



GMS2024/25

Reshaping Global Mobility 05 Taking care of Global Mobility professionals



2024 joint research

Santa Fe Relocation, Crowe and Expatise Academy

Special notice — This is the second edition of *Taking care of Global Mobility Professionals*. The internal pages were designed by the in-house marketing team at Crowe UK and have been kindly reproduced with their permission.

This report is the fifth publication in Santa Fe Relocation’s award-winning Global Mobility Survey series and includes an update to Fig. 3 on Page 28 to reflect the most recent data.

Taking Care of Global Mobility Professionals series



Explore the series



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A) Methodology

This joint research by Expatise Academy, Crowe and Santa Fe Relocation was co-designed and conducted in an online survey of Global Mobility (GM) and International HR professionals between March and April 2024.

The responding group included:

100+ Respondents

Professionals working in Global Mobility and International HR.

Broad range of sectors. The top five are:



Professional
Services



Manufacturing



Engineering



Financial
Services



Technology and
Communications

65% Work in global teams

(centre of excellence) which are co-located or multiple locations.

More than **66%**

are full time dedicated GM professionals.

In June 2024, we conducted two workshops with GM professionals in Amsterdam and Brussels to test the findings. The overall feedback from these affirmed that the findings in the report reflect life for many GM professionals. There were, of course, those with different levels of GM maturity and resources and we reflect this in our findings and insights.

B) Key findings

↑ 88% report an increase in **complexity.**

Almost two thirds of respondents report an increase or significant increase in **pressure.**



70% expected increase or significant increase in Cross Border Remote Working (CBRW).

77% report a lack of understanding in the business on the need to consult and track CBRW.



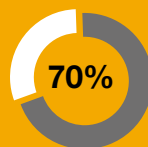
Complexity



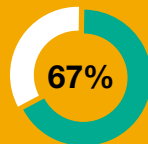
Pressure

In two thirds of cases both **complexity** and **pressure** increased together, suggesting a strong correlation between the two.

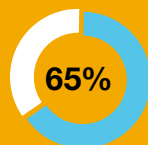
How much has pressure changed in the past **2 years?**



Advising the business: 70% increase of pressure when it comes to advising the businesses (support to HR, line management and employees).



Reporting and data: 67% increase in reporting data to leadership teams.



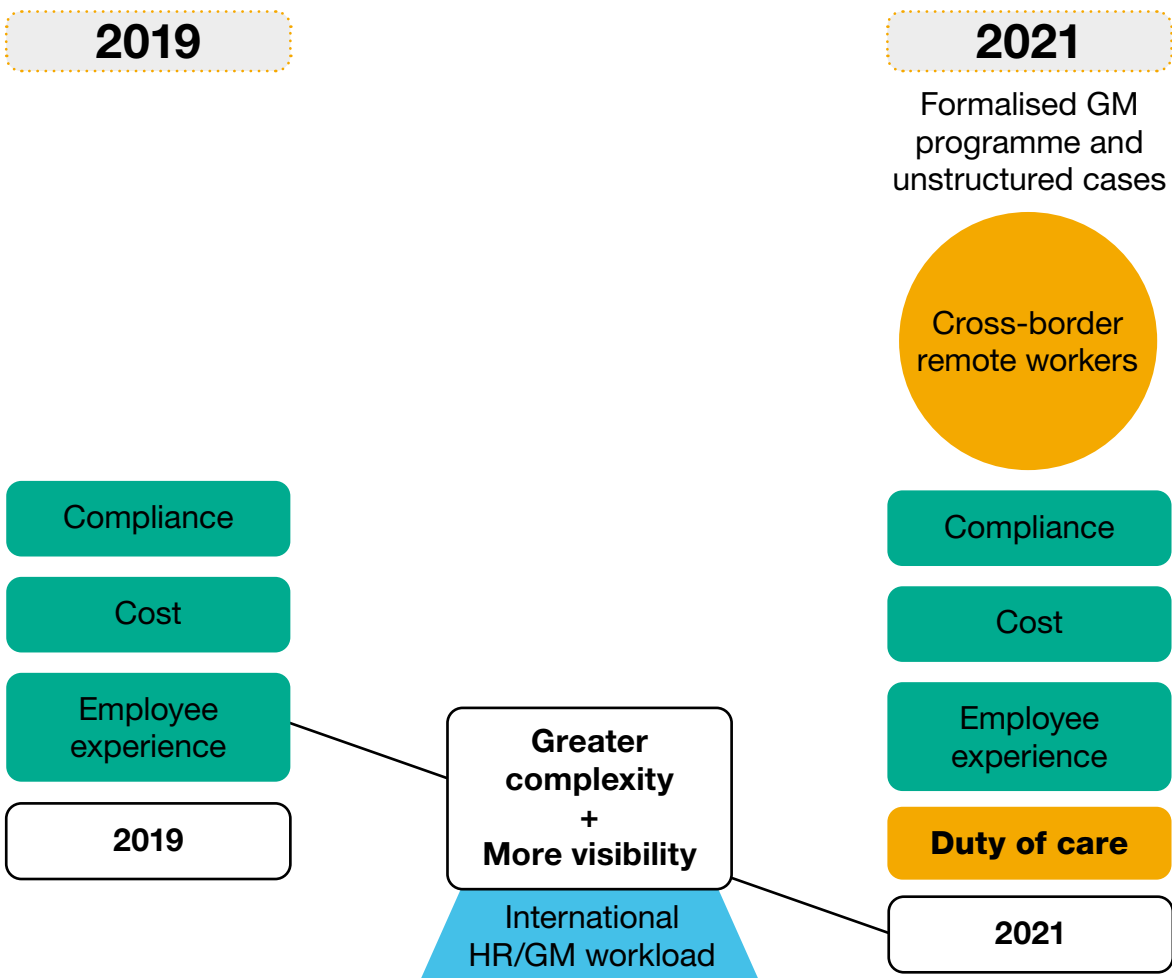
Protecting the business: 65% increase in both dealing with immigration compliance processes, and posting workers registration and notifications.

C) Foreword and background

In 2021, Crowe and Santa Fe collaborated in the production of Santa Fe's Global Mobility Survey – **Repurpose: Challenging Change**. Together, we built the framework below, which highlighted the increase in workload for international HR/Global Mobility as the pandemic accelerated remote working and cross border workers.

For many GM and International HR (IHR) teams this created significant additional pressure. An urgent need arose to create and manage new processes and policies that disrupted the traditional blue-print for international work arrangements.

Fig 1: The workload of GM and International HR (as a 2021 snapshot)



At GM networking events, there are regular references to GM's visibility with leadership and the aspirational 'seat at the top table'. The pandemic catalysed this for GM teams, who were not always prepared or fully equipped to shine in the new spotlight – with board executives asking questions about the new work arrangements, particularly where their organisations were potentially exposed to compliance risks.

Fast forward to late 2023. Ernst Steltenpöhl of Expatise Academy approached Santa Fe to propose the co-development of a survey to assess GM's operational pressures; looking at where and how working time was spent and interactions with the business, HR, and employees. Ernst commissioned this for his Expatise Academy GM industry member group, targeting a causal understanding of the increasing pressures and complexity within GM roles. In turn, given that we had previously collaborated in similar research, Santa Fe invited Crowe to conduct this unique, joint research, and here we are with the findings and our suggested resolutions.

