Building a Strategic & Sustainable Global Mobility Framework from Day One

As organisations look to expand into overseas markets, it becomes an ideal moment to step back and design a model for deploying employees internationally that reflects the business's strategic priorities and commitment to sustainable values.

By aligning cross-border employee movement with broader business and talent strategies at this early stage of international growth, global mobility can be positioned not merely as an operational function, but as a strategic enabler of longer-term success.

At Blick Rothenberg, we believe the development of a forward-looking plan early in the international growth journey can significantly enhance the Employee Value Proposition (EVP), which essentially captures why people choose to join, remain and develop in an organisation. It signals to current and prospective talent that the organisation provides meaningful global opportunities and structured support aligned with its core values. Indeed, our experience is that business leaders are increasingly viewing global mobility as critical to cultivating future leaders.

> *A strong, employee-centric mobility framework from day one ensures every international move creates value - for the business, for clients and for individuals developing their careers across markets. Establishing this alignment early on transforms global mobility into a core enabler for sustainable long term growth.*
>
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1. Strategic Framework — The 'Why'

Before selecting employees for overseas projects or assignments, organisations should first clarify the purpose behind their global activities. They should start with the question: Why?

Understanding both the broader business objectives and the micro level purpose of each individual move helps shape every mobility decision that follows.

A clear 'why' enables organisations to define:

- the role global mobility plays in entering or strengthening new markets.
- the people, skills, and talent required.
- whether local transfers, long or short-term assignments, remote working, or hybrid/virtual models best support the strategy.

This strategic clarity strengthens the EVP - when global mobility is purpose-led, employees are more likely to see international opportunities as part of a coherent career pathway which signals investment in personal development, exposure to different cultures and ways of working, and the opportunity to build new skills.

It also supports the process of selecting employees for international roles. Evidence shows that those who thrive in global environments typically demonstrate cultural adaptability, resilience, agility and personal readiness. Aligning global mobility with HR and talent goals - considering skills, performance, potential, and readiness - helps ensure the right people are placed in the right locations at the right time, whilst supporting longer-term talent and succession planning.

A well defined 'why' also enables cost efficient decision-making. When organisations understand the strategic purpose of a move, they can choose the most suitable employee for a particular role and adopt a project and employee specific financial model.

2. Execution Framework — The 'Who' and the 'How'

Once the strategic purpose has been defined, the focus shifts to effective implementation - understanding who is responsible and how the global mobility framework will be delivered.

This phase requires alignment across all stakeholders to ensure global compliance risks are managed, costs are accurately budgeted and controlled, and the employee experience remains central.

Example

Consider a typical two-year international assignment, which might be structured in three interlinked phases:

Pre-assignment Phase
The organisation prepares both the employee and the business by addressing immigration, tax, and social security requirements, cost estimates, compensation, allowances and benefits, payroll obligations and essential support such as cultural preparation, language training, and family assistance.

Assignment Phase
During the assignment, the focus shifts to ensuring ongoing compliance with immigration, tax, and social security obligations, correct compensation delivery, tax filings, monitoring performance, and maintaining the cultural and family support needed for a successful assignment.

Post-assignment Phase
This stage ensures smooth repatriation and long-term value. Activities include repatriation tax filings and trailing liabilities, compensation reconciliations, cultural and family reintegration, and structured career planning to help the employee re-enter the home organisation effectively.

Talent Retention

The post-assignment phase can often be overlooked, yet planning for a successful repatriation is critical. Organisations who proactively utilise the skills and global insight that returning employees bring back tend to see significantly higher retention. Employees are far more likely to stay when their international experience is recognised, valued, and applied to future roles - a powerful yet frequently underestimated contributor to the EVP.

Environmental, Social and Governance

Embedding Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) principles into global mobility delivery further strengthens the framework as well. Surveys consistently show that ESG considerations rank highly among Millennial and Gen Z employees and can influence their career decisions. For example, selecting an employee on an emerging-talent programme who might be willing to commute weekly overseas may reduce relocation costs, but raises key questions around environmental impact, sustainable travel choices, and governance controls on travel frequency.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

In addition, the contribution of global mobility to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) objectives should not be understated. A well-designed framework can broaden access to international experience, support nontraditional career paths, and provide underrepresented groups with exposure to critical markets and leadership opportunities. Embedding DE&I principles within the global mobility framework enables more equitable selection decisions and ensures international mobility supports both growth and inclusion.

3. Enabling Framework — The 'What'

Organisations do not necessarily need a fully mature global mobility programme in the early stages of international growth. However, they do require a set of scalable, well-designed foundations that can evolve as the global footprint expands.

At its core, an enabling framework defines the key operational roles, responsibilities, and activities i.e. what needs to be done. It provides consistency, transparency, and control, while remaining flexible enough to support different project requirements, talent profiles, and stages of business growth.

These foundational elements typically include:

- a simple and flexible global mobility framework with clear eligibility and selection principles.
- a proportionate, sustainable cost and support model.
- a structured, risk aligned approach to compliance, underpinned by principles that reflect the organisation's strategy and values.

