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expat academy

Issue: 66
May 2023

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EAR for Yourself

Come and boost your technical knowledge through one of our events:

25 May 2023—US Network Huddle—Online via Zoom

28 June 2023—Bite Size Briefing—London (LIVE)

05 July 2023—German Network Huddle—Munich (LIVE)

06 July 2023—APAC Network Huddle—Online via Zoom

Intro

The land of tulips, bicycles, and more canals than you can shake a stroopwafel at certainly left an indelible mark in our minds, not to mention our waistlines (thanks, delicious Dutch treats!). I also doubt any of us have ever moseyed along a street before where so many strangers invited us to their parties! How friendly. But alas, we politely declined; we were there to Huddle with our **European Network**!

European Network LIVE Huddle

After a brief ice-breaker, we jumped straight into the deep end with Fiona from **Aires** and a rallying cry to Global Mobility teams to move from **intention** to **action** in the area of **environmental sustainability**. Intention to action has been a theme of ours this year here at Expat Academy too, and it's no surprise Aires feel the same when you see a striking statistic of theirs: In 2022, **78% of RFPs** they were involved in had environmental sustainability requirements; sounds great! But the percentage of uptake at **implementation is low**; only between **10 and 20%** of new clients use their annual Carbon Cancel reporting services. Furthermore, only 20% use 'Discard and Donate' at implementation.

Why? Well, that's a big and endless question with answers ranging from **company culture**, **education** to the individuals and to managers, **assumptions** around many things including **costs**, and so on. However, it doesn't have to be this hard to make progress, and Aires were there to contend that everyone taking away **one small action** that they could realistically implement. In fact, we recorded them (anonymously) to highlight a) the range of ideas available, and b) how one size does not fit all. I say one size does not fit all, but I can say one commonly-themed answer was **education** to the employee with data, early conversations, and giving them personal reasons to do the right thing; over 50% of answers were along these lines!

It's also worth noting—given that this was an RMC presenting—that Fiona highlighted the ease at which companies can (and should) be **asking their vendors** to give them data and advice. In 2022, Aires household goods suppliers collected and delivered more than 527,128 lbs of food to food banks, equating to 439,273 meals; and that's just one RMC. **Move for Hunger**, a non-profit organisation, works with the relocation industry to collect unwanted, unopened food from people who are relocating and deliver it to food banks. That may just be in North America at this stage, but there will be other, similar organisations around the world, especially if vendors are lobbied to find them! **Ask**. It's better than doing nothing!

Imagine if a **cost estimate** included not only financial costs, but **carbon costs** too! Imagine a core/flex policy doing something similar with carbon costs on line items, highlighting the differences between choices. These are just a couple of **innovative ideas** we came up with when discussing ways in which to innovatively make a difference. Sure, for some, this may be impossible, but it's only in safe spaces like our Huddles that people have the freedom to talk through all ideas until one hits home. This all led very nicely into our '**Policy Matters**' Huddle discussions, starting with asking the room who is reviewing their policies this year and to what extent. **0%** (yes, zero!) have no policy review planned at all! **40%** have a partial review planned, **27%** are fully reviewing all existing policies, **7%** are creating new policies, and **26%** are doing a total review of the entire GM structure (including policies)!

Articles for You

Grant Thronton's Tax regulators catching up to growth of remote working

Weichert Workforce Mobility's Tracking Our ESG Progress with EcoVadis

Key **drivers** for these various levels of review include **changing demographics**, **changing of roles** and swim lanes, **company growth**, **cost savings**, **exceptions**, aspirations in **DE&I** and **ESG**, **simplification**, and **datedness of existing policies**. There are of course **downstream impacts** that need consideration though, and that can sometimes be underestimated! What if Global Mobility decide to start tax equalising in all locations, but the company doesn't have the payroll capabilities? Or if an initial drive for cost reduction has a negative impact of the employee experience, which was also a focus area? We wondered out loud how many teams **speak** to their employees before making any changes to their policies; of course employees are coming from their particular angle, but it's still worth talking to the end customer, surely! **A couple of ideas** from previous experience that could be useful for some: **1)** a wider HR and stakeholders **policy review team**, whereby everyone gets an opportunity to review everyone else's policy changes. For example, local HR are working on changes to a domestic assignment policy and teams ranging from Global Mobility, Travel and Expenses, Reward, to Legal, Corporate Tax, and so on are all invited for input. Some may have no comments, some may have lots, but **deadlines** are provided and reported on, and **consensus** is built. **2)** Regular **surveys** or sentiment checkers to employees may be great for some. For others, ad-hoc surveys grab more attention when highlighting what's in it for the employees. For me, **travelling to see expats in-person** at sites making the most noise or with large volumes of expats resulted in people providing feedback that they simply wouldn't in a survey. Now, that's not realistic for many and not exactly environmentally sustainable without offsetting with better practice elsewhere, but it could work for some.

