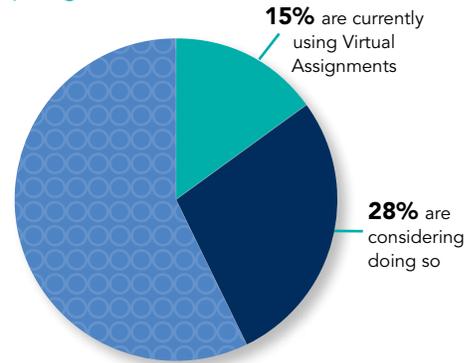


While Virtual Assignments have been around in some form for nearly a decade, thanks to COVID-19, 2020 was the year that they made them leap from buzzword to viable assignment type. In our pulse survey, we explore whether Cartus clients and prospects are using—or are considering using—Virtual Assignments and what that might mean for their relocation programs.

Within the group of thirty-four respondents, Cartus found that **15% are currently using Virtual Assignments**. The benefits they are providing assignees include cultural training, travel coordination, and mentorship.

Of those **not** currently using Virtual Assignments, **28% of respondents are considering doing so** on a global basis in the future. One respondent mentioned that Virtual Assignments are currently being used by assignees who returned to the U.S. early in the pandemic and were subsequently impacted when U.S. borders shut down; however, their organization does not intend to use Virtual Assignments in the future.



BENEFITS AND RISKS



The primary benefit of using Virtual Assignments is—unsurprisingly—that the assignment job is accomplished regardless of the employee’s location.

Another benefit is cost savings, including—but not limited to—not having to pay allowances and/or relocate an entire family.

From a risk perspective, there are many additional considerations. Compliance is a primary concern, with corporate tax risk topping the list. Tax concerns include inadvertently creating a permanent establishment and whether or not subsequent business trips will lead to unforeseen tax issues. Participants also advised that payroll issues may be a possible hindrance.

In regards to managing talent, some considerations include:

Work accountability	Work-life balance	Interpersonal connection (or lack thereof) with the host team	Impact on customers who are accustomed to personal interaction	Overall employee engagement
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HOST FAMILIARIZATION

When asked whether assignees on Virtual Assignments will familiarize themselves with the host location by partaking in a short assignment or an extended business trip, **the majority of respondents believed an extended business trip would be most likely to occur within their organization.**



TALENT STRATEGY IMPACT

From the perspective of practicality, the use of Virtual Assignments within talent strategy—unlike traditional assignments—favorably impacts cost and speed. Additionally, various jobs may become accessible to a larger demographic of the employee population. **The use of Virtual Assignments has the potential to make organizations more flexible and agile.**

While most are in favor of the benefits that Virtual Assignments have to offer, several respondents are concerned about the loss of cultural immersion and knowledge that is gained through a traditional international assignment. From a leadership development standpoint, Virtual Assignments may deter leaders from learning host country rules and regulations and from developing strong relationships with direct reports and clients/customers. Ongoing considerations must be made to ensure that quality of performance is not compromised on a Virtual Assignment.



INTERNSHIPS 2021



47% are considering the use of a virtual platform for their interns in 2021

The pandemic has had a major impact on internships in 2020. Many corporations scrambled—and succeeded—to coordinate a strong virtual internship program. For 2021, **nearly half of the survey respondents (47%) are considering the use of a virtual platform for their interns.**

THE FUTURE OF VIRTUAL ASSIGNMENTS

When asked whether or not Virtual Assignments will be used post-COVID-19, **more than 25% of respondents reported that they intend to do so.** At this time, it appears that a better understanding and familiarity with Virtual Assignments is needed before reaching a final decision on their permanent place within the workplace and the global mobility landscape.



For more information about how Virtual Assignments and other relocation trends may affect your global talent mobility program, please contact us at cartussolutions@cartus.com.