

CONVERSATIONS WITH MOBILITY LEADERS

Exploring Current
Trends in the
Evolving Employee
Mobility Experience

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Sirva holds regular conversations with mobility leaders to touch on current trends and explore challenges and opportunities within the mobility space. In this first of our series “*Conversations With Mobility Leaders*”, we focus on the evolving employee mobility experience, including:

- Evolving business needs and talent strategies
- Changing demographics with new expectations
- Segmenting and digitizing the mobility experience

Following are highlights of the discussions in which mobility leaders weigh in on what organizations are experiencing and how they are strategizing to improve various facets of the employee mobility experience.

Many organizations are providing training in mobility basics to their Talent Management group to help define Mobility’s role and set expectations within the organization on how to utilize the function to its full advantage.

SHIFTING BUSINESS NEEDS: BALANCING COST AND TALENT

When discussing the areas of employee experience, business needs, and talent strategies, organizations are focusing on new demographics, evolving employee expectations, and an increase in requests for more flexibility from both employees and hiring managers.

The demand for organizations to attract and retain talent continues as the need to balance cost considerations weighs heavily. The pressure to find cost-efficient ways of moving employees is being felt within support services, such as HR and Mobility, and within the business units and other areas that directly affect the end product. The desire to be more efficient and reduce overhead costs is reported by the automotive and manufacturing industries specifically, while other industries are seeing talent scarcity drive a need for greater investment in mobility. The costs of household goods, home sale, and tax, especially for long-term assignments, are sometimes perceived as significant drivers for mobility programs. The timing of moves and changing immigration processes also impact the overall cost and efficiency of employee mobility.

Some organizations reported that they are considering alternative assignment types and moving away from the more traditional long-term assignments to manage overall program costs, while acknowledging that these non-traditional mobility types are often more complex to manage from a compliance perspective.

To meet these competing needs, organizations are considering greater segmentation within their programs, developing policies targeted toward a specific purpose or population. The evaluation of core policies with flexible elements is also growing in usage.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TALENT AND MOBILITY: A CONTINUING EVOLUTION

Organizations are reporting a greater focus on growing partnerships and alignment with Mobility and Talent Acquisition teams. The emphasis is on the talent pipeline and ensuring people are in the right positions. Implementing an executive approval process for new assignments is cited as a key tactic to ensuring that Mobility and Talent Acquisition work together to achieve these goals.

In some organizations, the alignment of Talent and Mobility is seen as important but remains a work in progress, especially for programs with a majority of project-based assignments where the Mobility team may be viewed as a support function. These types of assignments can be challenging as compliance or immigration limitations can delay assignment start dates, especially if Mobility is brought into the selection process late.

Beyond the efforts of Mobility leaders to forge closer internal relationships, the company culture, industry, and business reasons for employee mobility seem either to enable or hinder a closer alignment between Mobility and Talent. In addition, one company reports that it engages in conversations with managers to understand budget affordability and engages with employees as well to get feedback on their expectations, goals, critical to quality areas, etc.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS, NEED FOR FLEXIBILITY DRIVE NEW APPROACHES

Organizations are witnessing the impact of changing demographics, particularly with the influx of millennials and Generation Z employees entering the workplace. Once again, the impact varies based on the industry and the company culture.

For example, one oil and gas company with an employee population consisting mainly of older generations reported that they are not experiencing significant changes due to demographic shifts. Their organization is focusing on building the future talent pipeline as they compete with the technology sector for talent.

Other organizations are highlighting the need to cater to new and different generational expectations and preferences for both communications and support. Companies with a millennial-aged or younger mobile population are more likely to explore instant communications as their employees expect 24/7 service coverage. One such organization was quick to adapt by considering more concise, yet guided, communication formats, such as business group-focused, bite-sized orientation, pre-recorded videos, and FAQ materials. A technology organization shared that instant communications are becoming increasingly acceptable and an expected part of the mobility experience, both during assignment planning and as part of the active relocation support phase.

The request for flexibility from both hiring managers and employees is being experienced by many organizations across multiple industries, and some companies are adopting, or are considering adopting, Core-Flex programs as a result.

While there is no one consistent approach, the overall mobility focus or strategy should drive the program philosophy. For example, one organization with a trained eye on global talent development implemented a flexible benefits program based on a lean set of core benefits and a larger proportion of flexible benefits. The organization supports this Core-Flex framework by offering individualized cost estimates and personalized support. As a result of implementing a Core-Flex approach, their attrition has dropped appreciably.

Adoption of tiered benefit policies and providing added flexibility within individual tiers are also reported by several organizations. One company uses tiered policies developed specifically for business units with distinct needs. Another developed a new remote work policy for self-initiated moves, where the organization is considering offering selected benefits as a talent retention strategy.



Examples of targeted policies – those focused on specific needs or populations – include leadership/strategic needs, project requirements, critical skills or developmental needs. Responding to the need to develop a talent pipeline, Developmental assignments expose early talent to important experiences.

Policy flexibility is a valuable tool in demonstrating a company's DEIB commitment as they seek ways to provide more meaningful support to broad ranges of employee populations through anticipating needs, allowing for more customized support, and providing benefit accessibility.

DIGITIZATION VS. HUMAN-CENTRIC SUPPORT: FINDING THE RIGHT MIX



Organizations are recognizing the importance of balancing human-centric approaches to support with technology-enabled solutions, incorporating the use of chat channels, digital platforms for onboarding and communication, and the implementation of employee self-service models. While there is a push for digitization, there is an acknowledgment that certain aspects of international mobility require a strong human support element.