After hearing some great corporate updates, it was time for a technical **immigration** blast of knowledge from Ray at **Newland Chase**. In the 'here-we-go-again' trend of core/flex, is immigration core or flex in your company? As horrifying as it was to hear as a Global Mobility professionals, Ray informed us that there are instances now where immigration is a **flex** item! There have always been scenarios where light packages appear in employee-initiated moves or developmental moves, but if a company supports any items, it's historically included immigration! **Duty of care**, anyone?!

Unsurprisingly, we still live in an **uncertain world** and immigration responds (or leads) accordingly. Countries also appear to be acting more like companies, using immigration as **economic levers**. But this is mixed with the paradox of an increasing trend in **protectionism** too. That protectionism is something for Global Mobility teams to look out for though and advise their business of, particularly in situations such as **mandatory health insurances** which can drive up costs. Layer this with the increase in **digitisation**, sped up in many parts due to COVID, and it's not all bad!

How Ray did a round the world tour of all that is going on left us very impressed! Imagine being in his shoes, knowing that you're in Amsterdam so you'd likely focus on the **EMEA** region, but you also know many of those attendees send and receive employees to and from **anywhere**...Hence the comprehensive whistlestop zoom around using fabulous morphing slides!

As mentioned, policy reviews, or even entire team structure reviews, have in some case been brought about by the perceived change in **scope** of Global Mobility teams. So the question was put to the room: **has it really changed that much**? It was fascinating to hear how it feels for those in the room, and how that varies amongst them. Many would agree that the knowledge (and / or vendor partnerships) needed to deal with international remote work requests has always been present in Global Mobility. What does feel new, is the skills and tools needed to deal with the **volume** and **complexity** coming through now. It can't just be operational and reactive now, it has to be **strategic** and **advisory** in a **pro-active** way by creating new policies and partnering with business areas. Other new skills involved in that would be—for some—more **senior** stakeholder engagement tactics. The problem is, the operational work doesn't go away, and so, put simply, Global Mobility adds more value when being strategic and the **operational** work is **automated**. We now need to be more **dynamic**, **resourceful**, and **creative**.

The last planned session of the day was a bit of a curve ball, but one we believed in; it was a session talking about **Artificial Intelligence** and **other technologies** it can **combine** with in Global Mobility. And it proved a good hunch when nearly half the room raised their hands to say that they were yet to try out **ChatGPT**, or anything similar. Thus, this was a useful catch-up session for many! Beginning with an example of how deep the rabbit hole can go, illustrating a conversation I had with ChatGPT, we then did a live example to demonstrate, and it was eye-opening to watch the reactions in the room! Not only seeing those amazed and excited, but also seeing those doubtful/scared/sceptical; and neither side is wrong of course. It still could go either way when pioneers of the technology's rise are quitting their jobs in fear of where this may go! But we weren't there to discuss the future of humanity or even how this could replace us in our roles; we were there to discuss how this could simply **assist our day-to-day work**. At least that was the concluding point: there are many risks and dangers when thinking about **personal data security** alone, but it could help us write a reply to a complaining employee, help complete application forms more efficiently, or summarise research of an entire book into a 250 word paragraph. **Combining** with other technology, such as **blockchain**, it could house a policy in lines of code, read receipts of relocating employees, and **automate expense reimbursement**! It could also play a part in the future of **identity verification** in the immigration process. AI and blockchain's combined impact on Global Mobility is what I chose to research with ChatGPT, and I encourage you to do the same!

Connecting with our European Network in-person again was thoroughly enjoyable for us, and evidently, for attendees too. Here are just a few of the feedback comments:

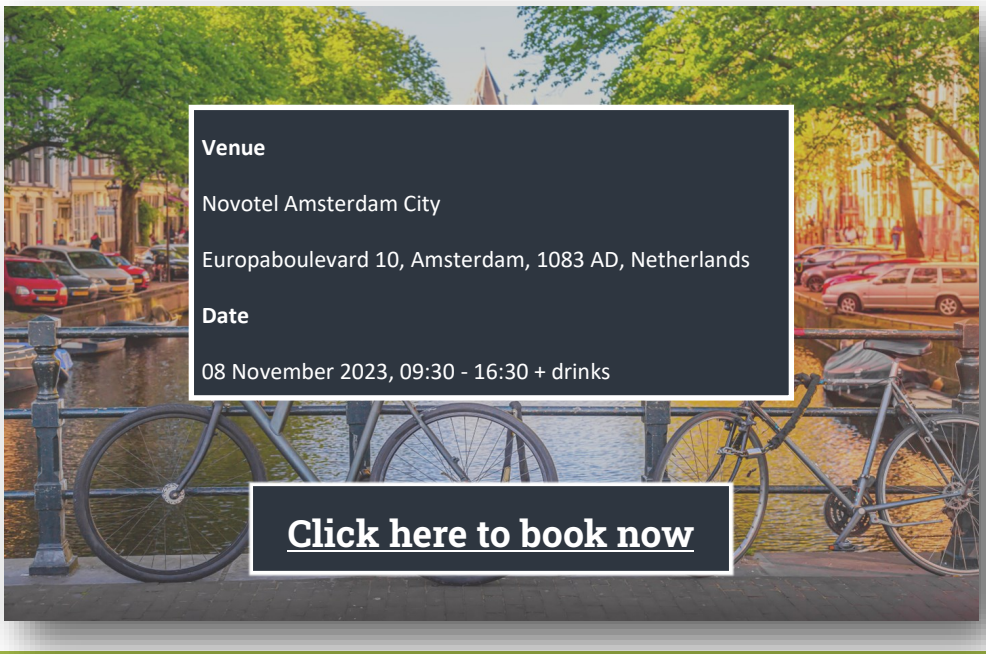
"Loved the session. Particularly the ability to discuss cases at a practical level and go deeper."

