

Their global nature also necessitates unique planning, concise communications, and well-developed execution strategies, given that they may involve multiple countries and several policy types, such as short- and long-term assignments or permanent moves. They must address tax, visa, and immigration intricacies, not to mention cultural, language, schooling, dual-income, and pet issues.

They're different from *international assignments*, in which securing necessary visa, immigration, and work authorizations are managed prior to assignments on an individual basis, with unique timelines. Global group moves may require a convergence of many individuals, including candidates of various skill levels, job titles, departure countries, and more, all coordinated on a similar timeline. These moves also require skillful juggling of compensation and benefits complications to minimize delays, depending on the countries involved.

Program and Policy Considerations

When considering a suitable global group move policy, companies should review all business drivers, project goals, and relocating employees' common profiles. Benchmarking the proposed policy against best practices or peer companies is recommended if there's enough advance notice.

Administering confidential, customized surveys can address employees' concerns and reveal important demographic data. Employees may feel that rejecting the offer could derail their career; others could have family issues. Such information will facilitate tailoring the global group move to include unique employee needs and will help identify individuals hesitant about the relocation. A survey can also help develop additional move benefits that could increase future acceptance rates.

> "Global group moves continued during the pandemic and are ramping back up again in 2022, but complications remain from country-required vaccinations, travel restrictions, or quarantines before working in each country.

Companies often use the same international relocation policies for all global group moves, but best practice is to adjust existing benefits for each group move's unique destination. A tailored policy can offer benefits to incentivize acceptance, including customized homefinding, destination services, and familiarization trips; home leave trips (if the assignment is not permanent); extra counseling and VIP services; housing subsidies; schooling support; and spouse or partner career counseling.

A company's relocation partner can suggest policy components that best fit their clients' needs, budgets, and goals, as well as write policies for the initiative. Here's an example of creative thinking *before* an announcement: Companies seeking to retain key employees likely to retire within three years of taking a global group move have offered paid household goods services back to the origin, or an equivalent distance elsewhere, upon retirement.

Protecting the company and employees working abroad from immigration, visa, and work permit noncompliance risks is a global group move urgency. A relocation partner should be able to fully manage the immigration process as an integrated collaborator. This includes tailoring communications and coordinating processes according to a client's preferences.

Planning, Timelines, and Communications

Just as with a new client implementation, a new global group move project requires similar detail. Establishing a comprehensive timeline that outlines all activities—and who's accountable for each task—is critical to project success. Timelines should include deadlines regarding when employees need to accept or decline move offers. This varies by company culture, but periods typically span 30 to 45 days, although they can be shorter depending on a project's urgency.

Realistic budgeting and frequent, proactive communications for global group moves are important. For example:

- *Budgets:* Time permitting, comprehensive cost estimates should be run and approved by management *in advance* of policy rollout. Use assumptions that are higher than historical norms, given the skyrocketing costs of international household goods shipments, potential delays, and other unique situations.
- *Communications:* A thorough communications strategy and timeline will help set employees' expectations from initial announcement through move completion. Remember: Some employees vital for a project's success may have never lived or even traveled outside their home country, so it's recommended to communicate more regularly than in a "customary" relocation to decrease anxiety, increase awareness, and improve acceptance rates.

Once the project is complete, the relocation partner should follow up with each employee about their experience and provide a comprehensive post-move analysis of costs and suggested changes deemed helpful for future endeavors.

Case in Point

Global group moves continued during the pandemic and are ramping back up again in 2022, but complications remain from country-required vaccinations, travel restrictions, or quarantines before working in each country. Major geopolitical instability can also alter group move timelines, despite best-laid plans.

Talent mobility stakeholders working on a global group move often find a huge percentage of their time and responsibilities shifting to focus on the new project, taxing their already precious time managing the regular portfolio of relocating employees. Having been requested to plan, coordinate, and manage a global group move may also prove awkward if proper authority is not fully delegated to talent mobility professionals. If front-line managers have final decision-making power for their business and become deeply involved in day-to-day details, they may also question the rationale of approved, best-practice relocation benefits.

On the flip side, for every challenge, there are valuable lessons on how companies remain flexible. Consider these recent examples:

To Switzerland

Targeting a late 2021 or early 2022 group move arrival in Switzerland, a company, its relocation partner, and its destination service partner started detailed planning six months prior in order to support 15 key employees and new hires from the U.S. and the EMEA region. Overcoming the destination's *much* higher cost of living was one major key to success in convincing employees to accept the move offer. The relocation partner identified where the company's existing international policies needed to be enhanced for the destination-specific global group move policy. After careful research, new benefits were added, including housing allowance tiers by job level, utility allowance tiers, parking tiers, and educational offerings.

The company, relocation partner, and DSP participated in regular weekly calls with local management to help them recognize the group move's unique challenges so they could speak with

> Companies often use the same international relocation policies for all global group moves, but best practice is to adjust existing benefits for each group move's unique destination.

a better understanding to employees and candidates. All policy changes were approved by senior management, and the move was a success.

To Luxembourg

A company made a priority request to coordinate a group move of 15 employees from the EMEA region who needed to be settled into Luxembourg within 60 days. Host-country tax regulations drove the timeline, requiring that employees' group move offer letters be sent immediately so employees could physically be on location by the deadline. Existing international policies provided a base for employees to accept their offers, with specific group move benefits customized and integrated rapidly thereafter.