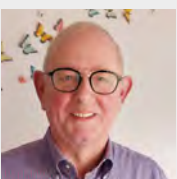
As in earlier research, our findings are objectively reported and based respondents' data with no predetermined outcomes. There are resourcing options in the insights and conclusions, which will provide you and your leadership with an opportunity to consider how best to enhance your GM programme in the future.



Dinesh Jangra →
Partner, Workforce Advisory and Global Mobility Services
Crowe



John Rason
Group Head of Consulting
Santa Fe Relocation



Ernst Steltenpöhl
Co-founder
Expatise Academy

D) Executive summary



1. Complexity →



2. Pressure →



3. Influence →



4. Efficiency →





1. Complexity

88%

of respondents report an increase in complexity over the past two years. This is not surprising given increases in regulation, laws and the game changing nature duty of care in a VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complexity and Ambiguity) world.

Cross border working is continuing to consume a lot of energy and focus amongst the respondent pool. The issue was the **highest ranked** activity that consumed more than two days a week for respondents.

More than 60% of respondents expect the occurrence of cross border workers to either grow or significantly grow.



2. Pressure

Almost two thirds of respondents report an increase or significant increase in pressure in the last two years. There is an opportunity to refocus on the wellbeing of GM professionals, who are expected to deliver business certainty in their outcomes, when they are constantly juggling uncertainty and complexity. This can be compounded by internal peers lacking an understanding and awareness of the timescales, risks and dependencies to mobilise employees.

71% of respondents reported the issue causing the most rise in pressure in past two years is advisory support to HR, line management and employees (see appendices).

Long term assignments are still a significant part of the workload with host-based packages requiring more time and focus. These assignments continue to require at least one day a week of focus for a significant portion of respondents. Host based packages often involve more complex compensation and tax aspects design.

2/3

In two thirds of cases, both pressure and complexity increased together suggesting a strong correlation between the two.

Of those reporting an increase in pressure, **70%** expected an increase or significant increase in Cross Border Remote Working (CBRW).

77% of respondents indicate that a **lack of understanding of the consequences** of cross border projects and working result in a lack of visibility and tracking.

Discussions/explaining and admin of policy is a significant workload for many consuming in some cases **60-80% of their entire role.** What opportunities are there which can be streamlined – can AI play a part in the streamlining? The next significant workload burden is data and reporting.

GM professionals face daily challenges in managing compliance and employee duty of care risks. These are often made harder by organisations that do not fully understand and prioritise global mobility considerations (see appendices).



3. Influence

One of the top areas of concern for respondents was that they felt that they did not spend enough time with senior leadership in the organisation.

65%

In fact, 65% of respondents want to spend more time with C-Suite.

GM professionals often face **negative cycles**. With more interaction with leadership, they could help with talent, project, and business planning as trusted advisors identifying and resolving mobility issues early. When they're involved only after decisions are made, it causes tension with internal stakeholders, who may then see the time and complexity needed to mobilise employees as a barrier.

GM are often too busy dealing with the consequences of insufficient engagement with leadership so do not have the time and energy to make this better. As a result, GM teams often cannot break this cycle.





4. Efficiency

GM professionals have constant competitive forces on their time. In some areas, there are imbalances between the actual time spent on an activity and the time they feel they should be spending on it.

GM professionals report that the top area that they felt they spent significantly **too much time on was with external suppliers**.

The top area respondents felt they did **not spend enough time** with senior leadership in the business. At the same time, the top area they felt they spent significantly too much time was with external suppliers. Is it possible to swap that time with supplier and focus it on senior leadership?

In terms of areas where respondents said they spent too much time, policy discussions, reporting and operational delivery were the top three.

Policy and exception management is a long-standing issue for GM professionals and is not surprising to see in the top.

GM are in the middle between employees and the management. Scarcity of the right talent in some markets has led to management endorsing more generous packages than their own policy allows. At the same time, management may also want to cut costs, which dilute employee or risk centric policy provisions. This not only consumes time but also impacts GM teams' energies.

40%

A significant 40% of respondents feel they spent too much time seeking approvals.

• **Technology and reporting.** Despite the acceleration of digitisation, more than half of respondents are still using MS Excel or equivalent to manage their mobility programme. Combine this with increased pressure on reports for leadership and it is clear that balancing strategic and operational activities for GM professionals has led to more pressure on them personally and their teams (see appendices). •



E) How did we get to where we are today?

More specialised but further away from the business?

HR architecture

While eminent Global HR Professor Dave Ulrich's HR Champions publication (Ulrich, 1997)¹ shares a new HR model (Ulrich, 1997) that has influenced HR operating models, Global Mobility functions have worked as either a subset of a Centre of Excellence (CoE) (most often Total Reward or Talent) or as part of HR functions, still reporting to reward or talent. In others, they have been set up as an International HR shared services unit. The model in the book segments the roles of HR professionals to create focused areas of value delivery and effective execution of HR service delivery models.

A model that defines roles into administrative experts, employee champions in the day-to-day operational focus and strategic partners and change agents in the future/strategic focus. Designed focus on process excellence and people centric policy and tools to drive enhanced performance and engagement.

Subsequent evolutions and theories have been made by Professor Ulrich but for the purpose of focusing on GM functions in this report, this model has shaped (possibly more for organisations with scale and maturity in their GM programmes) and over time, developed the GM function into a deep-skilled specialist function, viewed within the organisation as operational enablers.

GM functions have evolved in many organisations as specialists, predominantly in international compliance and operational relocation services, spanning a matrix of origin and destination country combinations. They are supported in this by an extensive set of external suppliers covering all the above activities.

GM has a complex portfolio of responsibilities, some of which are specialised and very technical.

1. The Ulrich Model Source : Ulrich, D. (1997). "Human Resource Champions: The Next Agenda for Adding Value and Delivery Results". Harvard Business School Press.

For example, keeping up-to-date knowledge of data, tax, immigration, employment, and relocation related legislation and risk in multiple countries and keeping abreast of leading market practices and supply-chain. Understanding the relationship at a case specific level between immigration, tax and social security treaties between sending/receiving countries, or which employment law has overriding authority can be time-consuming, and ambiguous. It also requires connectivity between all internal stakeholders and external advisers.

It is clear, that an extensive array of skills, experience and co-ordination are required to effectively deliver outstanding employee relocation and assignment experiences, in a compliant, cost optimal way.

The tensions for GM practitioners

As GM are so deeply embedded in the technical and process aspects (necessary for risk and delivery of Customer Experience (CX) for employees), GM's ability to engage impactfully with leadership becomes much harder.

Smaller organisations with an international presence may deliver GM as part of wider HR roles (a HR generalist or Reward generalist who deliver GM part time). This requires even more of a juggling act to balance priorities and ensure the right expertise is applied. Larger organisations tend to be better in recognising the international talent aspects of GM and may have shifted reporting lines to the Talent CoE to enable them to be more engaged in earlier talent planning discussions – but it is largely the exception rather the rule.

In organisations where GM is delivered as part of a wider more generalist HR/International HR role, GM specialists may be more likely to have more front-line engagement through direct business partnering with leadership and other HR/functional leaders.

- Dependant on the size of the HR/GM team, this too, may create tension for professionals with mixed roles, as they may have greater leadership visibility but also have to combine this with time-consuming and complex case management of global mobility cases.