Managing Cost & Risk

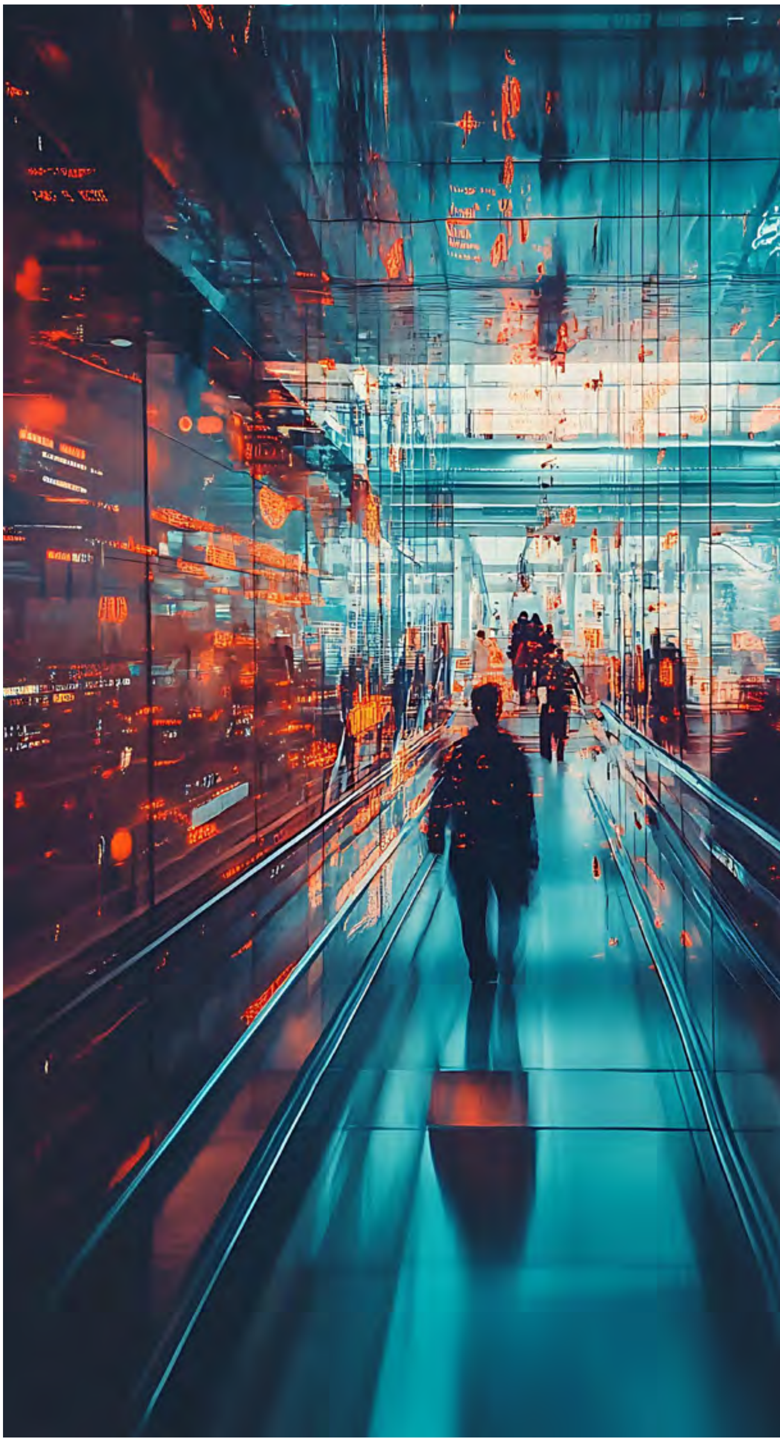
Adopting these basic elements early allows organisations to manage both risk and cost effectively without over engineering the solution. Importantly, it reinforces fairness and accessibility, enhancing the EVP by ensuring international opportunities are transparent, equitable, and aligned with strategic priorities.
As global activity expands and the volume of cross border moves increases, the framework should continue to mature, but we believe organisations should avoid merely defaulting to traditional, one size fits all assignment models. New ways of working and growing geopolitical pressures mean mobility policies must now be far more adaptable, enabling businesses to deploy skills where they are needed most rather than relying on traditional, long-term, location-based assignment models.

This approach improves agility and cost efficiency while widening access to global experience for a more diverse range of employees, including remote and hybrid cross border workers, virtual assignees, commuters, and those initiating their own international moves.

The Role of Technology

Technology and AI are increasingly playing a central role in supporting this evolution - from automating compliance checks and tracking cross border activity, to modelling costs and integrating mobility data into broader workforce planning. Digital tools also enhance the employee experience by offering self-service guidance, personalised support, and increased transparency throughout the overseas assignment lifecycle.

Crucially, an effective enabling framework improves decision-making by enabling organisations to measure the value of employee movement, not just its cost. Financial metrics such as assignment return on investment, and post assignment retention analytics can be complemented by people focused measures including skills development, leadership progression, and employee engagement.



Summary - Early adoption of a framework for long-term success

Businesses considering building an international workforce, should consider three inter-connected principles to develop and embed a consistent framework, starting with that first employee move overseas.

STRATEGIC

DEFINE WHY

Purpose: To ensure every international move is underpinned by clear strategic intent and aligned with broader business and talent priorities.

Focus: Clarifying business objectives, identifying required skills and capabilities, and selecting the right mobility model to support long term growth and talent development.

EXECUTION

ALIGN WHO & HOW

Purpose: To create a coordinated and compliant approach to delivering overseas assignments, with clear ownership across all stakeholders.

Focus: Effective planning and delivery across pre assignment, assignment, and post assignment phases, while embedding ESG and DE&I principles to strengthen employee experience and organisational outcomes.

ENABLING

BUILD WHAT

Purpose: To establish scalable, flexible foundations that support consistent governance while enabling future growth.

Focus: Developing simple and sustainable policies, risk aligned compliance processes, and the technology and data capabilities required to measure value, enhance decision making, and evolve as global activity increases.

At Blick Rothenberg, we believe these principles underpin a truly sustainable, employee-centric global mobility strategy that drives long-term value from that very first overseas move.

Our Global Mobility team supports organisations at every stage of their international journey, from those expanding globally for the first time to established businesses already managing cross-border talent. We help companies and their employees navigate their tax, legal and compliance obligations across the globe. Our goal is to provide tailored solutions that ensure compliance, cost optimisation and support long-term strategic growth.

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