With no time to spare, the relocation partner focused on the policies, moving, and housing, while the company concentrated on securing visa approvals. Identifying local housing was difficult given the timeline, but daily and weekly calls among all parties—and collaborating with a trusted DSP that provided all on-the-ground details—enabled all 15 individuals to accept the move, report on time, and settle in quickly during the winter of 2021–2022.

To Brazil

Numerous families involved in a successful Brazil-to-U.S. group move had purchased homes in the new country and had begun receiving company green card support. When the company restructured in late 2021, green card support ended, and all were required to either repatriate in a reverse group move or lose employment.

In addition to COVID-19, the relocation partner faced several unique challenges in assisting with employees' needs. Since most families did not speak English, communications had to be clear and concise. After every call, an email summary followed. Employees found this very helpful, as anything not fully understood by families was easily translated from the emails.

Real estate agents fluent in Portuguese and knowledgeable in global mobility practices were scarce, but the relocation partner sourced several excellent agents from surrounding cities and adjusted deed package timings to ensure that papers were signed *before* employees repatriated. Finally, the relocation partner advised employees to leave their U.S. bank accounts open to facilitate equity payments and avoid delays with transfers to Brazil.

To Germany

A project required rush assistance with homefinding and settling-in services for 48 American employees participating in a group move to Munich, an expensive German market. The relocation partner worked with a local DSP's Munich and Frankfurt project teams, dividing key tasks to ensure simultaneous research, employee communications, and expedited home search tours.

In a hot property market such as Munich, scheduling multiple appointments with local property owners was difficult, and dates and times were non-negotiable. By combining tours with several employees at once, the DSP teams guaranteed viewings of numerous properties. And by monitoring the market and vetting unknown landlords, the DSP teams also prevented employees from renting "too good to be true" apartments and becoming fraud victims.

To Costa Rica

A company's Mexico group opened a Costa Rica office under a tight budget and required numerous technicians to relocate from India. The immigration partner collaborated with experts in both countries to devise a solution. After investing many hours in analysis, research, and client guidance to develop a unique response, the involved Indian nationals were able to leverage the U.S. B-1 and B-2 business visas to authorize entry into Costa Rica. The company benefited by:

- Avoiding logistical burdens of obtaining visas through the Costa Rican Consulate in India.
- Streamlining the project, enabling technicians to meet deadlines and deliverables.
- Reducing visa processing time before technicians were on-site.
- Realizing project savings and a 100% success rate.

To Remote Australia

Assistance was required for global employees heading to a town two hours outside of Perth, Australia—one of the world's most isolated cities. Sourcing temporary housing presented a challenge, as most moves included families and pets. Move benefits included temporary housing, but the first employee refused to transfer without his dog. Serviced apartments were about AU$15,000 per month; none accepted pets.

A solution was developed with a resourceful DSP that agreed to lease and manage furnished properties on the company's behalf. This not only reduced costs but also provided reassurance that all due diligence was followed and enabled employees to bring their pets. Each tenant became liable for damage—tracked through a system of interim condition reports—and the client was protected from liability.

Going From Fear to Opportunity

With record M&A activity expected in 2022, it is important to reach out immediately to your relocation partner when your manager advises you that your company is acquiring or merging with another company or a global group move is announced.

Certainly, *all* group moves are different and need special attention, but global group moves—with cross-border hurdles, executive visibility, and opportunity costs—can be some of the more distinctive and challenging responsibilities talent mobility stakeholders may inherit.

Still, as actor Morgan Freeman has said, "Challenge yourself: It's the only path that leads to growth." Mobility stakeholders who collaborate with the right experts and support systems can face *any* group move challenge—and turn it into a path to learn, grow, and thrive while meeting company objectives. *m*

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Making International Remote Work... Work!

More employees want to work remotely in destinations abroad—but just how effective are remote work policies, and how can companies stay compliant while supporting these new employee experiences?

BY DANIEL MORRIS

Unquestionably, the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated that employers adapt to the "new normal," in which employees are working remotely in destinations abroad—or even more commonly, destinations where the employer has no corporate entity or legal presence.

Nearly two years after the onset of the pandemic, mobility managers have adapted and evolved policies to account for the challenges COVID-19 still presents. But just how effective are these new policies?

It's important that we assess: 1) how we started; 2) what we learned from the challenges; 3) what we did to make it work; and 4) how businesses and assignees really feel about the efficacy of these policy changes and opportunities.

From Home Office to Digital Nomad

It was not long ago that the idea of commuting in to an office and working a standard eight-hour work day was the relative norm. From there—and with the evolution of technology and the internet—we then observed companies leveraging the capabilities of broadband internet, voice over internet protocol (VOIP), and videoconferencing to offer employees opportunities to "work" while not in the office. Admittedly, these policies appeared to derive from an employer's intent to increase productivity by offering opportunities to complete work while one might be "temporarily" out of the office.

Fast-forward to the evolution of the home office, through which these off-site opportunities have become permanent in many respects and span across borders. These employees undertaking cross-border remote work have become colloquially known as "digital nomads." The term represents employees or individuals who "roam about" with no real fixed residence and are enabled to do so without any professional or financial hindrances due to the evolution in how employees can work utilizing today's cutting-edge technology.

Two major challenges presented to employers by digital nomads are rooted in mobility policy and immigration compliance (among several others, such as tax). For years, employers have tried to harmonize objectives from a business, recruitment, and employee retention standpoint. Creating or adjusting mobility policies to accommodate digital nomads appears to have done just that, until COVID-19 arrived at our doorsteps.