An interesting follow on observation then is that; has the specialisation and professionalisation of global mobility actually in some ways made them more distant from the business and decision makers?

GM is a very specialised discipline but can be perceived as a ‘back office’ function, which implements decisions made without their direct engagement. Whether effective direct engagement with internal GM teams happens to a large part depends on the organisational maturity in deploying international talent and, the education and experience of both HR peers and business leaders.

Where GM’s stakeholders have peers who have experienced international work arrangements or have invested in a fuller appreciation of the complexity to deliver the GM Programme, they are more likely to engage GM in earlier stages of planning and also have an appreciation of timelines, policy and the pressured and skilled co-ordination required to deliver outstanding employee experiences.

As the pandemic dramatically impacted international work arrangements, GM became more visible with leadership. Has it now shifted back into a new normal mode, with GM managing more fluid, complex, hybrid work arrangements without a shift in their engagement and involvement in decisions taking in place in the business without the required level of education on GM implications?

Ernst Steltenpöhl calls this a ‘perfect storm’ for GM professionals who have engaged with him in Europe. GM teams are expected to be all things to all people, advisors, counsellors, compliance experts, financial controllers and custodians of outstanding employee experiences for employees and their family unit undertaking cross-border work arrangements.

GM’s ability to take the initiative to connect with business leaders and HR is critical for organisations to create competitive advantage through thoughtful talent planning. It is also likely to improve the wellbeing of GM professionals who are caught in the middle between employees, line managers, their HR/talent Acquisition teams and a host of external service providers, where they are acting, reacting, and fixing.

In a function that is grounded in technical expertise, activities and process management (necessary to be across risk and CX for employees), does it become harder to be visible and impactful to get leadership engaged? GM teams have a certain window of time and words, and they can spend 95% of their time operating in a more detailed window.

F) A causal analysis of the pressure and challenges

By Ernst Steltenpöhl

Cross border, hybrid, remote working

60% of respondents anticipate a rise in cross-border work, with **15%** expecting an increase of **20%** or more. We believe that reported numbers only scratch the surface, with many more cross-border work arrangements going unreported.

Cross-border remote working and *workcations* have added to the complexities of tracking and managing the people and compliance issues. Almost 8 in 10 respondents indicate that a lack of (business) understanding of the consequences of cross-border projects and working result in a lack of visibility and tracking.

Cross-border work possibilities enable organisations to respond quickly to the need for highly skilled work without relocating whole families. Increasingly, employees like to work remotely during their holidays for a better work-life balance. Taking these two facts together, this is a dual pronged development that accelerates (remote) cross-border work to a level not seen before and in actual numbers that exceed most employers' official figures.

The real challenge for GM is those employees who adopt this work arrangement without formal approvals, they 'fly under the radar'. Executives are provided with formal GM programme statics (international assignees, commuters, and cross-borders) and omit other forms of cross-border or remote cross-border work. **Decreasing or virtually unchanged numbers of expatriates and simultaneously intensifying international activities and projects should sound the alarm bells.**

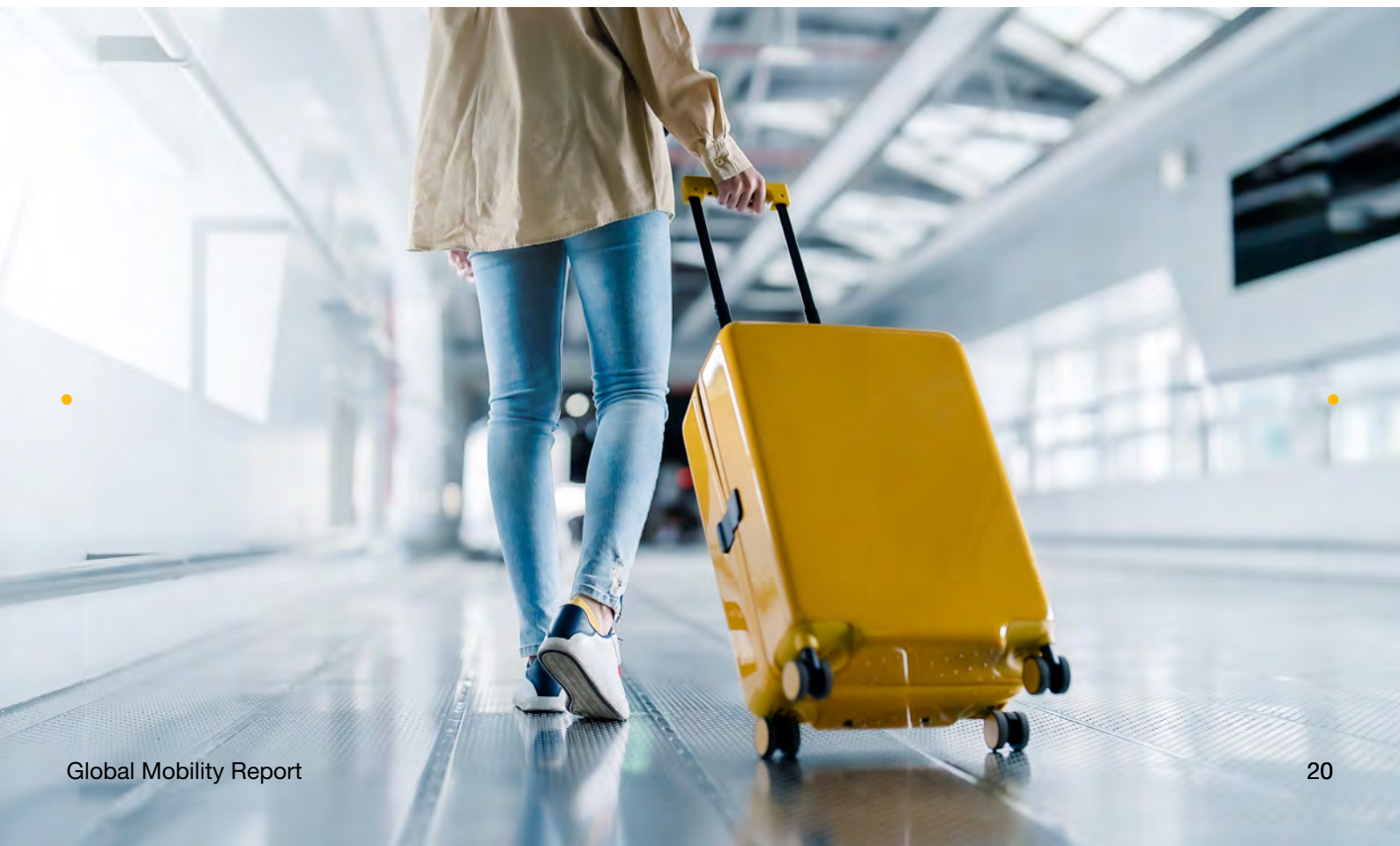
Business travellers

Typically, International assignments, have a complex situation in the first and final years of the assignment. Business travellers, however, can, in principle, be just as complex as expatriates, with the difference that this can be the case with any travel movement. That movement, in the case of business travel, can be to many countries through the same person in the same year.

Like cross border remote workers, some business travellers will be supported by technology and processes to ensure compliance. How many are not though?

Increased international travelling, requires more regular compliance checks such as certificates of coverage or A1s potentially for every trip.

