



# CONVERSATIONS WITH MOBILITY LEADERS

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Changing Role of  
Mobility: Talent  
Acquisition,  
Deployment, and  
Retention

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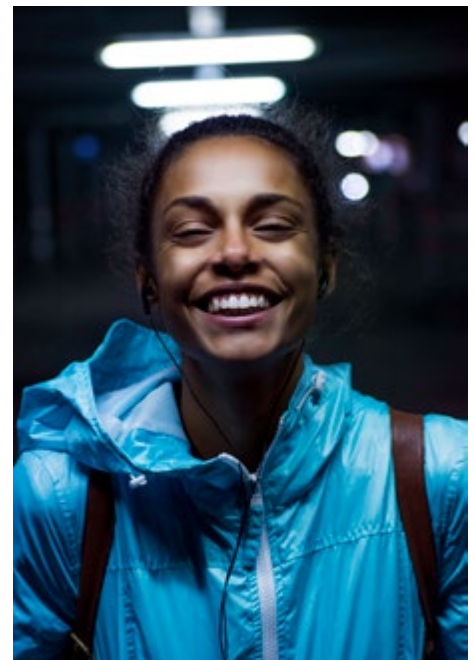
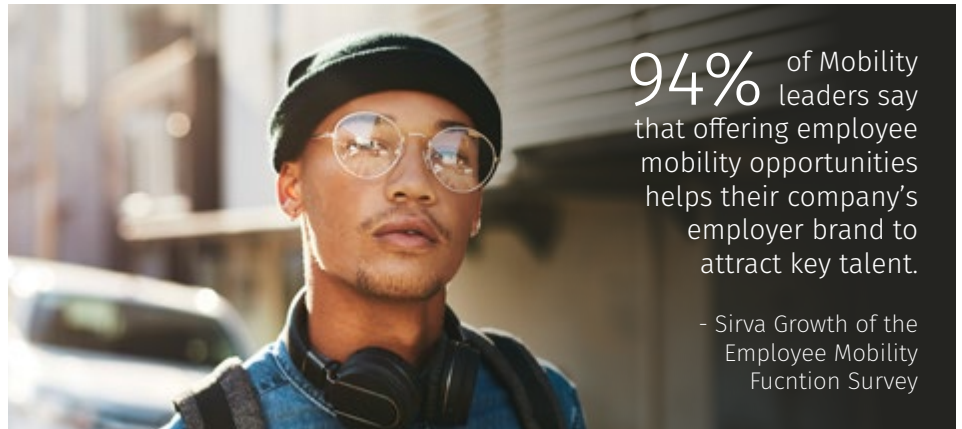
In our continuing series, “Conversations with Mobility Leaders”, Sirva explores the changing role of the Mobility function, specifically as it relates to talent acquisition, deployment, and retention, including the:

- Expansion of Mobility’s scope to support hybrid or remote work, business travel, and the associated opportunities and risks
- Economic and scope of work pressures and what Mobility leaders are focusing on to unlock value for their organizations
- Evolving team structures, business partnerships, and Mobility teams’ upskilling/reskilling needs

In recent years, HR and Mobility professionals have seen several macro trends impacting their organizations, from geopolitical shifts to the COVID-19 pandemic, local and regional conflicts, and economic pressures driven by inflation and rising interest rates. Thousands of Baby Boomers are leaving the U.S. workforce daily, impacting the available talent pipeline. Significant changes in remote working practices are also putting organizations’ ability to effectively deploy talent domestically or internationally, and retain key skills, under increasing pressure.

Are Mobility leaders seeing the need, or an opportunity, to expand Mobility’s scope because of these shifts?

Following are highlights of the discussions in which Mobility leaders weigh in on the changing role of the Mobility function, the present and future of its place in the organization, and how leaders can best articulate the importance and value of employee mobility.







# DRIVERS OF MOBILITY SCOPE EXPANSION

Many Mobility leaders have indicated Mobility's role in the organization is responsibility for employee relocation, business travel, and duty of care programs. This makes their function's remit broad, but also gives them a more integrated view of employee moves, especially with the many different mobility types that are emerging.

Mobility teams are looking to be at the forefront of ensuring that health and security risk management and business visa providers are deeply integrated in their solutions. They are also working more closely with Talent Acquisition to consult on compliant sourcing of cross-border skills for establishing a presence in new locations or staffing for strategic skills transfer. Some Mobility leaders are experiencing the benefits of a more 360° purview, given the move away from point-to-point transactions to the more fluid nature of today's mobility, especially when considering compliance. Teams can be aware any time an employee is getting on a plane and work closely with corporate tax, legal, talent acquisition, and payroll to provide integrated employee support.



**95%** of respondents listed compliance and risk management as a 'very important' strategic focus for Mobility.

**87%** of leaders say that mobility plays a key role in enabling their company's DE&I objectives

- Sirva Growth of the Employee Mobility Function Survey

## COMMON TASKS SUPPORTED BY EMPLOYEE MOBILITY

Letters of assignment	67%
Policy selection	67%
Cost estimates	64%
Business advisory	63%
Exception management	62%

Source: Sirva Growth of the Employee Mobility Function Survey

Considering the growing complexities of mobility today, some teams are getting involved in providing business travel-related compliance guidance, which may include immigration and tax compliance, as well as potential status change and compensation adjustments.