COVID-19's Massive Disruption to Expatriate Assignments

There can be no question that the rapid onset of the COVID-19 pandemic left nearly everyone in the mobility industry frantically trying to ascertain what options remained for current assignees abroad, soon-to-be assignees gearing up to relocate, and business travelers who weren't able to return due to sudden border closures. For those "stuck" overseas, many had no choice but to work from laptops in their hotel accommodations.

> Countries such as Spain, Portugal, and Thailand are in the process of implementing digital nomad visas into their immigration legislative framework.

To no surprise, many employers had no policy whatsoever related to international remote work. With no such policies, these assignees and business travelers caught in the crosshairs of strict worldwide regulatory measures weren't provided the ideal expatriate experience one typically envisions.

Two years ago, for many employers, the only option for assignees was repatriation. This was especially true for employees who were on assignment in China. Throughout the following year, some of the strictest immigration precautions were put into place by the international community, ranging from complete border closures—Australia, for example—to requirements for pre-departure PCR or antigen testing with subsequent post-arrival quarantine. To that effect, many gearing up for an international assignment were not going to be granted the opportunity to do so any longer from an immigration standpoint.

For those fortunate souls now able to go on international assignments in 2022, several issues are still at play when ascertaining whether an international remote assignment is compliant with the local immigration regulations. In many destinations—and depending on the type of work permit the employer or assignee petitions for—"labor market testing" may be a precondition to receiving approval for a work permit. In essence, the employer must prove that the open position cannot be sourced from the local labor market in the host destination and, as a result, the employer needs to hire a foreign assignee for the position.

It can be challenging, then, to argue that the position cannot be sourced locally when the foreigner will undertake the position in-country and remotely. While not an impossible measure to overcome, employers have faced several challenges obtaining work permits when the duties of the position do not require the employee to be on-site at a local office or with a client.

In response to the pandemic, many employers simply allowed expats on assignment to work remotely without regard for the local destination's regulations on remote work. Interestingly, worldwide immigration authorities are trending toward allowing international remote work as a method to obtain additional visibility of in-country foreign workers.

Unforeseen Red Tape

When speaking to a people success manager for a large research and development company based in San Francisco, I learned that they had completely done away with their previous international remote work policy and opted for an approach that would allow "any employee to work from anywhere for up to eight weeks."

Several conditions had to be met in order to be eligible for international remote work under their company's new policy, but most importantly, the company required visibility on these employees, along with immigration compliance and assessments for taxation. There was some additional discussion on whether the company provided immigration and tax professional support for these employees. Ultimately, the company left those decisions to the respective business units with which the employee worked, as it was an elective option for some but required for others due to the pandemic.

It was an interesting approach in that, on the surface, it appears to accomplish the primary objectives of protecting the business, yet in some instances it shifts the compliance obligation to the employee alone, from a support and advice perspective. Regardless of whether the employee alone is tasked with this responsibility, employers should be advised that there can be legal consequences if they, too, do not undertake their own due diligence in these situations.

For example, assume an employee under this policy wants to live and work remotely in France, comes back to his employer, and says, "Yes, we are OK from an immigration standpoint. As a U.S. national, I do not need a visa for 90 days." If the employer doesn't conduct its own due diligence here—which presumably means providing professional immigration support—it might be surprised to learn that France has no remote work visa options, and a U.S. national is in no way permitted to work without a work permit. An employer can open itself up to major risks in this situation.

Employers are also making international remote work permissible due to the rise of the digital nomad visa. These visas seem to be the dream scenario for any employee looking to utilize a policy such as that iterated above; to varying degrees, these visas: 1) require no local entity for visa sponsorship; 2) have short processing times, typically from three weeks to three months; and 3) permit stays up to 12 months—and are renewable in some destinations. With options for employees to undertake international remote work in destinations such as Greece, Brazil, the Cayman Islands, or the Bahamas, it's no surprise that these visas are becoming extremely popular with those looking to undertake international remote work.

Even so, employers are continually advised to undertake their own immigration and employment legal diligence, as some destinations will not permit employees to work under a digital nomad visa when the visa holder's employer already has a legal or corporate presence in-country. The general policy there is to prohibit employers from using the digital nomad visa as a way to circumvent standard work permit processing for other noncompliance reasons.

Are International Remote Work Policies Working?

From observations and discussions with numerous multinational clients and expats who request

"Often overlooked are the assignees themselves, who must undertake international remote work opportunities within the confines of these new policies. Critically, feedback from assignees has been mixed.

immigration guidance from advisory services daily, the short answer is yes.

Many businesses proclaim that they "embrace innovation," but the true test of innovation in the mobility sphere is whether there is a willingness and desire by the company to continually enhance the expatriate experience. An approach that signals to the assignee that the company takes compliance seriously but is flexible in terms of destination, duration, or benefits seems to be the most common trend. The revamped policies are undoubtedly working for businesses; until now, many mobility departments had no methodology for tracking the activities of business travelers outright. With new policies requiring compliance as a condition for approval, these departments have significantly increased the level of visibility on an entire mobile population they did not have previously. This, in turn, allows these departments to ensure that, where international remote work is concerned, the business is protected to a much higher degree.

However, from surveys, often overlooked are the assignees themselves, who must undertake international remote work opportunities within the confines of these new policies. Critically, feedback from assignees has been mixed. Some current assignees have expressed disappointment that it took a pandemic for these policies to finally warrant making changes, while other assignees have expressed increased job satisfaction and feeling as though their employer supports international travel experiences in ways that other employers do not.