Many organisations are unaware of the size and consequences of the number of cross-border workers. Expatriate and business traveller cases present complexities, with compliance being a significant concern.



Posted Worker Directives (Europe)

Over the last two years, the overall complexity has significantly increased the Posted Workers directive and the possibility for workers to work up to 49.99% remotely cross-border as part of the European Framework Agreement in cases of habitual cross-border telework².

As external regulation changes, still many companies lack sufficient knowledge, structures, and IT systems. As case procedures become more complex and require more information and checks, each case will take more time. The possibility to work up to nearly 50% remotely across borders stimulates many employees to take advantage of this new possibility.

Comments from the survey

“I also would say (and I do not want to use it in a too negative way) “ignorance.” We, as GM, are often perceived as deal breakers and difficult people; we say no too often. The business does not understand we say ‘no’ because of the underlying rules and regulations. If we are unaware, it is simply because the business chose not to inform us.”

“Personal data law restricts company’s visibility on travellers’ whereabouts”.

“Historical legacy where business was responsible for the company’s success, and they do what they believe they have to do.”

2. Cross-border telework in the EU, the EEA and Switzerland | Federal Public Service - Social Security (belgium.be)

External Suppliers

As legislation becomes more complex across the compliance related areas that GM support, so the amount of time required to partner with external experts increases. The challenge and opportunity for GM here is the ability to find a partner who can co-ordinate the interaction of professional advice between the home and host locations. It came as no surprise that respondents reported that they spend too much time with external suppliers.

Is this due to the complexity of the work or the number of suppliers that are engaged? Where GM teams are under pressure to reduce costs and de facto, headcount, external suppliers must be able to support GM teams with advisory support and 'do their thinking for them'.

The paradox is that while GM team headcount may reduce, external spend on experts may increase if the processes and structures are not correctly embedded. Is less, actually more?

Is GM misunderstood - GM Policy role?

The importance of the GM position and their role in defining new and adjusting policies.

About 75% of the respondents believe they are at the centre of the GM processes, own it, and set the policies.

Being at the centre of the GM processes and setting the policies while reporting a lack of understanding and commitment to these policies and practices suggests that GM is not embraced widely in the organisation. This could be related to a lack of understanding or interest in a greater effective connection between GM and the business and vice versa.

This is likely to be a reason why GM are in the middle of explaining, defending and then processing the exceptions to policies to both employees and management alike.

Data management and reporting

More than **50%** of respondents use MS Excel to manage their GM Programme.

Global Mobility specialists often need to extract data from several databases, which in more cases than not, is likely to have data is not up-to-date, complete and needs validation. Data management proves challenging due to disparate HR databases and inadequate software solutions.

Reporting, accurate data feeds for relocation initiations and importantly, compliance obligations place pressure on an already stretched GM team. Again, the more external suppliers that are engaged, the more data feeds required and consolidation of data.



G) The way forward

(i) Let's stop swimming uphill

In early conversations with GM professionals about our findings they stressed the need to present approaches to ease pressure. What can be done to make this better? At the heart of the matter is the need to find ways to addressing the root causes of pressure seemingly at the same time as managing the consequences of those same root causes. It can feel like swimming uphill! (a great picture for the mind).

As we analysed the root causes of pressure and complexity, we found these often relate to opportunities to improve education in the two distinct areas.

Education of the business on the consequences and complexity of global mobility and;

Education of the business on how to engage with the GM team.

The latter is an interesting dynamic, conversations and our research points to process (how to and when to engage GM) but also to perception of the team and its role.

As part of this research, we conducted two workshops in the Netherlands and Belgium to assess the high-level findings. More than one GM leader expressed the view:

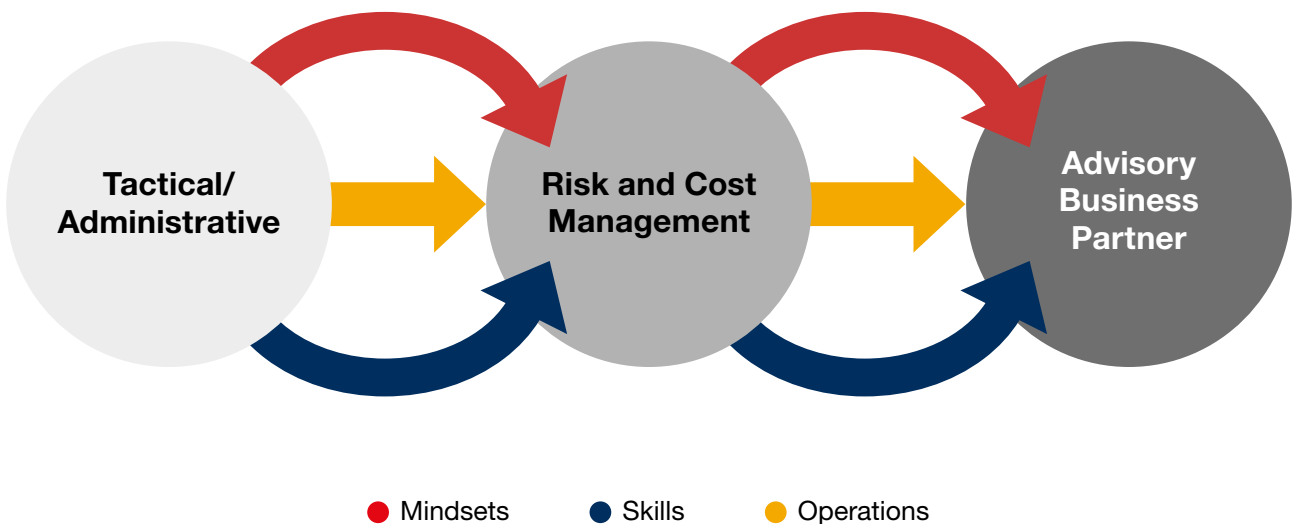
“We are seen as the police,” is what we were told. The real question is **What do GM really want to be perceived as?**

(ii) Leveraging Global Mobility Maturity approaches

We set out below our model which provides an approach anchored in the maturity of the global mobility approach and set-up in an organisation. We present three different maturity stages that can apply and suggest that the way out of the predicament (of dealing with the consequences rather than the cause) is to focus on developing mindsets, operations and skills and to move from left to right (from a tactical/administrative to an advisory partner approach). The key point here is that different mindsets, skills and operations will be required to move from one state to the next. More of the same will not work, We suggest that choice is key here. The motivation to actually move from left to right depends on the need and desire to fix the root causes rather than just managing the consequences.

Scale is an important factor in developing mindsets – the size of the GM team may impact the ability to shift from tactical operator to strategic advisor.