Companies' industry, culture, reasons for mobility, and country combinations often drive specific approaches. For example, one organization had a group of executive new hires in locations with significant immigration backlogs, presenting challenges for speed to deployment of talent, and triggering compliance conversations with the company's leadership.

The structure of some Mobility teams is reflective of a broader organizational focus on systematically enabling internal mobility, whether employees relocate or stay in the same location. These types of programs are designed to give employees opportunities to change roles every few years, thereby driving skills development, knowledge transfer and, ultimately, employee engagement and retention. The Mobility function in these types of organizations is positioned to be involved in the entire employee life cycle and is brought in to consult on all aspects of mobility, such as compliance, speed to deployment, skills audits, or supply chain management, whether it's for individual relocations or more complex group moves. While these Mobility teams don't directly oversee all mobility types or business travelers, they are focused on strategically partnering and providing holistic guidance.

Another evolving situation involving Mobility teams is partnering with their organization's DEI leaders to assess support for LGBTQ+ employees in locations with newly restrictive legislation. This partnering is driven by the balance between the focus on Mobility's alignment with the business objectives of the organization and managing employee moves with empathy.

# ECONOMIC AND SCOPE OF WORK PRESSURES IMPACTING MOBILITY LEADERS



Global volatility and a series of concurrent crises are clearly impacting Mobility leaders who are increasingly dealing with situations that need a fast response without necessarily having established solutions to consult. Many Mobility teams were put into the executive leadership spotlight at the onset of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as organizations decided to mobilize employees impacted by the conflict. Teams were fundamentally delivering the same experience they typically do, but under extreme pressure, short turnaround times, and high visibility. The complexity of a fast-evolving situation, employee hardship, and regulatory restrictions from sanctions, immigration and tax, and immunization protocols, made business leaders appreciate the value of Mobility teams' expertise.

The challenges of decreasing margins and progressive workforce reductions have also resulted in many organizations needing to optimize mobility programs to focus on cost containment. This is causing them to adopt alternative mobility types, have a stronger focus on maximizing strategic leadership mobility, or redesigning supply chains, especially in countries where local HR previously delivered on-the-ground relocation support. Possible tax implications of emerging alternative mobility types, such as extended business travel, are also under increased scrutiny in many organizations. There is a greater focus in many organizations of the overall cost of mobility and taking opportunities to reinforce best practices, such as localizing or repatriating mobile employees whose assignment duration exceeded five years.

On the other hand, some organizations are reporting a sustained growth in employee mobility investment, with relocation volume increasing steadily since 2020. These programs are sharply focused on strategic moves with clear assignment objectives, a defined assignment duration, and a repatriation or localization path determined at the outset of the assignment. These organizations are designing mobility benefits packages to be competitive, but without ancillary incentives, which makes the cost of mobility comparable to local talent acquisition cost for valuable skills.

Mobility leaders in many organizations are actively nurturing the profile of Mobility by being visible, broadening their remit, building trust, educating stakeholders, and providing proactive updates. This level of involvement in the organization can earn the Mobility team invitations to the early stages of mobility, giving them a chance to be truly consultative.

Expansion opportunities exist for Mobility teams on a strategic level. While key executives will continue to relocate in a traditional way to develop a successful international career, many organizations are seeing a chance to expand their horizons with alternative mobility types, which can now be offered to employees who would not previously qualify for traditional relocations. However, many organizations are challenged by a resource shortage. While the existing Mobility team may have the right skills, employee demand compared to the size of the support team is currently too high.



# ARTICULATING VALUE IN THE FACE OF EVOLVING MOBILITY PERCEPTIONS



Given recent significant shifts in work structures, Mobility leaders of even established global programs are challenged to articulate the value and purpose of moving employees. This highlights the need for the Mobility and HR functions to continually assess new opportunities and threats, and educate internal stakeholders about the varied, and evolving, complexities and contributions of employee mobility.

Many Mobility leaders are looking to reimagine the future and revive international career development programs to mobilize a broader employee base and nurture a more internationally minded workforce. Also, there is a greater focus on improving the internal Mobility brand. While Mobility teams may have the right technical skills, they are now planning to more closely align experts to the functional business lines. This will allow the Mobility team members to develop a deeper knowledge of the functional objectives and intricacies of the business and ultimately become a more strategic partner.

One Mobility leader reflected that questioning the value of employee mobility is not unexpected in the context of the changing world of work over the past three years. This often does not come from the point of leadership's ignorance or questioning the team's expertise, but rather to prompt new ways of thinking. Some Mobility leaders are expecting the focus of their team to shift to a more planning, assessment, and consultative type of role aimed at broader mobility types or hybrid work arrangements, with less time dedicated to the logistical aspects of move management.

**86%** of Mobility leaders say the business now requires, or will require, increased numbers of mobilized employees to meet business objectives.

- Sirva Growth of the Employee Mobility Function Survey





# CONCLUSION

Organizations are clearly demonstrating that the role of employee mobility and Mobility teams is changing - considerably and fast - especially in more progressive organizations. The Mobility function has an opportunity to move into a more consultative role, partner externally with innovative vendors and industry bodies and internally with talent acquisition, legal, and corporate tax to address new compliance risks, drive more strategic approaches to global workforce planning and deployment, and maximize return on investment in talent.

Promoting the strategic aspects of Mobility's role has never been more relevant, or important.

*If you are interested in joining Sirva's "Conversations with Mobility Leaders" program, please reach out to your Sirva representative or email us at [marketing@sirva.com](mailto:marketing@sirva.com).*



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