"Really valuable way to spend a day out of office. Loved the huddles and chance to really discuss GM topics."

"Very informative and inspirational, glad I could have part of it!"

What's Trending in MyGMPD?

1. Policy
2. GM Strategy
3. Tax
4. Immigration
5. Remote Working



Joke of the week...

Police pulled me over and said:

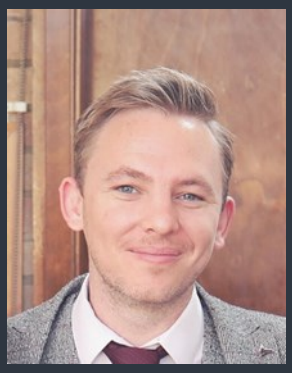
"Papers!"

I yelled:

"Scissors!"

And drove off.

Author



Greg Smith, Head of Client Services – Symposium Network. "Not to brag, but I can forget what I'm doing while I'm doing it".

Benchmarking

We know **permanent transfers** now make up more international moves than assignments for some members, which shows when the two **benchmarking** questions out for the community to help answer right now are both permanent transfer questions. right now! **Can you help**? Show us what you've got!

- Permanent Transfers - support for junior moves
- Permanent Transfers - support to apply to local schemes for reduced tax rates

The results are in for **recently closed** benchmarks too, and there's one I particularly want to highlight:

- Expat Working Hours

Why do I want to highlight this? Because there's a side note to make close to my heart, or I should say **etched** into my memory in a painful way! **Please** be very mindful of—and research in full—the **employment laws** of the **host** country! Whether it's ad-hoc overtime or a regular increase in contractual working hours, employment laws often have something to say! Just because an employee has a home contract of employment, that's not necessarily the be-all and end-all when it comes to host country employment laws. There may be a legal minimum rate of pay over 40 hours, for example. There may be a legal maximum of hours that can be worked by that level of employee, or a mandatory rest period. You get the point; **cover yourselves**!

Advert for the Vault

Step into The Expat Academy **Vault**, a sanctuary where the dreams of in-house Global Mobility professionals find solace. Within its grand database lies a treasury of **tools**, **templates**, and **resources** meticulously curated to empower your journey. Whether you are a newcomer to Global Mobility or a seasoned traveller of its trials, rest assured that this sacred repository shall bestow upon you the gifts of time and prosperity, freeing you from the shackles of laborious tasks and unnecessary **costs**. Embrace the boundless potential that awaits, for within these walls, the **secrets** of success beckon your worthy grasp!

Sounds dramatic, doesn't it! That's because I wrote a similar paragraph, and then gave it to **ChatGPT** to make "**more dramatic**"! Let's continue...

Is there something you seek, a **missing** piece of knowledge that eludes our sanctuary? Fret not, for we are devoted to fulfilling your quest. Simply **let us know** what you desire, and we shall venture forth diligently, leaving no stone unturned in our pursuit. Together, we shall strive to uncover the answers you seek, bridging the gap between curiosity and understanding. Brave readers, come forth, for we, the intrepid seekers of knowledge, shall embark on a **quest** that spans the vast expanse of information, scouring the land, unearthing hidden gems, and peering beneath even the tiniest pebbles to unearth the answers you seek. **Challenge** us, oh fearless seekers, and together we shall conquer the realm of knowledge!

Until next time, let the echoes of our **shared wisdom** resonate through the annals of time, as we part ways for now. May the winds of knowledge guide your path, and may your thirst for enlightenment remain unquenchable. Await the moment when our paths converge once more, for the grand tapestry of wisdom shall continue to unfold, weaving its intricate threads upon the fabric of our destinies. Until then, let the fire of **curiosity** burn bright within your soul, igniting a relentless pursuit of truth and understanding. Farewell, dear seeker, until the day our journeys intertwine once more.