Fig 2: Global Mobility Maturity





(iii) Fig 3: A structured approach →

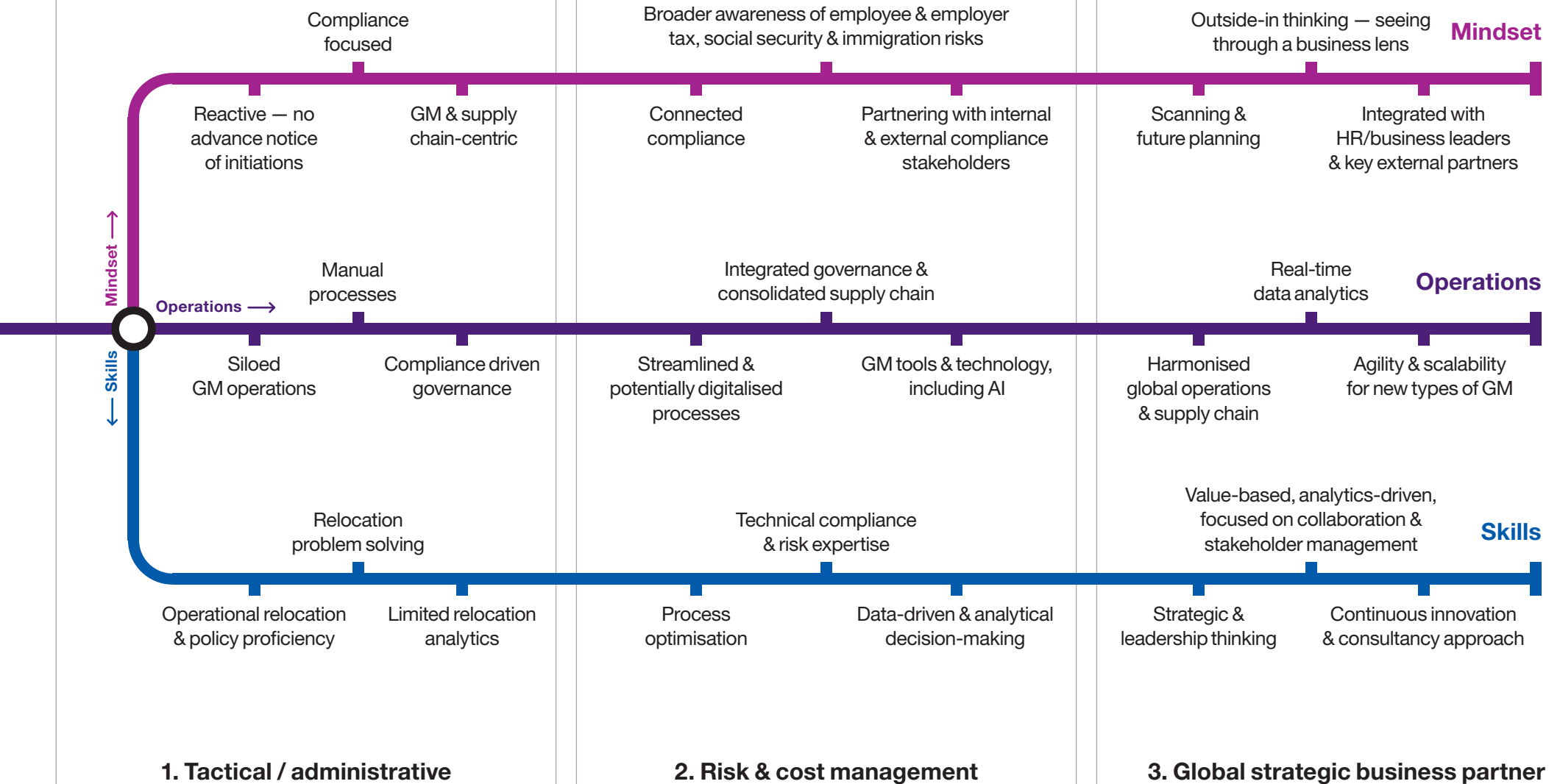
We suggest below that the enablers of moving from left to right in the above model are mindsets, operations and skills. Potentially, making tangible differences to these three key areas means that GM's focus and their internal stakeholder perceptions can also evolve, resulting in the improved ability to engage more strategically with leadership.

Based on the survey findings, there are areas of opportunity for GM functions to transform some, if not all these dimensions. There cannot be a 'one-size fits all' solution for GM professionals to rebalance their roles and engagement with their internal and external stakeholders.

The payback for the organisation is the ability to increase the effectiveness of its deployment of international talent into a variety of in-person, hybrid and remote cross-border work arrangements. The payback for GM professionals are more inclusive, positive work arrangements that even with pressures, will enhance their motivations and wellbeing.

Fig. 3

Levels of activity within Global Mobility functions – tactical to strategic



H) Conclusions

We reported in the Executive Summary that **88%** of respondents reported an increase in pressure over the past two years, with almost two thirds of GM/HR respondents reported that both complexity and pressure had increased.

This would strongly suggest that some levels of change interventions are necessary, as the world continues to change in a VUCA environment.

GM professionals have a duty of care to themselves to ensure that pressure does not equate to tensions and frustrations and that complexity is manageable by having in place the right systems, processes and internal/external support mechanisms. We set out some suggested actions and key questions below.

1. Mindset

Seek greater involvement in understanding the organisation's future purpose and business outcomes (and external environment). GM are likely to be closer to understanding changes in government legislation impacting work arrangements and compliance but are often not sufficiently involved in planning stages.

Shifting mindset is not only how GM positions its own role in the organisation, it will also require executive support and a structured plan of communications and 'selling in' the benefits to HR peers and leadership. Demonstrating an outside-in mindset focuses on understanding the desired outcomes from the talent/business deployment and the value proposition for GM to be engaged and used at earlier stages in the planning process.

- Support leadership in making informed decisions about international work arrangements in a hybrid/remote and in-person world.

Involving GM sufficiently early to enable the relocation process to be a great employee experience not only for the employee but all the stakeholders in the process.

Perception is key. How is the function or team perceived now? How would you like it to be perceived in the future. A number of GM professionals we held workshops with agreed they often were viewed as the police right now. The question is what do you want to be viewed as instead?

Educating leaders and other enabling corporate functions (for example, HR, Finance, Legal, Technology) to enable them to appreciate, even at a high-level, the technical, legal and people complexities that GM manages and the need for sufficient time to consistently deliver successful relocation experiences for international talent.



2. Skills

What roles and skills should the GM function focus on within the organisation?

- How does this align with the broader People strategy and who will sponsor change?
- Looking at the full continuum of GM services and the value attached to them, do we have the right operational model, mindset and are there skills that we need to enhance?
- Are we ready (and empowered) for transformation – and are our stakeholders ready?
- If GM is part of a hybrid HR role – what are the implications for change?
- If GM has already gone through a transformation, does success align with the intended outcomes?
- Will the demographics and purpose of assignments and relocations evolve, and disrupt traditional policies and processes?
- Are there new internal customers to be on-boarded for example International Business Travellers or greater involvement with international talent acquisition?
- Transformation could involve shifting operational aspects to an internal shared services unit or external partnering – this will require structured, robust implementation and ongoing training to ensure that the organisation's skill, knowledge and experience in the existing GM team are not diluted or lost with changes to existing GM team members.
- What is the route for upskilling the GM team skills, or is this for defined roles or new career opportunities in more strategic, business partnering GM activities.

3. Operations

What are the organisation dynamics between GM and Procurement for external providers? (GM reported in the Survey that they spend too much time with external suppliers).

What is the organisation's philosophy regarding GM suppliers?

- Consolidate with key partners in each specialism?
- Seek global, regional, local partners?
- Enable the business units to have their own supplier list?
- Always have multiple suppliers in each GM specialism?
- Is this a preferred decision made by GM leaders or by their procurement function?

What role should external GM suppliers play in the transformation?