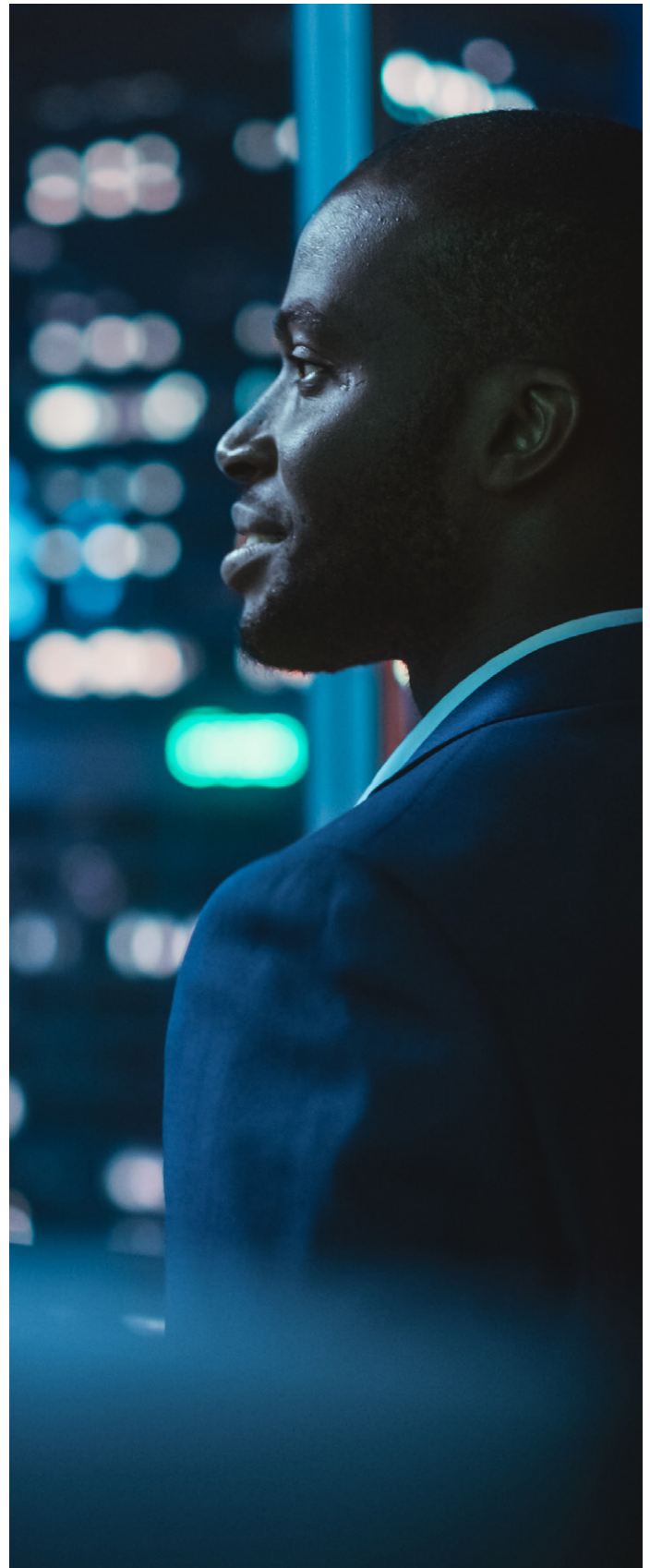
Companies are using a number of technologies and tools on their journey to digitization, from e-signature platforms, intranet portals, and HRIS, to specialized or homegrown mobility technologies. System integration and bi-directional data flows are unsurprisingly seen as critical, if often hindered by the lack of available internal IT resources. Organizations report that their approach to and level of digitization is driven by, and highly dependent on, several key factors, including:

- Company culture
- Strategic reasons for mobility and assignment types
- Geographical footprint with regional differences in digital adoption

Companies in the technology sector reported faster adoption of employee self-service features, driven both through internal IT and the use of external platforms. One organization is piloting an onboarding technology for new hires, which they plan to assess for future onboarding of existing employee moves.

On the other hand, companies within both the manufacturing and construction industries are reporting a more gradual approach to digitization. They are also reporting an almost total reliance on relocation management companies and tax vendors to provide tools that will support the digitization of the employee mobility experience.

Companies have varied expectations when it comes to their vendor partners utilizing technology-enabled solutions to enhance the mobility experience. For instance, a company with a Core-Flex program heavily focused on talent development emphasized the importance of having internal relocation consultants to reinforce a company-driven, personalized experience. Other organizations are leaning more heavily on their relocation management or tax partners to deliver a larger part of the employee mobility experience, present innovative technologies, and integrate them into their clients' digital ecosystems.



Conclusion

Continually shifting economic and cost pressures, changing employee profiles, and advances in technology are certain to factor into mobility strategy for the foreseeable future. According to Statista, freelancers who perform gig work will total 90 million and account for more than half of the U.S. workforce by 2028. Against this backdrop, mobility leaders remain focused on delivering a personalized and flexible approach to relocation. Finding the right blend of policy, digitization, and human contact, as well as understanding how best to maximize the alignment between talent and mobility, will be critical to their discussions and to any ultimate solutions.

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.



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