Why Invest in the Management of a Mobile Workforce?

The ROI in Expatriate Talent Management

Mobile employees are used by international organizations amongst other things, to: effect international growth; be headquarters’ “mind and management”; transfer culture and values; and conduct technical troubleshooting.

However, companies have traditionally failed to invest in their mobile employees to the same extent that they have in their local staff. The cause may be cost which, according to one of our client studies, can be five times as much administrative time and three to four times the compensation of a domestic employee. Perhaps employers consider this enough.

Whatever the cause, there remain significant opportunities for improving the return on this “investment”, their engagement and attraction levels.

While the demographic shift occurring over the last few years necessitates a change in approach, companies continue to use a model developed essentially in the 1970s when the typical employee was male, the primary family wage earner, committed to a long-term career with a single employer and eager to see the world.

Today’s expatriate can be male or female, is highly educated, worldly and has a working partner and — despite your best efforts — likely to work for multiple employers during their career.

A senior colleague was fond of saying that “high potential people will get to the top despite what you HR people do to them.”

Mobility is similar and those who are willing and inquisitive will for the most part, notwithstanding what is put in front of them, find a way to achieve their goal. These people are not our primary concern in this article.

Younger managers are generally not drawn to international assignments out of curiosity. They have travelled extensively outside of employment and readily connect to the rest of the world through multiple platforms. They need more family support than their parents and (usually) most employers have been willing to provide.

Plus the mobile “gene” is often no longer enough. An employer may determine that despite an employee’s willingness, they don’t have the competency needed to represent corporate interests in an overseas market.

Most HR folks would agree that a year on international assignment is worth five of domestic training and development, but how many organizations can you name that think of assignments as an investment? Most think in terms of the cost and, back in the day, the investment in a mobile employee could be recouped over a much longer career.

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of common terms and conditions and/or a single common employer is not only contemporary and timely but will:

- Reduce the costs of expatriation;
- Enhance success in the competition for scarce top talent; and
- Mitigate financial risk exposure

The transition needs to be carefully planned and ideally, the experience of professionals who have previously undertaken these projects. These are once in a career projects with a high likelihood of failure which is dramatically increased when a well intentioned neophyte is asked to manage the project.

While ostensibly focused on talent management and therefore an HR initiative, a successful project will involve finance, tax and risk management across multiple jurisdictions and require an experienced leader who can coordinate and is familiar with the interaction of these functions in the management of mobility.

— Paul Pittman is the founding partner of The Human Well and has more than 30 years of international human resource experience. He consults to Boards and executive management on matters focused on improving the return on investment in people through compensation strategies, cultural change initiatives, solutions for employee benefit risk, expatriate management and M&As.

He has led successful teams at Massey-Ferguson, Laidlaw, Japan Tobacco International (formerly RJR Nabisco), Deloitte and the global reward practice at Alcan where he integrated HR practices world-wide following the merger with Pechiney. He led the HR integration teams in the $8-billion acquisition of RJR International by Japan Tobacco in 55 countries, the $12-billion IPO of Novelis Inc., and delivered $20 million in savings from global rationalization of HR.

He is a former member of the Conference Board of Canada’s Council of Human Resource Executives, speaks at conferences and publishes articles globally as well as having served as an expert witness on compensation matters.

He has lived in the U.K., Canada (Quebec and Ontario) and Switzerland and worked extensively in many other parts of the world. He is currently located in Toronto. He is an accountant by training. He has also served on the Board and as President of the Oakville Club. Please visit www.thehumanwell.com for more information.

A 10-minute health check for mining manager résumés
BY JANE BANKS

In a recent survey, two thirds of senior mining managers and leaders told us they are either already looking for their next role or would consider a new role if the right one landed on their desk today.

This begs the question: if the right opportunity came your way today, would your résumé be up to scratch for submission?

Clients expect the best mining recruitment consultancies to provide shortlists much more quickly these days. If you need to wait until a spare weekend to get your CV ready, you might miss out on the opportunity to be put forward at the earliest opportunity.