One assignee advised that his employer not only allowed him to undertake 12 weeks of international remote work in Croatia but also provided immigration and travel support for his wife and two daughters. He went on to highlight that he had other friends working for large tech companies, and to his knowledge, none offered such generous international remote work options and benefits.

Looking Forward to 2023

The next year will likely see several other countries embracing international remote work where immigration formalities are concerned. Already, countries such as Spain, Portugal, and Thailand are in the process of implementing digital nomad visas into their immigration legislative framework. Consistent with that trend, employers then have excellent opportunities for recruitment and retention if their mobility policies evolve at the same pace as these new opportunities are arising. The pandemic has demonstrated over the last two years that employees not only desire the option to work remotely, but that many continue to achieve professional success in that capacity.

COVID-19 will continue to present challenges where mobility and business travel are concerned. Now is the time for employers to revisit outdated mobility policies, collaborate with assignees on policy enhancement, and look for opportunities to showcase the versatility of the business to adapt to the many challenges still presented by the global regulatory environment. The next year is likely to see exciting developments in which nonsponsored global international remote work remains in the spotlight. *m*

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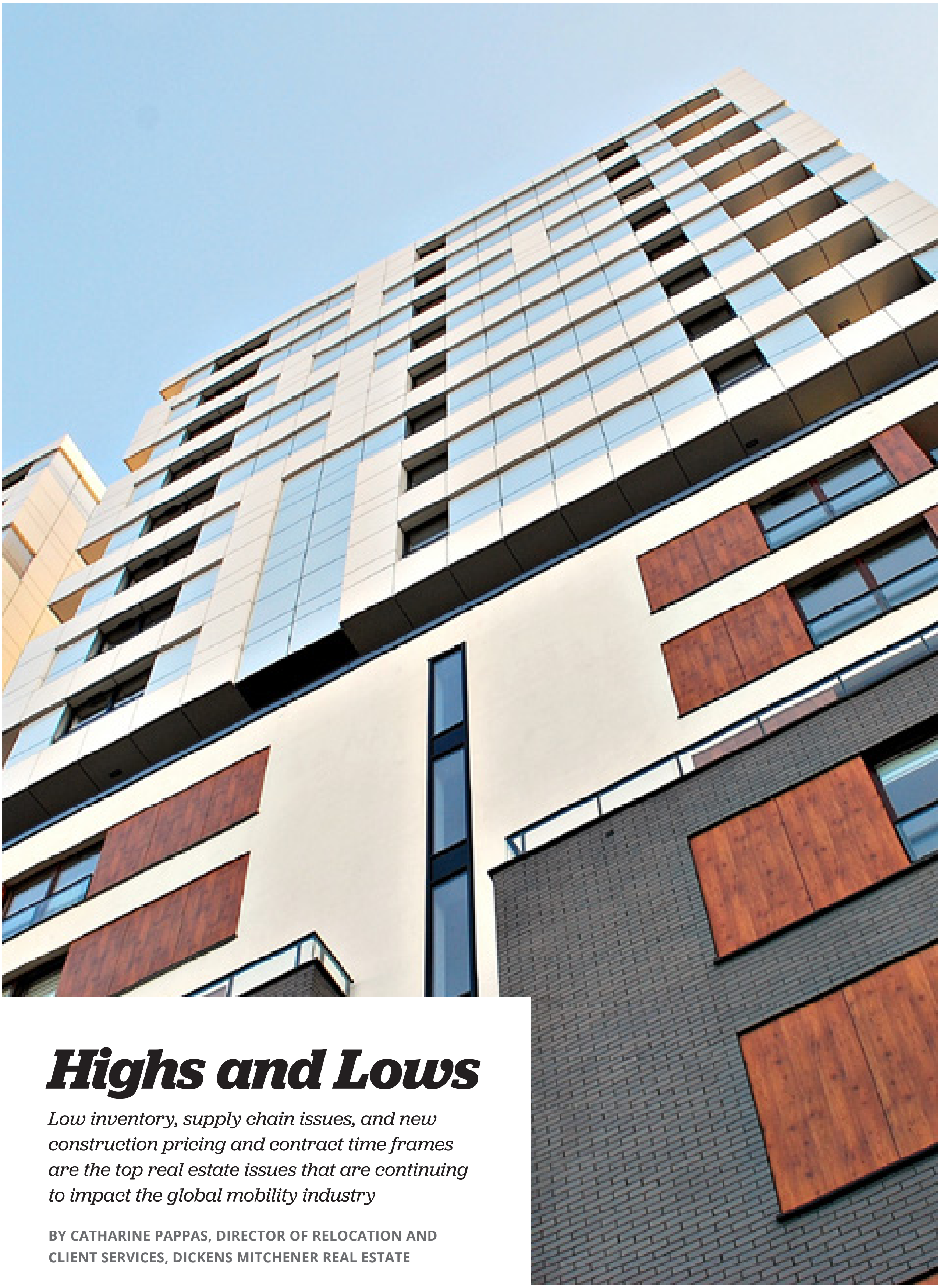


Highs and Lows

Low inventory, supply chain issues, and new construction pricing and contract time frames are the top real estate issues that are continuing to impact the global mobility industry

BY CATHARINE PAPPAS, DIRECTOR OF RELOCATION AND CLIENT SERVICES, DICKENS MITCHENER REAL ESTATE

The real estate market has experienced record-breaking sales in recent years, heavily impacting available inventory for homebuyers. In fact, the National Association of REALTORS® reported in January 2022 that inventory reached historic lows, dropping 16.5% from January 2021.