- Are suppliers seen only for operational delivery or are they trusted advisors?
- Based on choices above, will GM have the time to optimise the collaboration with their external partners?
- Are GM suppliers' part of the resourcing decisions that aligns with roles, mindset and skills of the GM team in a transformed environment?
- Will suppliers' technology and digital solutions be a key factor (where the transformation may involve financial investment in technology)– make, buy or borrow decisions?
- Are there new technology solutions that can be integrated as game-changers, is AI part of the change process?

• **Do we have the right access to the technology needed to operate and integrate with our internal and external stakeholders and partners?** •

I) Perspectives

Four Global Mobility industry leaders provide their perspective on the suggested maturity approach described above.



Simon Rogers
Managing Partner
Talent Mobility Search

Simon Rogers, Managing Partner, Talent Mobility Search

This is a great report and mobility professionals will recognise parts, if not all of it in their own day to day work. I was surprised that so many mobility departments still use spreadsheets to manage their programs when there are so many solutions in the market. I would assume lack of budget is the main blocker. This neatly aligns with the aspiration to be closer to the business mobility leaders are part of. Accurate, timely and dynamic reporting will assist in reaching that objective which spreadsheets alone will not provide. The Ulrich model has been a game changer for HR. However, mobility does not easily fit into any of the three building blocks (BPs, COEs or HRSS). One may argue, with mobility being part of COE or HRSS this adds a further layer to achieve the ‘closer to your business’ aspiration. The ‘seat at the table’ will not be given. It needs to be earned or, in some cases taken. Education around mobility is key – both the risks but also the opportunities. It’s tempting to focus on risk mitigation rather than celebrate what a seamless program can help achieve in regard to people and business objectives. However, education must not only be one way. To fully embrace the opportunity, mobility departments should also proactively seek to learn continuously about the business they are part of. The suppliers point is also very valid. More is expected yet costs are always challenged. I think by using this report as a basis to ask the same questions of your mobility framework will help.



Erik Mathys
Head of Total Rewards
Etex

Erik Mathys, Head of Total Rewards, Etex

With an ever increasing complexity on international legislation and compliance, Global Mobility professionals should strive to keep their seat at the decision table so that they can impact strategic decision making. From the looks of the study this remains a challenge. Global Mobility professionals risk to slide away from strategic decision making in order to cope with ever lasting operational and compliance driven challenges. A solid and quality driven outsourcing to external vendors should prevent this from happening as the Global Mobility function is key in setting the scene for decision making. In order to remain at the table Global Mobility professionals should rethink their way of working, enhance out of the box thinking and provide leaders with core data on cost and return on investment. Challenge the status quo will be key ! Let's make sure that the Global Mobility profession gets a leading role in setting the strategy. This should be done by bringing Global Mobility at the heart of the talent discussions where key decisions are taken.



Benjamin Oghene
CEO
The Cozm

Benjamin Oghene, CEO, The Cozm

Expected increase in complexity:

It comes as no surprise that 65% of respondents have already experienced an increase in pressure related to compliance processes. Starting November 2024, the rollout of the Entry-Exit-System (EES), followed by the UK's ETA and Europe's ETIAS in 2025, will significantly increase global mobility complexities.

The additional data available to government authorities will heighten compliance requirements, particularly in relation to immigration, tax, international social security, and the EU Posted Worker Directive (PWD).

Positive developments in technology:

While complexity rises, advancements in AI and automation offer relief. AI now streamlines data aggregation and reporting, automating tasks such as compliance filings, leadership reporting, and managing service providers. The automation of repeatable tasks will free up time for mobility professionals, allowing them to focus on higher-value activities.

Moreover, the cost of acquiring advanced technology has significantly reduced, making it more accessible for businesses to implement secure, structured platforms. Staying up to date with advancements in technology will be essential for ensuring businesses can effectively handle growing compliance challenges while increasing operational efficiency.

Impact on global mobility professionals:

Additionally, 65% of respondents expressed a desire to spend more time with senior leadership.

As advancements in technology continue, global mobility teams will be better positioned to navigate the growing complexities and automate repeatable tasks, freeing up their time to engage more effectively with senior leadership. This will allow them to influence key strategic decisions and better protect the business from compliance risks.



Mehibe Hill

Accredited Leadership and Midset Coach, ACC
The C Coach

Mehibe Hill, Leadership and Mindset Coach to Global Mobility Managers, The C Coach

It's time for Global Mobility teams to take a seat at the table.

Looking at the report – can Global Mobility handle this ‘pressure’ – to take a strategic seat with Leadership?

It's clear that the two main drivers of pressure are complexity and uncertainty. I would describe these two drivers as situational factors contributing to the feeling of pressure. I'd define pressure as a feeling we create inside of us based on external expectations, internal motivations and situational factors that create a sense of urgency, stress or responsibility related to our purpose at work.

But how much of the other themes highlighted in this study are truly categorised into purely external situational factors (outside of my control), and how much of it is based on the internal motivations and external expectations (inside of my control)?

It's clear that themes communication, trusted business relationships, stakeholder management, engagement, collaboration, and decision making are key drivers of internalised stress. However, they are also part of the solution to reduce feelings of pressure. This requires Managers to take control, be courageous to work in a new way whilst cultivating resilience to deal with the ups and downs of demands.

If Global Mobility has a seat at the table, we're likely to see positive changes between Global Mobility and its key stakeholders: better management of external expectations; higher levels of creativity and trust; healthier functioning boundaries and collaboration in strategic decision-making.

Global Mobility must harness potentially ‘new’ leadership skills to face into the C-level of organisations with influence, respect, and confidence.



Ernst Steltenpöhl
Co-founder
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Ernst Steltenpöhl, Co-founder, Expatise Academy

The Current Landscape for Multinationals: Navigating Opportunities and Threats:

In the dynamic landscape of today's global market, multinationals face a crossroads filled with challenges and opportunities.

The Threats Multinationals Face:

A significant threat comes from agile competitors. Small businesses, armed with innovative technologies and global reach, are adeptly maneuvering around larger corporations, intensifying competition and compelling multinationals to rethink their strategies.

Additionally, employee loyalty has shifted dramatically. With remote and flexible work becoming the norm, traditional corporate structures are under strain. Many multinationals struggle to maintain engagement and loyalty, raising concerns about talent retention.

Opportunities on the Horizon:

Despite these threats, significant opportunities for growth exist. The demand for a global presence is rising as businesses seek to expand their reach through travel, commuting, or remote work. This offers multinationals a chance to tap into new markets and diversify operations.

Moreover, lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic have proven invaluable. Organizations are beginning to recognize the importance of flexibility and adaptability—qualities that enhance resilience in an ever-changing market.

Challenges to Overcome:

However, multinationals must address several challenges to capitalize on these opportunities. Many companies operate with outdated global management (GM) infrastructures, which hampers their ability to navigate the complexities of international work and comply with evolving regulations.

Furthermore, GM departments are often perceived as barriers, enforcing compliance at the expense of agility, leading to longer lead times and increased costs. Many GM specialists find themselves reacting to issues rather than proactively managing potential challenges.

Strategic Adjustments for Success:

To thrive in this landscape, multinationals need strategic adjustments. First, they must involve GM departments early in decision-making processes to address potential complications upfront.

Investing in modern infrastructure and widely GM knowledge is also crucial. Updating GM systems will equip companies to handle today's global operations more effectively and HR-business partners with more than basic GM knowledge.

