

The GEC and the Future of Work: Preparing International Employment Structures for the Next Decade

A Moment of Structural Change

Organisations operating internationally are navigating a confluence of forces that, taken individually, would each represent a meaningful strategic challenge. Taken together, they amount to something more fundamental: a structural shift in the nature of work, the composition of the workforce, and the geopolitical environment within which both operate.

Artificial intelligence is reshaping the skills that organisations need and the roles through which they deploy talent. Demographic pressures, such as ageing populations in developed economies, and growing working-age populations elsewhere, are creating asymmetries in labour supply that will define international mobility patterns for a generation. Employee expectations are evolving rapidly, with flexibility, purpose, and wellbeing now carrying weight in talent decisions, alongside compensation. And the geopolitical environment, as explored elsewhere in these newsletters, is becoming more complex and less predictable.

Each of these forces has direct implications for how organisations structure the employment of their internationally mobile workforce. The Global Employment Company (GEC), as the primary vehicle through which many multinationals manage that workforce, is not immune to their effects. The question is not whether the GEC model will need to evolve (it clearly will), but whether organisations will manage that evolution proactively or be forced into reactive adjustment.



AI, Automation, and the Changing Shape of International Roles

The integration of artificial intelligence into core business processes is already altering the composition of the internationally mobile workforce. Roles that were once exported wholesale, such as Shared Service functions, routine analytical work, standardised technical delivery, are increasingly automated or consolidated. What remains, and what is growing, is the deployment of highly specialised, high-judgement individuals whose value lies precisely in the capabilities that automation cannot replicate: strategic leadership, complex relationship management, cross-cultural integration, and the kind of contextual intelligence that only comes from deep experience.

For the GEC, this shift has practical implications. The model must be capable of accommodating a more senior, more specialist, and more expensive internationally mobile population, whose expectations of their employment structure are correspondingly more sophisticated. The standard compensation and benefits

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frameworks that served well for a broader assignee population will need to be reviewed and, in many cases, enhanced.

At the same time, AI is creating new opportunities within the GEC itself. Predictive analytics, AI-assisted compliance monitoring, and automated reporting are making it possible to manage the internationally mobile workforce with a degree of precision and visibility that was previously unattainable. Organisations that invest in these capabilities within their GEC will find themselves able to make faster, better-informed decisions about workforce deployment and to demonstrate to their boards and regulators that they are managing their international employment obligations with appropriate rigour.

Demographic Shifts and the Geography of Mobility

The demographic landscape of the next decade will look materially different from that of the past twenty years. In many of the world's largest economies, the working-age population is contracting. In others, it is growing rapidly. These shifts are already influencing where organisations choose to locate activity, and they will increasingly influence where internationally mobile talent is deployed.

For the GEC, this means preparing for a more diverse geography of mobility; one that includes emerging markets and less familiar jurisdictions alongside the established corridors of international assignment. The compliance frameworks, duty-of-care infrastructure, and benefits design that underpin the GEC will need to be robust enough to operate effectively across this expanded geography. Organisations that have built flexible, scalable GEC structures will be better placed to respond to these shifts than those whose models were designed with a narrower range of deployment locations in mind.

Evolving Employee Expectations

The internationally mobile workforce of the next decade will expect more from its employer than its predecessors did, and will be less willing to accept arrangements that do not reflect its priorities. Flexibility in how, where, and when work is performed is increasingly regarded as a baseline expectation rather than a premium benefit. Purpose and values alignment are influencing career decisions in ways that would have seemed peripheral a generation ago. Physical, mental and financial wellbeing are genuine organisational priorities rather than corporate communications themes.

A well-designed GEC is well placed to respond to these expectations. Its structural characteristics, such as employment continuity, consistent benefits, coherent governance, provide a stable foundation on which more flexible and responsive assignment frameworks can be built. The GEC does not constrain flexibility; it enables it to be offered safely and consistently.

Building for the Decade Ahead

Organisations that will manage their internationally mobile workforces most effectively over the next decade are those that are stress-testing their GEC structures now, before demographic shifts, technological change, and evolving employee expectations force their hand. That means reviewing the GEC's policy architecture for fitness across a wider range of assignee profiles and geographies. It means investing in the data and analytical capabilities that technology makes possible. And it means ensuring that the GEC's governance framework is robust enough to withstand the scrutiny that a more complex and more risk-aware regulatory environment will inevitably bring.

The key point to remember is that a GEC is not a static structure, but rather it is a strategic asset whose value depends on how well it is utilised.