This critical shortage marks a consecutive 32-month year-over-year decline. Increased demand has remained prevalent, creating a competitive market in which homebuyers have to move quickly on active listings. The current average shelf life of a listing is 19 days, allowing the home to go from an active listing to being under contract in a radically short period of time. Last year, in an already highly competitive market, the life of the listing took around 21 days, further demonstrating how the real estate market has weakened as it is continuously forced to function under the heavy weight of a major inventory shortage.

This record-breaking shortage has created immense stress for homebuying transferees, pushing already tight deadlines for agents to find a home in the transferee's destination location. REALTORS® are working harder than ever to overcome these added obstacles by giving their clients the best advice and moving quickly on any available listings as soon as they hit the market.

However, agents are participating in an extremely competitive market that features homes repeatedly selling well above list price. This effectively increases not only the seller's expectation to obtain the maximum profit for his or her property but also creates increasing frustrations for overwhelmed buyers. It is now not only prevalent but common for buyers to miss out on multiple properties after being subjected to prolonged bidding wars.

Often, relocation clients are in their newly designated area for only a short period of time. The immense pressure of finding a home that fits their needs, combined with a challenging market with limited homes available, makes their reliance on a REALTOR® critical. Many cities across the country have less than two months of housing supply available. In addition, despite an average 19 days from listing to contract, data shows that this already limited housing supply is often subject to go under contract in far less time—within 72 hours of listing.

> Home prices have risen nearly 30% since 2019, resulting in the typical home costing on average about US$80,000 more than pre-pandemic listings.

In this market climate, knowledge is power, and relocation clients need to know, without a doubt, that their agent understands their search parameters and can translate that to an itinerary worthy of their often limited time. Likewise, REALTORS® must coach and prep their clients on countering with aggressive offers to ensure that they secure the home they want without jeopardizing the integrity of their investment.

"We have found that educating our agents and clients to, in turn, help their transferees on the front end understand our area market has been extremely beneficial in setting transferees' expectations," says Paige Thompson, vice president of relocation, Zeitlin Sotheby's International Realty. "Many know the market is moving fast, and low inventory is an issue. Showing real-time data helps with managing expectations."

The National Association of REALTORS® research group outlines rising home prices continuing to hit record highs, further breaking down affordability. Home prices have risen nearly 30% since 2019, resulting in the typical home costing on average about $80,000 more than pre-pandemic listings. Although wages have increased as well, they are not keeping pace with continuously rising home prices. With this uneven correlation, potential buyers are forced to allocate more funds from their budget to housing. However, increasing their budget only affords them a typical home, despite the higher price, compared with similar homes in 2019.

Interestingly, housing market data shows an inventory shortage even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, with record-breaking lows in 2021. Current data suggests that approximately 1 million active listings are available, whereas nearly 4 million listings were available for sale in 2007.

This influx of homebuyers and the corresponding supply shortage is a trend throughout the U.S. "In today's real estate market, inventory in Southern California is at all-time lows as homebuyer demand continues to outpace the monthly supply of homes," says Ashley McEvers, executive director, Pacific Sotheby's International Realty. "The influx of homebuyers from Northern California and Los Angeles is creating competition for listings across San Diego and Orange County, thus making our already surging demand even more unprecedented. According to Pacific Sotheby's International Realty's *Insider Intel* report, if no new inventory hit the market, all inventory would sell out in less than a month in San Diego and Orange County."

Another reccurring trend is the debate among consumers to rent or own. More transferees are opting to rent due to record-breaking low inventory. In addition, transferees are often forced to operate under tight time constraints set by their employers, and under mounting pressures to find a desirable home in their destination location and start a new job as soon as possible. Although many of these renters will buy and own real estate in the future, the immediate and apparent solution for many is to rent.

Also related to COVID, a new obstacle has arisen in the housing market and greater economy. Paired with historic concerns of land, labor, and lumber shortages, supply chain challenges continue to cause serious delays in the production of available housing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Census Bureau confirmed that supply chain issues in 2021 expedited the decline of available housing units. By February 2022, developers nationwide cited continuous issues in obtaining building materials, attributing the shortage of available new builds to supply chain problems, causing major construction delays. By midyear 2021, housing stats decreased by 7% to a seasonally adjusted rate of 1.53 million units.

> "Supply chain challenges continue to cause serious delays in the production of available housing.

"The decline in single-family permits indicates that builders are slowing construction activity as costs rise," says Danushka Nanayakkara-Skillington, National Association of Home Builders assistant vice president for forecasting and analysis. "Stats began the year on a strong footing, but in recent months some projects have been forced to pause due to both the availability and costs of materials."

A recent poll shows prices and availability were significant issues for 96% of builders, and 91% of builders expect the problem to continue throughout 2022, according to the NAHB/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index. Availability and the time it will take to obtain building materials was a predominant issue for 91% of builders, while 90% expect it will remain an issue in 2022 and beyond.

It's clear that low inventory and new construction will remain a challenge for the foreseeable future. However, real estate experts do see brighter days ahead. As COVID wanes, many are anticipating that a more normal and predictable market is on the horizon. *m*

Spotlight:

Osaka

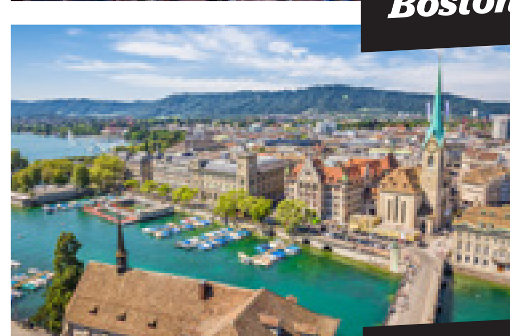
BY MARYELLEN KENNEDY DUCKETT

Located on Honshu island in central Japan, outward-looking Osaka is an international city rich in linguistic, ethnic, and identity diversity. This openness to different cultures and ideas contributed to Osaka earning a spot on the first-ever Prosperity and Inclusion City Seal and Awards (PISCA) index. Published in 2019, the PICSA ranked the 113 top cities around the world in terms of their "inclusive prosperity"—in other words, the ability of all residents to participate in the economy and share in the benefits.

