

Expat Academy Round-up

Recent news has definitely brought back a feeling of ground hog day or déjà vu, just at the point that members and organisations were being able to plan ahead and start to be optimistic about 2022. Some of our members are themselves assignees and already had plans in place for seeing family at Christmas this year and these plans are now in turmoil. Many within Global Mobility feel that assignees and employees are more likely to make a dash to be with family and friends and there could be another spike in employees working in locations outside their contract of employment.

Current Challenges

- Whilst moves do seem to be gradually increasing, Global Mobility are finding that each move is incredibly time consuming given the daily changes and updates on the different restrictions due to the new Omicron variant. Some Global Mobility functions are looking to get assignees in place as soon as possible as it is unclear how long any new restrictions could go on for.
- Last week the Australian government announced that Australian temporary visa holders did not need an exemption to return home and could depart at any time as long as border restrictions in their home country allowed them to return. However, this week this announcement is being reviewed given the change in travel restrictions. In addition, to the country border restrictions, is the added complication of state borders within Australia meaning that although employees and assignees may be able to get back into Australia, they may remain stuck in Sydney as they cannot travel to where they are staying if that state has restricted access.
- Whilst a number of organisations had no issue with employees travelling to see friends and family at Christmas, there is a concern that should the employees get stuck in that location their visas could expire and they may not be allowed back in.
- In Singapore, anyone issued with a SHN (Stay Home Notice) was required to stay in a SHN dedicated facility and this was managed by the government. Now the government have provided a list of facilities from which travellers can choose. This has led to Global Mobility becoming involved to ensure the employees and assignees do not automatically choose the 5-star option leading to spiralling costs! Organisations are dealing with it in different ways:-
 - If the travel is personal, then the organisation will not pick up the cost of staying in a SHN dedicated facility.
 - GM or Business Travel are booking the SHN dedicated facility themselves for the employee or assignee.
 - Or GM are agreeing capped amounts for different family sizes and allowing the employee or assignee to book the facility themselves. Should they then decide to spend extra the additional cost is for their account
 - Most organisations met the cost of the meals whilst an assignee or employee is in an SHN dedicated facility.

- Some organisations have seen a dip in permanent transfers whilst individuals are assessing whether now is the right time for them to move. Other assignees are choosing not to take their families at the moment.
- In Hong Kong, there is concern about those arriving from high-risk locations. For those that are arriving from these locations they are required to:-
 - Undergo compulsory quarantine for 21 days in a designated quarantine hotel (DQH);
 - Undergo 6 tests during compulsory quarantine (professional swab sampling);
 - Self-monitoring in the subsequent 7 days; and
 - Compulsory testing on the 26th day of arrival at Hong Kong at any Community Testing Centre (CTC)

The designated quarantine hotels (DQHs) are currently fully booked until the end of January 2022. Therefore, some Global Mobility functions are advising their businesses that they cannot get assignees into Hong Kong until March 2022. Accommodation costs are currently spiralling high given the lack of availability. Some organisations have also seen a last-minute decline for moves into Hong Kong on the basis that if they test positive for COVID, the assignee and their family would automatically be taken into hospital where they must stay until they have two negative COVID tests. Upon release from hospital, they are then taken to another hospital for a further 14 days. This can prove difficult for those just arriving in Hong Kong as a number of the support staff do not speak English.

- There seems to be the need to have differing approaches across the world when it comes to knowing whether employees have been double vaccinated. In some industries the approach has been able to be direct, where a client requires vaccination confirmation before an employee works on a client site. Some organisations are not letting employees back into the office if they haven't been double vaccinated and have circulated information to say that office pass cards will be deactivated if employees don't log the confirmation on the HR System! Other organisations have taken legal advice in the different locations they are in to work out how best to handle obtaining and storing this information. Where organisations are taking a tough stance on vaccinations they are also preparing for the 'Great Resignation' as those that refuse to have their vaccinations have no other choice but to leave the organisation.
- The new COVID-19 variant leads to enhanced travel restrictions for those travelling into the UK. Six southern African countries - South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zimbabwe and Namibia – were added to the UK's travel red list from 4am on Sunday, 28 November 2021. Travel restrictions from those countries will started from midday on 26 November 2021. More information can be found [here](#).
- There has also been a benchmarking question on the number of rooms that organisations are providing short term assignees or those in temporary accommodation. The majority of respondents stated they have not added an additional room to their policy on the basis that an assignee was expected to attend the office and there would be less chance of them working from home. Although some could see that if there were to be further restrictions, this issue may resurface for those already on assignment. The full answers can be found [here](#).

Global Heads Network

Our Global Heads network took two minutes out of their ever-demanding day job to reflect on successes over the last 20 months at the recent Global Heads network meeting. Recognising the resilience and outstanding performance of their team's 'survival' was undeniably the key success for all. It was a big pat on the back and then back to the day job.

The challenges of that day job continue with an ongoing focus on remote workers and the business need to track the increasing population. There is a noticeable increase in those either looking to implement new technology or at least ensure they are getting the best ROI from pre-existing technology in order to enhance talent management and streamline GM processes moving forward. Utilising working relationships and gaining the input from current suppliers around full technology capability is a must.

Amongst other challenges, increased shipping costs continue to cause a headache with organisations implementing creative solutions including rental options, whilst also take into consideration ESG.

Thinking to the future there was an in-depth discussion around 'development assignments' for varying levels of employee. Some companies are focussing purely on rising talent and others are looking at developing an effective strategy for retaining the most experienced and valuable talent within their organisations. For these types of moves, costs are generally being charged to the host entities and the more successful programmes are working very closely to establish progressive performance goals throughout the assignment period to ensure there is a measurable return on investment. Some organisations are just looking to implement a strategy to ensure programmes support their people which futureproofs the business.

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Myrianthe has over 15 years' experience in the Global Mobility industry, both in house and as an outsource provider across a variety of industries from Banking through to Oil & Gas. Myrianthe currently uses her extensive Global Mobility knowledge and experience to bring together topical, interesting and relevant industry insights and content at the training sessions, Bite Size briefings, Huddles, Super Huddles and Conference across the globe.