

The value and cost of delivering Global Mobility

For many organizations, discussions around Global Employment Companies (GECs) still begin (and often end) with cost. While a disciplined approach to cost is undeniably important, this narrow framing risks overlooking some more fundamental questions: What value does global mobility actually deliver to the business? How effectively is that value being measured? How consistently is that value delivered? And, on the topic of cost, what is the cost of delivering that value with an acceptable level of consistency?

Global mobility has evolved far beyond its traditional administrative roots. It now plays a central role in enabling international growth, supporting market entry, facilitating knowledge transfer, developing future leaders, and more. Assignments are no longer simply operational necessities; they are strategic investments in capability, continuity, and competitive advantage. This implies that any shortfall in the delivery of Global Mobility support is likely to erode business value, at least to some extent. Yet, despite the steady evolution of the Global Mobility function, the way organizations evaluate mobility models has not always kept pace.

A more meaningful evaluation begins with defining what success looks like. Organizations may choose to measure this through a variety of lenses. Talent outcomes are often a key consideration. For example, assignment completion rates provide insight into whether deployments are delivering on



their intended objectives. Post-assignment retention is equally important, as it reflects the organization's ability to retain the very talent it has invested in developing. Promotion rates among assignees can indicate whether international experience is effectively contributing to leadership pipelines.

Beyond talent metrics, performance and risk indicators also play a critical role. The extent to which assignees are delivering expected outcomes, the level of compliance with immigration, tax, and employment regulations, and the organization's exposure to Permanent Establishment risk all form part of the broader value equation. These factors are not merely operational concerns; they have direct implications for business continuity and reputation.

Efficiency is another dimension that cannot be ignored. The degree of fragmentation within a mobility program, the number of stakeholders involved in each assignment, and the time required to deploy employees all influence both cost and effectiveness. Highly fragmented models, where responsibilities are dispersed across multiple functions and

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geographies, often lead to delays, inconsistencies, and increased administrative burden. This, in turn, affects the overall experience of the assignee and the ability of the organization to respond to business needs.

Despite the richness of these metrics, many organizations struggle to integrate them into a coherent framework for decision-making. One of the key challenges lies in the fact that not all elements of value can be easily quantified. Compliance, for instance, is often assessed in terms of potential penalties or fines. However, the true cost of non-compliance extends beyond financial penalties to include reputational damage, operational disruption, and, in extreme cases, the inability to operate in certain jurisdictions.

This creates a dilemma when comparing different mobility models. A model that appears less costly on paper may achieve this by operating with lower levels of control or oversight. Conversely, a model that incorporates stronger governance and compliance mechanisms may incur higher direct costs, while delivering greater long-term value. Comparing these models purely on financial terms is therefore misleading.

Another critical consideration is the consistency with which key performance indicators are achieved. It is not sufficient to define KPIs; organizations must also assess how consistently they are met over time. Variability in performance can be influenced by factors such as resource constraints, fluctuations in assignment volumes, or gaps in expertise. Understanding this variability is essential in evaluating the true effectiveness of any mobility model because it has cost implications. The Service Delivery Model of the Global Mobility function should be optimized in terms of resources and infrastructure to ensure it can cope with fluctuations in demand. Under-resourcing the model may lead to inconsistent performance and erosion of value delivery. On the other hand, over-resourcing the model would increase the cost and create unnecessary over-capacity.

This is where the GEC model introduces a different perspective. By centralizing employment, governance, and visibility, a GEC provides a platform through which value can be more effectively managed and measured. It allows organizations to aggregate data, monitor performance consistently, and align mobility outcomes with strategic objectives. Importantly, it creates the conditions for a more informed evaluation of cost versus value.

Importantly, this does not imply that GECs are inherently more cost-effective in every situation. In some cases, the implementation of a GEC may even result in higher direct costs, particularly if it introduces more robust governance and compliance frameworks or enhanced support structures. However, such comparisons are only meaningful if they are made on a like-for-like basis. Comparing the cost of a compliant, well-governed model with that of a less controlled alternative is not a valid exercise.

Ultimately, redefining the value of global mobility requires a shift in mindset. It involves moving away from a narrow focus on cost and adopting a more holistic view that encompasses strategic impact, operational effectiveness, and risk management. It also requires a willingness to engage with complexity, recognizing that value is multifaceted and cannot always be expressed in financial terms.

For organizations considering a GEC, this broader perspective is particularly important. The decision to implement such a model should not be driven solely by cost considerations, but by an assessment of how it can enhance the overall effectiveness of the mobility function. When evaluated through this lens, the GEC becomes not just a structural alternative but a strategic tool for delivering sustained value.

If you wish to discuss how your organization may benefit from a GEC, please feel free to **[reach out to an ITX consultant](#)** for a free consultation.