PICSA cities are recognized as great places to live due to factors such as wide access to health care, education, and jobs. Osaka's inclusive prosperity extends to expats, whose contributions are key to the region's knowledge economy. In recognition of Osaka's global mindset, the city was chosen to host World Expo 2025, which is expected to attract an estimated 28 million visitors from 150 countries.

Snapshots:

Boston



Zurich

Immigration and Permits

Japan's Working Holiday (WH) visa allows expats to work full time in Osaka for up to a year, provided they stay no longer than six months with a single employer. To apply for a WH visa, international employees need to make an appointment at a Japanese embassy in their home country. There are no visa fees; however, applicants need to provide extensive paperwork documenting that they meet baseline requirements, such as having a college degree or at least a decade of work experience in a specific field.

Expats who are recruited to work in Osaka or who are relocating to the city through their company enjoy the benefits of having a human resources department guide them through the process for a longer-term work visa. High-demand fields for expats in Osaka include medical equipment and pharmaceuticals, environment- and energy-related industries, and robotics and information technology.

USKARP / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Entrance area around Terminal 1 of Kansai International Airport

Doing Business in Osaka

In the PICSA index, Osaka earned high marks in the "prosperity" category, which examined the quantity of economic growth in a city. Two engines powering high wages and wealth in Osaka are international firms and startups, both of which enjoy incentives such as free office space for up to six months just for establishing a business in the city. Recent international additions to the city's growing international economic base include Germany-based Delivery Hero's subsidiary foodpanda and Australia-based IDP Education, an international leader in study abroad-related businesses.

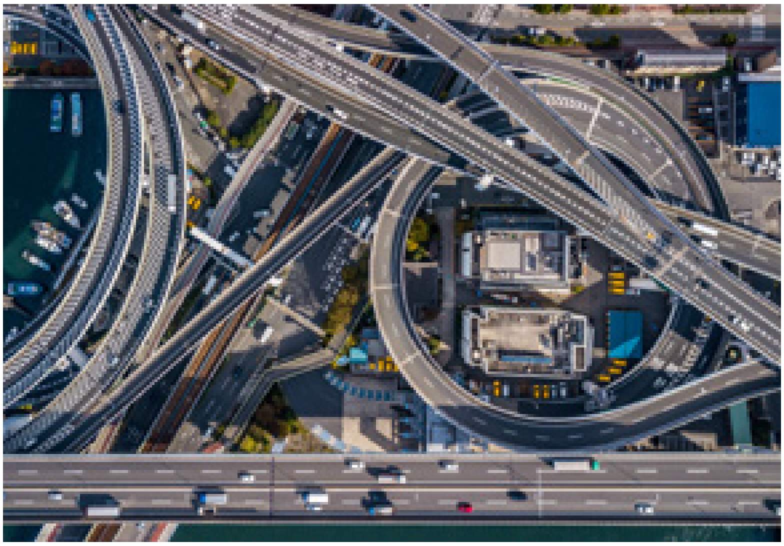
Expats working for Japanese employers can expect to put in long days at the office. Traditionally, the workplace is considered an employee's weekday family, meaning colleagues view themselves more as extended family than as co-workers. Dedication to this work "family" and its shared mission during the week is expected, while weekends are generally reserved for free time. Expats need a basic knowledge of the Japanese language to assimilate into the work culture, and some employers may require international employees to take the Japanese Language Proficiency Test.

Living

Establishing temporary residency in Osaka begins upon arrival at the airport, where expats receive a Japanese residence card or photo ID. Within two weeks, expats need to bring the card to their local municipal office to register their Osaka address and have it formally printed on the back. International employees also need personal stamps, or *hanko,* made from wood or plastic and engraved with their name. *Hanko*—available online and at *hankoya* shops and kiosks—serve as verified signatures and are used for everyday life and work transactions such as signing rental contracts.

Favorable rankings for health care, infrastructure, and stability helped Osaka nab the second spot (Auckland, New Zealand, was No. 1) in *The Economist*'s 2021 survey of the world's most livable cities. But it's the welcoming attitude of Osakans that particularly appeals to expats. Osakans are known for being laid-back and eager to help outsiders. And, based on the city's ranking as one of the world's most prosperous and inclusive, it shouldn't be surprising that a popular local greeting is *"Mokari makka?"* It means, "Are you profiting or making good money?"

An efficient public transportation system connects Osaka's two major city centers, Umeda and Namba, to popular expat communities such as Toyonaka, located close to the airport just north of Osaka City, and upscale Ashiya, located midway between the financial hubs of Osaka and Kobe. The Toyonaka International Center offers expat-centric services such as Japanese classes for adults and children, while tree-lined Ashiya boasts stunning views of Osaka Bay and easy access to private schools, including Ashiya International School (pre-kindergarten through sixth grade) and Ashiya International Secondary School (seventh to 12th grade).



Aerial view of a major highway interchange in Osaka

A tourist samples hot *takoyaki,* or octopus balls.