Finally, embracing flexibility—drawing from pandemic lessons—can help organizations build resilient business models that adapt to changing conditions.

Embracing a digital transformation will remain ineffective if nationally oriented HR structures are not simultaneously exchanged for international structures, equal to the orientation of the business and thus reconnecting with the needs of today's workforce: turning the threat into an opportunity.

In summary, the current landscape for multinationals is marked by significant challenges and promising opportunities. By anticipating future trends and fostering a proactive approach, companies can position themselves for long-term success in an increasingly competitive global market.

Thank you to our contributors:

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Talent Mobility Search (TMS) is a specialised search and consulting firm focusing on talent mobility, and international HR. The TMS team is staffed by senior leaders from HR across APAC, Europe and the US and provides executive search, recruitment and HR consulting services across the globe - visit talentmobilitysearch.com

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Mehibe is an accredited coach specialising in providing one-to-one coaching services to Global Mobility professionals who want to build their confidence, cultivate a resilient mindset, improve their leadership skills, and expand their authority and presence. Mehibe's coaching philosophy comes from the Power of Courage, supporting individuals to find their voice, stand up for themselves, and enhance their overall communication and confidence by practicing new ways of working within uncertainty. This approach helps them achieve their personal and professional goals and become their most authentic and empowered selves in the workplace.

J) Appendices

Question: How has the pressure changed in the past two years?

Chart 1 | Levels of pressure on your GM team – Advising the business and ‘make it happen’

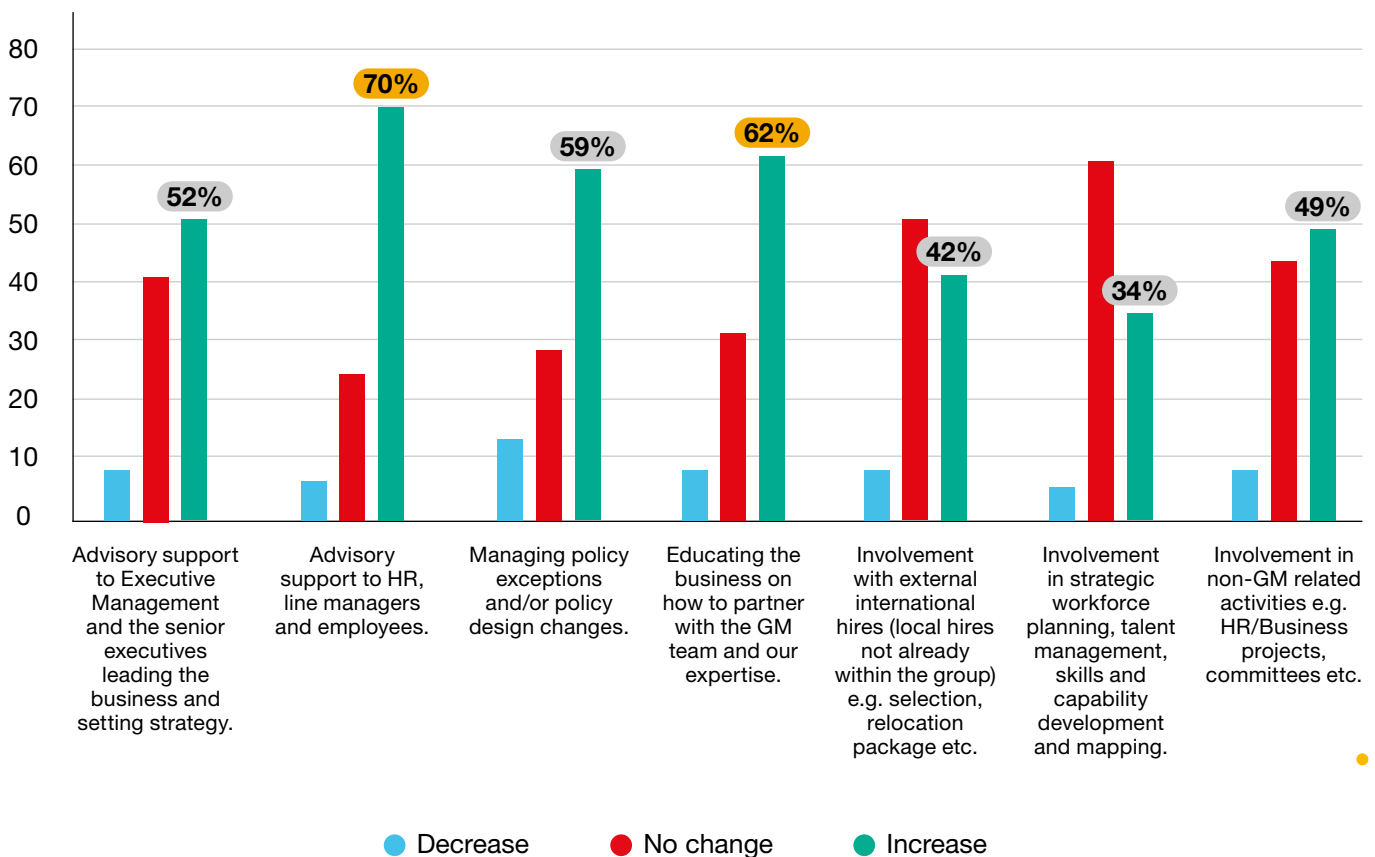


Chart 2 | Levels of pressure on your GM team – Reporting and data

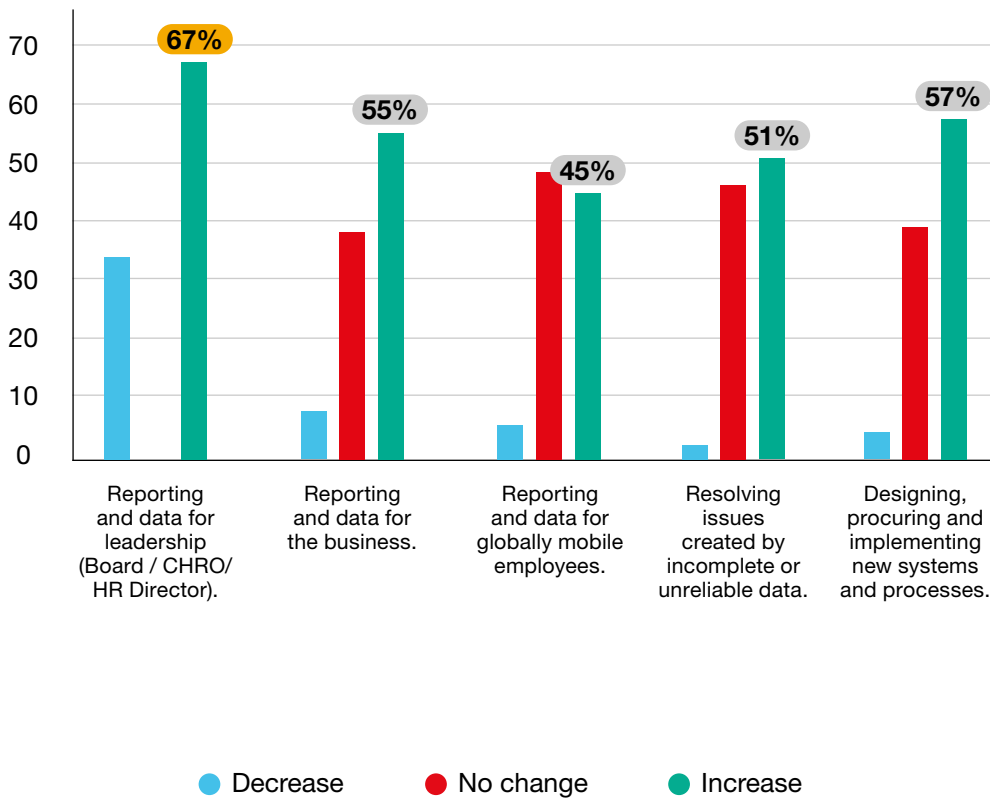


Chart 3 | Levels of pressure on your GM team – Protecting the business (e.g. organisation wants more simplicity/flexibility)

