

Building the Infrastructure: How a Global Employment Company Enables a Borderless Talent Model

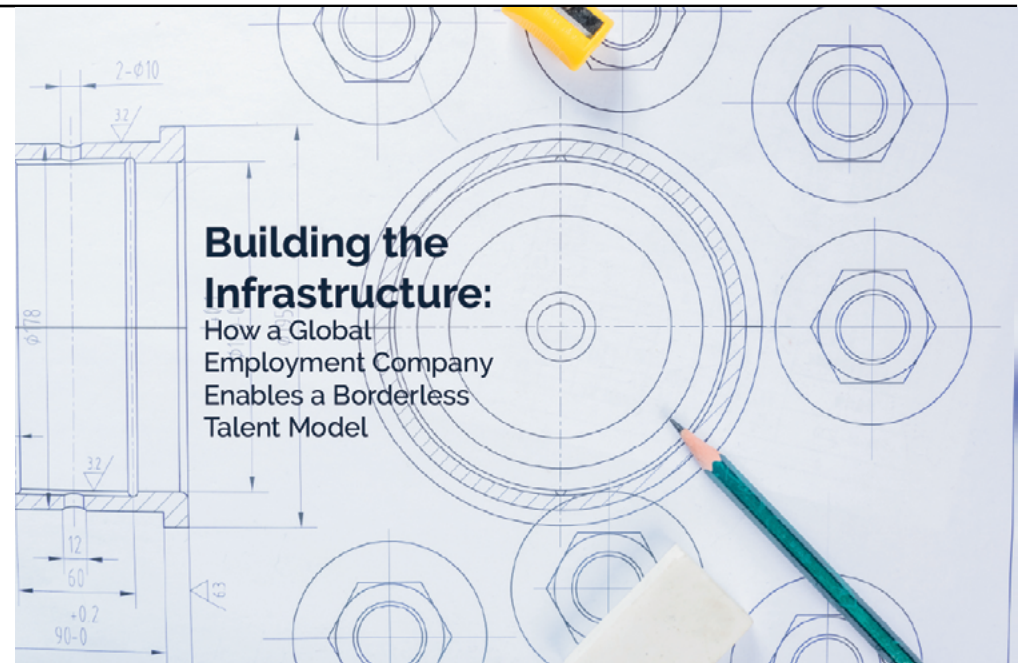
The earlier two articles made the case for a different way of thinking about talent, one where loyalty is earned continuously and mobility is treated as a deliberate strategy rather than an occasional event in an employee's career.

Neither idea works, however, unless the underlying employment structure actually allows it.

Most organisations still hire people into countries, functions, and business units, and then use international mobility as a bolt-on mechanism to move them between those structures after the fact. The more useful approach turns that model around, starting with the question of where the talent is located (i.e. the "supply") or is needed (i.e. the "demand"), and only then working out which entity should employ them.

If talent is genuinely to be treated as decoupled from any single location, an organisation needs two things it rarely has by default: (a) It needs a practical means of moving people across borders and business units without re-negotiating employment terms from scratch each time; and (b) It needs an employment model that reflects the reality that this population is an enterprise-wide resource, rather than being assets locked into the country or division that happened to hire them first. This is the idea behind a global talent Infrastructure, an employment framework designed to let an organisation find, hire, develop, deploy, and retain talent wherever it is needed.

A Global Employment Company, or GEC, is the vehicle many organisations use to build this. It is worth being precise about what a GEC actually is, since the term is often confused with a related but distinct idea, namely the Employer of Record (EOR). An EOR is



typically a third-party service an organisation uses to employ a person in a country where it has no entity of its own, usually for a single hire or to test a new market, with no broader ambition beyond local compliance.

A GEC is a different instrument entirely. It is an employment structure the organisation establishes for itself, specifically to become the direct employer of its internationally mobile population, its assignees, secondees, and globally deployed executives, regardless of which country or business unit they happen to be working for at any given time. Its main purpose is continuity and centralisation, giving mobile employees a single, consistent employment relationship that travels with them from assignment to assignment, rather than requiring them to be re-employed, or informally attached, to whichever local entity currently hosts them.

Once employment sits with a GEC, rewards and career management can be applied consistently across borders, which matters particularly for senior executives whose compensation arrangements are rarely well suited to any single home location. Career and performance history can be tracked centrally across an entire sequence of assignments, rather than fragmenting into disconnected local records every time someone moves. Repatriation pipelines become visible well in advance, so the

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organisation can see which experienced, internationally seasoned people are about to become available and plan succession accordingly. Perhaps most importantly, the talent pool itself becomes genuinely enterprise-wide, since the individual's employment no longer belongs to the entity that first hired them. This is what it actually means, in structural terms, for talent to be an asset of the whole organisation rather than of one country or one business unit.

It is also worth being precise about what the local country or business unit is actually giving up when an existing employee is released for an international assignment. The employee is not simply being “developed” at the current unit's expense for someone else's future benefit. In a well-run model, that person is also meeting a genuine business need in their current role, and the unit is already extracting real, present-day value from them. Any reluctance a local manager feels is therefore not really about

an uncompensated investment, but rather it is about the disruption of losing a productive contributor with no one ready to take their place.

This is precisely where Succession Planning becomes the element that makes the whole model work, more so than any funding mechanism on its own. When a business unit maintains a visible pipeline of successors for its key roles, in the same spirit as the leadership development pathways described in the earlier articles, releasing someone for an international assignment becomes a natural and well-prepared transition, rather than an unplanned loss. The GEC's ability to recharge assignment costs still has a role to play in balancing the books between units, but what actually earns a manager's willingness to let a strong performer go is the confidence that the vacancy left behind will be adequately filled. Succession Planning, in turn greatly benefits from the GEC structure, which provides better visibility of the employee's career history, competencies, performance, and repatriation timelines.

None of this infrastructure, however well designed, functions on its own. For it to succeed it requires a culture that actively supports movement across borders and divisions, built through visible “executive sponsorship”, practical guidance from HR in shaping and coaching each move, and genuine willingness from Line Managers to release talent when a “win-win” case exists, rather than quietly protecting good performers from ever leaving their team. Corporate culture, in this sense, is not a separate initiative running alongside the infrastructure. It is the catalyst that determines whether the infrastructure is being used as it was intended.

Taken together, the three articles covered in this newsletter point to the same conclusion. A talent strategy built on continuous investment and earned loyalty needs mobility to give it real substance. Global Mobility needs to be understood in all its forms rather than treated as an occasional career event, and both depend on an employment infrastructure that is governed sensibly, as well as a company culture willing to use it. None of this eliminates the genuine human adjustment involved in an international move, but it does mean an organisation is no longer relying on goodwill and improvisation to make its global talent ambitions real. It has built the structure to support them.