Unexpected Osaka

Foodies flock to Osaka—nicknamed *tenka no daidokoro* (the nation's kitchen)—to dig into the city's signature *kuidaore!* (eat-until-you-drop!) street food scene. Served up alongside Osaka's ubiquitous *takoyaki* (octopus balls) and other tasty treats are lively comedy club offerings. Long known as Japan's comedy capital, Osaka has produced many of the country's leading comedians and is best known for its *manzai*-style acts, which pair a straight man, or *tsukkomi,* and a fool, or *boke.* Expats can experience the fast-paced banter of *manzai* comedy duos at places such as the ROR Comedy Club, an English-language venue hosting weekend shows and a Tuesday open mic night.

Boston

Home to more than 40 colleges and universities—including world-class institutions such as Harvard in neighboring Cambridge—Massachusetts' state capital and largest city attracts top talent from around the world.

Having a solid base of highly educated professionals in the Greater Boston region, which encompasses Boston proper and 43 other cities and towns in eastern Massachusetts, helps sustain the area's prosperity and inclusion, as measured by the PICSA index. Along with possessing a wealth of opportunities in fields such as finance, health care, biotechnology, and information technology, Boston is also an ideal base for expats who want to explore the wider six-state New England region.

Inside the city, riding the T (Boston's historic subway system) and walking are the easiest ways to get around. Some of Boston's most culturally diverse communities, such as Jamaica Plain and Somerville, are on the T's Orange Line, and there's a T or public shuttle bus stop near many of Boston's more than 60 museums. Expats with families may want to make the hour-plus commute into Boston from southern New Hampshire, where there's no state income or sales tax and the median price of a single-family home is a relatively affordable $400,000, compared to $750,000 in Greater Boston.

Zurich

Named the world's most prosperous and inclusive city on the PICSA index, Zurich—Switzerland's largest city—scored most impressively in categories such as work and educational opportunities, quality of life, and housing. The clean, modern, global city of 1.3 million is an international capital of commerce and scientific research, and a pricey place to live and work. Switzerland perennially makes top 10 lists for the most expensive countries to live in, and Zurich was ranked as the world's fourth-most expensive city in Mercer's *2021 Cost of Living City Ranking*. Fortunately, professionals typically enjoy high wages, making it possible to afford Zurich's high standard of living.

It's also possible to live car-free thanks to Zurich's expansive public transportation network featuring boats, buses, cable cars, trains, and trams. Swiss public transport famously runs on time, too. That's extremely helpful in a country where punctuality is expected in business.

One priceless perk of expat life in Zurich is the scenery: shimmering Lake Zurich in the city and snowcapped mountain peaks beyond. Two particularly scenic areas for expats are the Gold (the sunnier eastern shore) and Silver (the western shore) coasts of the lake. Both offer private, international schools, such as Lakeside School Küsnacht (pre-K to grade 6) on the Gold Coast and Zurich International School (ages 3 to 18) on the Silver. *m*

Maryellen Kennedy Duckett is a Tennessee-based freelance writer and a contributing editor at National Geographic Travel Media.

Advertisers' Index

Thinking Inside The Box

CUSTOM MOVING SOLUTIONS TO PROPEL YOUR TALENT FORWARD

BY KAREN BANNON, DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL MARKETING AND ESG, ARPIN INTERNATIONAL GROUP

As a privately-owned and innovative independent moving and storage company, Arpin International Group brings agility, flexibility, and scalability to its clients. Our commitment to continuously reinvest in the company enables us to anticipate and respond to the rapidly changing global business requirements of our customers. One shared pain point experienced by both corporate and RMC clients is how to achieve a timely, exclusive, and more streamlined moving experience for employees relocating during peak moving season — especially new hires and those employees receiving a lump-sum moving allowance.

Arpin's solution — FastPAC℠! For over a decade, Arpin's innovative FastPAC℠ (Planned Arrival Containerization) program has taken the worry out of moving transferees domestically during peak season when capacity issues — exacerbated by the ongoing driver shortages — have frustrated those responsible for getting talent in place for their new assignment. By simply applying our expertise in international moving to the domestic moving process, we have perfected a system that provides an efficient, cost-effective, and more streamlined move for our customers.

Benefits include:

- Dedicated move coordinator assigned to each transferee to take them step-by-step through the moving process.
- Direct transit with no weight limits results in faster transit time (no delivery spreads).
- Simplified pricing allows for improved budgeting accuracy.
- Sealed containers ensure the protection and safety of household goods during transit.
- Enhanced international pack and wrap service provides added protection from loss or damage.
- Containerized shipments packaged for safe and easy transfer.
- First 30 days of storage are free; No warehouse handling fee; No re-delivery charges.
- One for one replacement of the value of goods if lost or damaged.

Moreover, we also know that many customers are still concerned with moving during the ongoing pandemic. FastPAC℠ gives them added peace of mind that their household goods won't be commingled with other household goods shipments.

So, what are you waiting for? Contact Michael Hughes, VP Global Business Development, via email at mhughes@arpinintl.com or by calling +1 (718) 427-0438 to learn how your organization can take advantage of Arpin's containerized shipment solution before the summer rush begins. In the meantime, scan the QR code to discover how FastPAC℠ compares to a traditional van line and what you might be missing out on by not using Arpin's FastPAC℠ containerized moving solution.

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Using Your Red Carpet

What companies are doing to get and keep top talent

To say that the labor market is volatile is a bit like calling the ocean wet. It's true, but it doesn't say everything that needs to be said.