This article doesn’t aim to provide definitive guidance on writing a résumé. But if you have a spare ten minutes, why not invest them in your future career by giving your résumé a quick health check?

1. CAN YOU FIND YOUR MOST UP-TO-DATE CV OR RÉSUMÉ?
Be honest. Can you quickly lay your hands on your most up-to-date résumé? Or would you, like many people, be searching your hard drive and turning up any number of out-of-date copies?

If you want to keep old or alternative versions (and I appreciate they can come in handy) create an archive folder within your main résumé folder and save them there. Sort out version control by incorporating the date into the filename of your document.

2. ARE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS CORRECT?
Basic stuff I know, but worth checking. Make sure you have a professional email address. Avoid references to race, gender, religion, or particularly wild things in your username. Nicknames can get you remembered for all the wrong reasons.

Email is an ideal way to first contact someone about a job, so ensure you’re giving an email address you can — and will — check regularly and frequently.

3. IS YOUR CURRENT POSITION LISTED?
Once you’ve landed a new role, adding it to your CV is probably not your highest priority. But it makes sense to get it on there now, together with a brief summary of the skills you’ve demonstrated and recent measurable achievements.

4. ARE YOU COLLECTING EVIDENCE OF ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THIS ROLE?
I always encourage candidates to keep records of any measurable achievements that can be used on a résumé, ideally with supporting evidence. If you’re not doing this already, now is a great time to start.

5. ARE YOU CONFIDENT YOU CAN SUBSTANTIATE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN PREVIOUS ROLES?
Read through the achievements you have for earlier roles. Are you confident you can talk about them fluently in an interview? Can...
6. CHECK YOUR REFEREES
It’s not essential to have referees listed but if you choose to do so, double check you’re including the most appropriate people and that their contact details are correct. Are they even still with the same company?
You might want to get in touch to make sure they are still happy to be contacted. It’s courteous and might result in a helpful networking conversation.

7. HAVE YOU ADDED ANY COURSES OR TRAINING YOU’VE COMPLETED RECENTLY?
If you’ve completed any personal development in your current role, it’s worth making a note of it. Evidence of continuing professional development will always impress potential employers and it’s all too easy to forget short courses a few months down the line.

8. DOES IT REFLECT YOUR ASPIRATIONS AS WELL AS YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS?
A résumé is a historical document, but it’s useful if it reflects your aspirations. If you have a clear career plan in mind that means your next role will require financial management skills, make sure your résumé reflects some experience of that.

9. DOES IT STILL READ WELL?
The one benefit of not looking at your résumé for a while is that you can now read it with a fresh pair of eyes. Search for errors, inconsistencies, layout issues and any hint of BS. Read it out loud if you have time.

10. GET SOMEONE ELSE TO READ IT, TOO
It’s tough to proofread your own work. If you can get ten minutes of anyone else’s time, ask them to check your document for typos, grammatical errors and sense. This objective check can be invaluable; what makes sense to you won’t always be clear to others.
If all you can spare is ten minutes this weekend, see these steps as the diagnosis stage and make time to address any issues as soon as possible. After all, you can never predict when the next opportunity will come your way.
— Jane Banks in Principal Consultant for Stratum International, based in their North America office in Washington DC. With nearly 20 years’ experience in international executive search and more than a decade specializing exclusively in mining recruitment for Corporate and Operations roles, Jane has a track record of more than 600 successful searches within the sector.
Stratum International is a global mining recruitment and executive search consultancy specializing in business-critical roles in mining operations and mining project development. We can help clients find and attract mining project and operations professionals at the top of their game. Stratum’s consultants are recognized experts in the field, focused on knowing the best mining talent available. They cultivate relationships with senior professionals across specific mining disciplines, including Project Development, Mine Operations and Executive Leadership, helping them plan their careers. This proactive contact means Stratum can provide clients with candidate shortlists in days rather than weeks. Please visit www.stratum-international.com for more information.