

MOBILE LEADERSHIP IS GOING LOCAL

Hiring C-suite Talent: Think Global, Recruit Local



As business complexity, speed, and global reach converge, the need for competent managers to take on cross-border assignments is growing – the number of expat and globally mobile employees is set to surpass one million by 2021, according to a Finaccord study.

Discerning hiring practitioners are taking a holistic approach to employee engagement, paying close attention to distinctions in customs and requirements across different markets. Global mobility programmes prove to be an essential part of the on-boarding process to ensure that incoming staff and existing teams can address relocation challenges swiftly and effectively.

There are many benefits of talent mobility – skills transfer, increased diversity of senior leadership, and strategy alignment. But with the advancement of technology, remote-working trends, and organisation-wide cost consciousness (and, of course, the drive to accelerate growth), are

cross-border assignments for senior executives still valuable?

LEADERS WITHOUT BORDERS

Generali's study from 2018 explains that employees are key to companies' international growth either by spearheading and steering operations in new countries or by helping transfer skills and innovation. One example is Saudi Arabia, where expats with relevant experience and skills are brought in as advisers to local C-suite leaders, to boost skills transfer and localise leadership.

Ronan Coyle, Partner Middle East, explains: "With the major infrastructural projects that are under development in Saudi Arabia,

highly competent senior Saudi nationals will be recruited at C-level but then senior and experienced expats will come in as senior advisers, work for two years, the skills transfer happens, then he or she leaves.”



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It's a win-win situation for the company and the imported leader, as Coyle adds. "From an HQ organisational point of view, this ensures that the overarching corporate strategy globally is aligned. The international experience can also be really good for the local candidate's development, alongside improving the senior leader's mentorship and succession planning skills."

WHERE LOCAL INSIGHT MEETS GLOBAL VISION

In Africa, countries like Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have become attractive relocation markets for senior leaders from America, Canada, and Britain looking for high-potential markets for their next challenge.

"Industries such as mineral extraction, oil and gas production and commodity trading of gold, platinum, renewable energy, alongside the demand for food and agriculture – all of these spaces are new and untapped in Africa, if you compare them to the rest of the world," says Lucie Collard, Principal Africa.

Once again, this is not about nudging local talent out of the market. African governments are keen to ensure balance and get the best of both worlds. They're fostering the growth

of local leaders and making repatriation a priority by encouraging international investors to have a certain number of local board members and local managers at the senior level, helping to grow the skill sets of local leaders, via support and mentoring.

COMMITMENT IS KEY

Tenure goes hand in hand with long-term impact and is a top priority for companies and recruiters bringing in C-suite leaders from other countries and cultures. But adaptation can be challenging, especially in certain markets, as Jon Goldstein, Senior Partner Southeast Asia & India, explains.



Relocation issues arise not so much from the language barriers but adaptation to local life; the reality is that the people who come in don't always settle, and companies need to pay greater attention to helping them integrate. Success comes when the culture fit is there, which itself comes from understanding the strategy of 'localised leadership' and what that means for the company.

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In Southeast Asia, many companies are opting for 'returnees' to home countries to work in leadership positions as they believe they have better cultural understanding, provide greater stability in the role, and are more cost-effective.



Ben Wainwright, Associate Partner Asia, says it comes down to a question of fit in terms of language and culture. “Asia as a whole is changing: from being the emerging market, where companies needed to import best practice, in many cases they can now be considered the market leaders, exporting their best practice into the business world.”

Recruiters especially need to exercise cultural sensitivity. As Franck Johnson, Senior Partner Asia Pacific, explains, “There are challenges for all sides of the recruitment dice – hiring into Europe for Asian companies and vice versa, alongside competition for hiring visionary HR and talent teams in-house. It comes down to culture in many cases, insofar as understanding the culture of Asia and Asian companies compared to European ones and being sensitive to that.”

A PASSPORT TO SUCCESS

Digital transformation is helping to redefine demographic profiles. More Millennials are assuming leadership roles and looking to international assignments as a pathway to career enhancement, personal development – and increasing their value.

Courageous companies are implementing policies and programmes that transform the ways in which people work and propel cross-border collaboration. At the heart of this is trust and flexibility, and the new possibilities the digital world offers leadership, as Coyle explains. “PepsiCo changed their working model so that they no longer have expensive regional leadership hubs populated by expats on all-inclusive expat packages. Most of their regional C-suite leaders are based in their own countries, doing their jobs as local recruits.”

We live in exciting times. Page Executive is working closely with its partners across the globe to help companies find the perfect candidate. Our global mobility programme equips our consultants with multi-market executive hiring experience that drives home the importance of adapting to local cultures, relocation challenges, and delivering in new markets.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

A company’s global mobility programme is vital to support new business growth. When combined with insightful talent management, they can boost financial performance, employee engagement, succession planning and talent retention and bring value to companies everywhere.

- ▶ Recruiting globally delivers distinctive, dynamic leadership styles, vision and experience, and facilitates vital knowledge transfer and know-how
- ▶ International assignments can be a fast-track for mobile leaders who want to broaden their portfolio and horizons
- ▶ Leadership needs to understand and differentiate regional business practices and requirements to ensure cultural fit and long-term impact
- ▶ The local team needs to be part of the integration process to ensure that members gel wherever they are and wherever they come from