We could talk all day about turnover costs, unemployment rates, and the importance of getting and keeping necessary talent for company success, but we would only be rehashing things that everyone already knows. What we need to know, and don't, is why the labor market has hit peak volatility, and if there's anything we can do about it.

New generations are growing up with technologies that provide nearly endless possibilities for job growth and career choice. The freedom and accessibility of information via platforms like YouTube and Masterclass have made it possible for anyone to acquire premium knowledge and learn professional skills at next to no cost. Skills which they can take wherever they please. Even those who graduate with traditional degrees in fields like mathematics, finance, medicine, and law are finding it easier and highly enjoyable to go into business for themselves; technology is helping them do it.

All that to say, it's easier than ever for your employees to make an exit, and you're not just competing with other companies for their labor. Entrepreneurship is hot, and it's getting hotter every day. So, what do you do?

You roll out *the red carpet.*

Many companies, in addition to improving both their wage and non-wage compensation, are turning to premium mobility benefits as a means of attracting critical talent and building confidence and appreciation for the organization.

Some examples include:

Home closing cost reimbursement for transferees who currently rent

Flexible funds which allow transferees to recoup personal costs up to a certain amount

Enhanced services like home organization or total move management (i.e., ExtraCare by NEI)

Corporations are doing this because benefits say something that words can't. They convey appreciation in a tangible way and using them strategically to let your employees know they're valued will absolutely pay dividends for years to come.

Technology will ensure that the problem of voluntary turnover will continue far into the future. But people are still people. And if you treat them well, they'll stick around.

Randy Wilson, CRP
President | CEO
NEI Global Relocation

[redacted]

Mobility Matters

Interesting, challenging, and surprising stats and finds around the globe

BY JON FERGUSON

It can be assumed that humans have amused themselves with sports since the beginning of time. Since then, sports of all stripes, from the highly genteel to the impossibly violent, have been invented so we can test ourselves in competition.

DINENDRA HARIA / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

1

Whitney Hay of Liberal, Kansas, made the U.S. proud in March when she bested Katie Kodof of Olney, England, to win this year's Pancake Day Race. Contestants sprint 415 yards (379 m) while carrying a frying pan holding a pancake, which they must flip at the beginning and end of the race. Hay, a 21-year-old college student, won the U.S. leg of the race in Liberal with a time of 1:07, while Kodof, who ran in Olney, finished at 1:10. The inaugural event happened in Olney in the 15th century, with the folks in Liberal challenging Olney to an international competition in 1950.

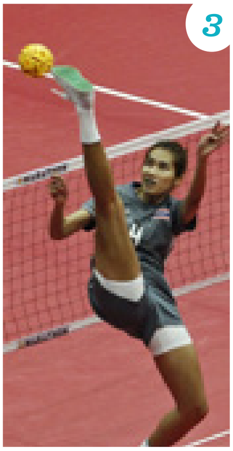
Source: apnews.com

2

If watching grown men and women kicking the living shins out of each other is your idea of a good time, here's an event for you: Robert Dover's Cotswold Olimpick Games, which is held in June near Chipping Campden, England. The Shin Kicking contest, one of the games' most popular events, unfolds exactly as it sounds. Two men wearing long pants—which can be padded with straw—hold each other by the shoulders and kick each other's shins. The first contestant who knocks his opponent down twice is declared the winner. Footwear reinforced with steel toes is strictly forbidden.

Source: olimpickgames.co.uk

DAVID STOWELL



MOHD NASIRRUDDIN YAZID / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

3

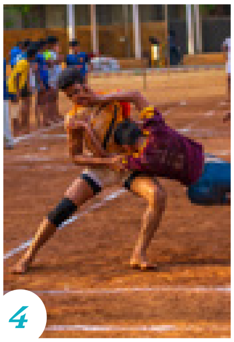
If you can imagine playing volleyball with your feet instead of your hands, you might be able to picture the aerial ballet that is *sepak takraw*, a sport that Malaysians started playing about 500 years ago. Each team consists of three players who must use their feet to get a grapefruit-sized ball over a 5-foot (1.5 m) high net in three touches, without allowing the ball to hit the ground. Play starts when the server executes a horse-kick serve, with players then scrambling to go airborne and strike the ball backward over one of his or her shoulders. Try it sometime.

Source: thescarlet.org

4

Kabaddi, the national game of Bangladesh, is a sport that relies on contestants' vocal power as well as their physical prowess. Teams of seven players on each side score points by both attacking and defending. Attackers, or raiders, take a deep breath and race to their opponents' side of the field and try to touch as many foes as they can, but then they must get back to their side of the field before taking another breath. Opponents try to physically prevent the attacker from getting back to safety in time. To make sure the attacker doesn't cheat and take a breath, he or she must keep shouting *"kabaddi"* the entire time they are in enemy territory.

Source: rulesofsport.com



SNEHAL JEEVAN PAILKAR / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

LORENZO NOCCIOL

5

Complete and utter mayhem might be the best way to describe *calcio storico*, which is literally translated from Italian as "historic football." It is an annual tournament held in Florence, Italy, that pits teams of 27 players—wearing period costumes, no less—against each other in a giant sand pit. Points are scored during the 50-minute game by tossing a ball into long troughs behind each end line. The basic strategy during play is to incapacitate your opponents by punching them, tackling them, kicking them, stomping them, or whatever other violent action gets the job done. There are no substitutions. It is believed that no one has died during a modern *calcio storico* match.

Source: nationalgeographic.com

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