

DEVELOPMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS & THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE



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Many mechanics of a developmental assignment are like that of a traditional expat assignment. Tax equalization, immigration support, and a COLA are commonly provided for both move types. However, developmental assignments target a specific type of employee: emerging talent, typically below age 35, that shows growth potential to the business. Retaining talent and fostering a positive employee experience is always important for Mobility, but even more so in developmental assignments; should the employee leave the organization shortly after repatriation, the business would receive no return on their investment. Mobility can support their developing talent by understanding that young professionals are in a different stage of their lives than mid-career professionals, and they expect and require different support from their peers.



To better understand the wants and needs of young professionals, we held a discussion with AIRINC employees under 35 to share our personal values and professional perspectives. Paired with that discussion, this article focuses on how Mobility can tailor their policies and practices to better support the talent that the business invests in.



Nearly all expat assignments are allowed to be accompanied, meaning the employee is permitted to bring their spouse or partner along for the assignment. Though developmental assignments are a type of expat assignment, they may not need the same accompaniment status. For example, if the young professional is in a romantic relationship, they might struggle with the decision of bringing along their partner or spouse.

While bringing a partner on assignment provides valuable support for the employee, their partner may be working on rising in their own career. Most individuals under 35 are still working at developing

their skills and discovering what their career path may look like, so taking a 2–3 year pause to support their partner may be detrimental in the long run for both salary and skill development.

In a discussion with AIRINC peers, many 20-somethings shared that an unaccompanied assignment would likely work best for their personal situations. Ranging in relationship status from newlywed to long-term relationship, they all agreed that a temporary long-distance relationship (with a clear end date to the assignment) would be preferred over a disruption to their partner's career.



In addition to personal support, traditional expats and early-career professionals require different relocation support as well. AIRINC team members agreed that they would not want to ship their household goods overseas, or even want to store them in the home location. They also shared that a typical home leave benefit of travelling to their home location would not be too appealing. Instead, they placed the most value on having flexibility to explore their assignment location.

Organizations can offer flexibility in many ways, such as by offering additional paid time off, or having a financial stipend to travel. Since some traditional benefits may not be needed by younger talent, Mobility can reallocate assignment budgets to better suit the needs of the employees. By considering traditional expat benefits through the lens of relevance to an under-35's lifestyle, Mobility can create packages that enhance the employee experience.

In our discussion, AIRINC colleagues shared that having a positive personal employee experience was important, but equally important was having a positive professional experience. They discussed that it is important to have clear goals for a developmental assignment, detailing what the employee should accomplish and learn while in the host location. In addition, having a clear career path for the years post-assignment would be extremely valuable, as this provides the employee with transparency, as well as a future purpose within the organization.

Being chosen for a developmental assignment shows the employee that the business values them and sees their growth potential. By clearly communicating exactly how they want the employee to grow, the business sets up both parties for success. Keeping the employee engaged with goals and expectations, as well as a proven interest in their career, helps to ensure that the young professional will continue to develop within the company.

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Investing in talent takes time, consideration, and care. In AIRINC'S 2022 Mobility Outlook Survey, we found that 28% of organizations are looking to increase their use of a developmental policy in the upcoming year. Before sending this younger population on assignment, Mobility should take the time to consider what these employees find valuable. Considering employee circumstance, increasing flexibility on benefits, and setting clear goals are just three ways that Mobility can focus on helping these assignments to succeed. By developing policies tailored to an emerging population, Mobility can ensure that the business has the talent they need for years to come.