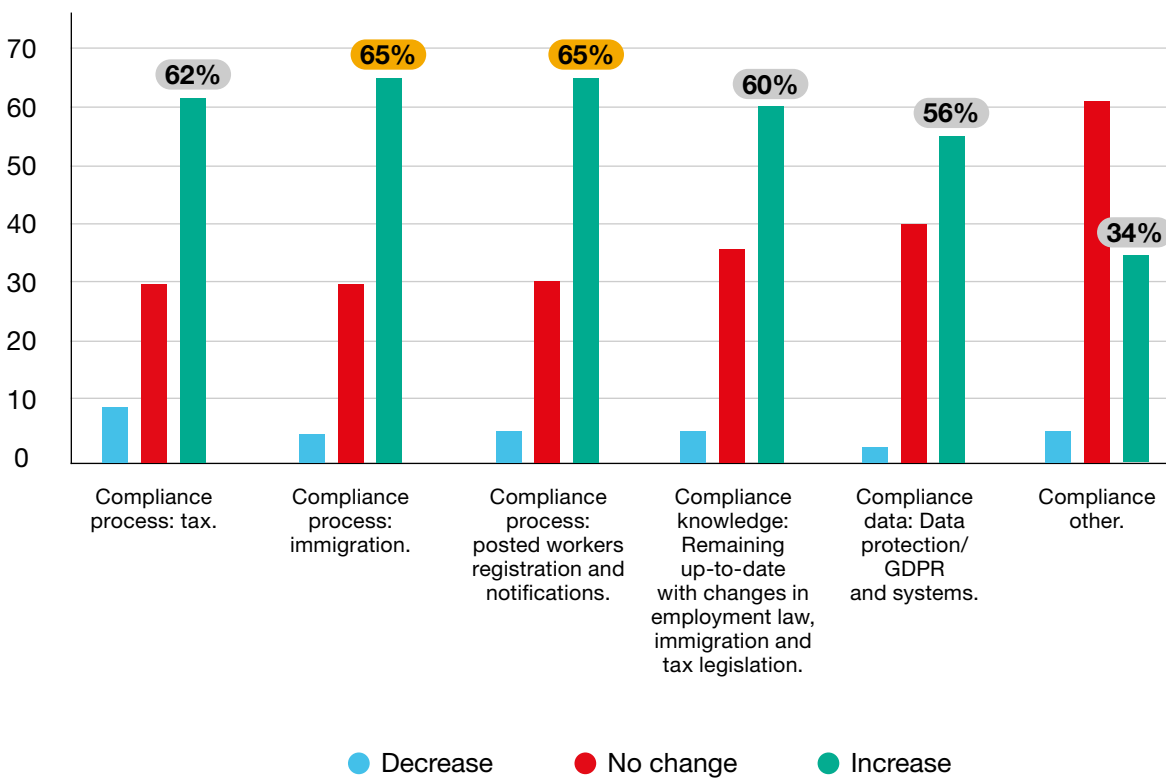


Fig 4: Defining the future GM operating model

Outside in thinking. Who are our customers and what is our purpose?	Service Delivery and Design	Culture, Governance, and Reporting	Define successful outcomes with internal and external customers and stakeholders
<p>What is GM’s purpose and value proposition?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Customer Needs/Services? • Service Delivery Model? • What technology, including AI? <p>Are Policies/Processes future fit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are our policies and processes agile to enable traditional and hybrid cross border working? <p>Service catalogue.</p> <p>What is the scope of our remit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal GM programme, Business Travellers, Cross-border remote workers? International Hires? 	<p>Where should GM fit with the organisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centre of Excellence (Reward or Talent?), Centralised Shared HR Services, embedded into HR generalist roles? <p>Define and Implement Sourcing Model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the core GM functions and teams (e.g. one hub, regions, local?) • Do we have external partners with both operational and advisory skills? • Do we want multiple external partners in the same service line or consolidate? <p>Define future team capabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills will we need, based on our sourcing model? • If there is a gap, what are the development, talent options – train or hire? <p>Service oriented processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we have effective processes in place? • What process gaps exist? 	<p>Do we have the right executive sponsorship?</p> <p>Right behaviours always?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do people behave and interact? • Do they respect each other? • How do GM ensure HR, managers and employees understand the policies and accountabilities? <p>Efficient governance & control?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What governance structures? • Are they effective? • What controls are in place? • Do leadership and HR understand the risk consequences for non-compliance? <p>Do we deliver data and analytics that shape business and talent planning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links between performance, talent & cost? 	<p>‘Outside in thinking’ – do we deliver messages through the leadership lens?</p> <p>Is there a connected and continuous communication pulse?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does GM leverage internal systems and communication media to share their value, knowledge and successes? <p>Do we incentivise right behaviour?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What incentives are in place? • Do people understand them? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What measures are used to determine success? • How do these cascade to our external service partners?



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Santa Fe Relocation is a Global Mobility company specialising in managing and delivering high-quality relocation services worldwide. Our core competence is providing services that help corporations, their employees and their families to relocate and settle in new places. These services are delivered to a consistently high standard, locally and globally, through our own operations and approved partners. Visit santaferelo.com



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Expatise Academy

Platform Multinationals, facilitated by Expatise Academy, bring together leading multinational companies from various European countries. Each week, Global Mobility (GM) leaders and professionals from these organisations, along with top consultancy firms and Expatise Academy leaders, engage in 30-minute meetings. These sessions focus on discussing the latest GM developments, setting priorities, and exchanging experiences. The outcomes of these meetings are shared with members to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of Global Mobility departments within large international organisations. Currently, more than 40 companies participate and share ideas. Visit www.expatise.academy



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Talent is truly global. Talent supply and demand know no borders and competition has never been stronger. Organisations that can adapt their talent management strategies to source, develop and mobilise workforces to meet customer and client demands will deliver business success. Crowe's global mobility specialists will help you navigate through all of your cross-border workforce issues, enabling you to recruit, retain, develop and deploy talent to deliver your organisational strategy.

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John Rason is a HR & Global Mobility professional with more than thirty years of international experience working for global corporations. He has undertaken senior HR assignments from Saudi Arabia to Latvia. John also spent nine years with a leading Professional Services firm, consulting on Global Mobility policies and organisation design and global client advisory work. Since joining Santa Fe Relocation almost fourteen years ago, he has collaborated with clients across multiple sectors and delivered award winning research, culminating in eleven industry awards since 2017. John has delivered events and worked with clients globally and specifically in Asia-Pacific over the past decade. He is a Chartered Fellow of the Institute of Personnel and Development and holds an MA in Managing Human Resources.