Heart
RELOCATION

Wellness in Mobility

removing stress and improving ROI

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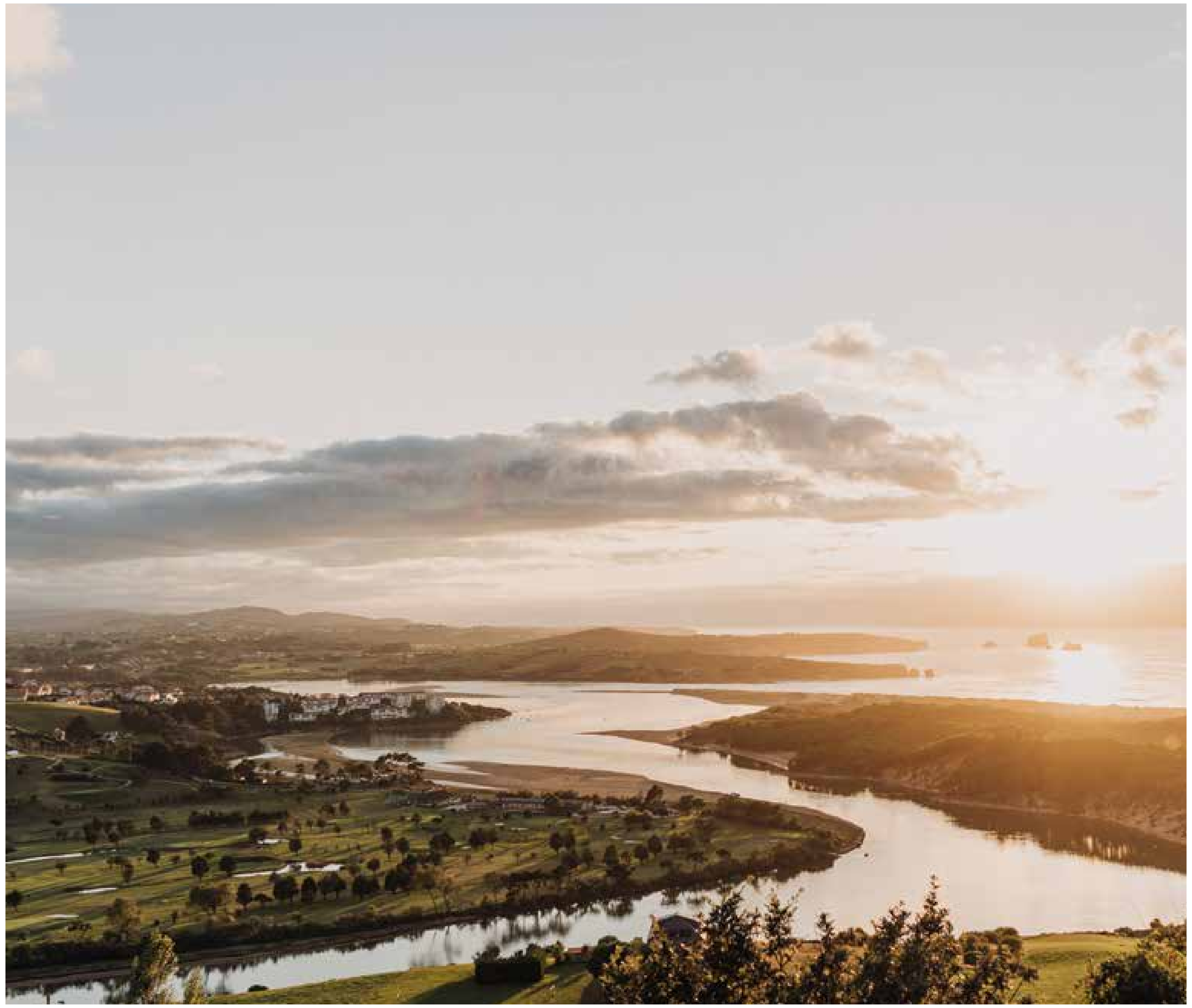


Wellness in Mobility – removing stress and improving ROI

A lot has been said on wellness and wellbeing within international mobility, much of which centres on the wellbeing of the individuals we support moving around the world. And rightly so.

In many cases, it's backed by research. For example, the Oxford Saïd Business School found that happy employees are 13% more productive than unhappy employees. Given the investment made by the company in relocating talent around the world, it is critical to ensure a return at an organisation level.

Wellbeing isn't only about productivity. Companies are heavily invested in the war for talent, though employee value propositions should focus not only on attracting but also retaining the right talent. They do this by demonstrating company values that intrinsically include the value they place in their employees.

Global Mobility – an important weapon in the war on talent

Global Mobility (GM) can clearly demonstrate the value a company places on its employees. In turn, it is a powerful tool for attracting the best talent.

If you agree with the above, here lies the challenge: how do companies manifest this in reality?

Clearly, policies can be constructed to include services and support mechanisms that stretch beyond the key elements of the relocation programme. For example, how the softer (and possibly more stress inducing areas) of relocation are supported, which includes how much money is invested into the programme.

The cost of ineffective mobility management

Heart Relocation's recent wellness survey - conducted through in-depth interviews of assignees, accompanying partners and older children - revealed that perhaps mobility has not been as effective as it could be.

Did you spend time at work on non related tasks related to your relocation?	80%
Did your relocation provider add to your stress levels?	75%
Was your work and home life more stressful as an assignee compared to your life before relocating?	100%
Did the increased stress levels have a detrimental effect on work and home life?	60%
Did you take 'unauthorised' time out of work to resolve relocation/personal/family issues?	77%

One of the most interesting findings was that, on average, 15 days were "lost" during the first six months of an assignment.

It is relatively easy to calculate the cost of this loss. For example, a 2-year Long Term Assignment is effectively 500 working days. While losing 15 days from 500 (3%) might not seem much, the average cost of a 2-year assignment could be in the region of €750,000, resulting in an equivalent cost of €22,500.

Under pressure to deliver

We recognise that cost constraints are ever present when it comes to mobility. As a result, companies constantly apply pressure on mobility professionals to reduce costs and deliver a good return on their investment.

In real terms, what does this mean? For corporate mobility it often results in head count constraints, meaning fewer people are expected to do more work just to deliver the same level of service. When we consider the role of corporate mobility professionals and the wide scope of their roles, inevitably some of that work is critical and some "nice to have". In these cases, the mission critical roles take priority and the nice to haves are left behind.

More importantly, we must ask what this pressure does to the individuals who represent GM within a company? Whilst a relative amount of pressure is commonly held to optimise performance, is this really managed in a measured way? We should not forget that the stress of relocation is ultimately a human condition and many studies (MIND, WHO) have indicated that human beings, when placed in stressful situation, respond best to positive and supportive human interaction.

GM professionals are dealing with colleagues who are typically under significant stress and pressure and consequently spend a lot of time dealing with other people's problems. It is recognised that, when dealing with others' problems, some of the weight of those problems is transmitted. Given the typical numbers of people every mobility person must deal with, this can become problematic.

Stress throughout the supply chain

Considering the earlier premise of lost days and associated costs, one could make an argument that additional services that support the assignee and the internal mobility function could result in a net cost saving and an increase in assignment ROI.

If we look at mobility service providers, the challenge becomes even more evident. The pressure to reduce costs, lower fees and do more for less has resulted in many relocation management companies expecting their employees to take on larger and larger caseloads. It is not uncommon for consultants in relocation management companies to be carrying more than 100 caseloads. In some cases, significantly more.

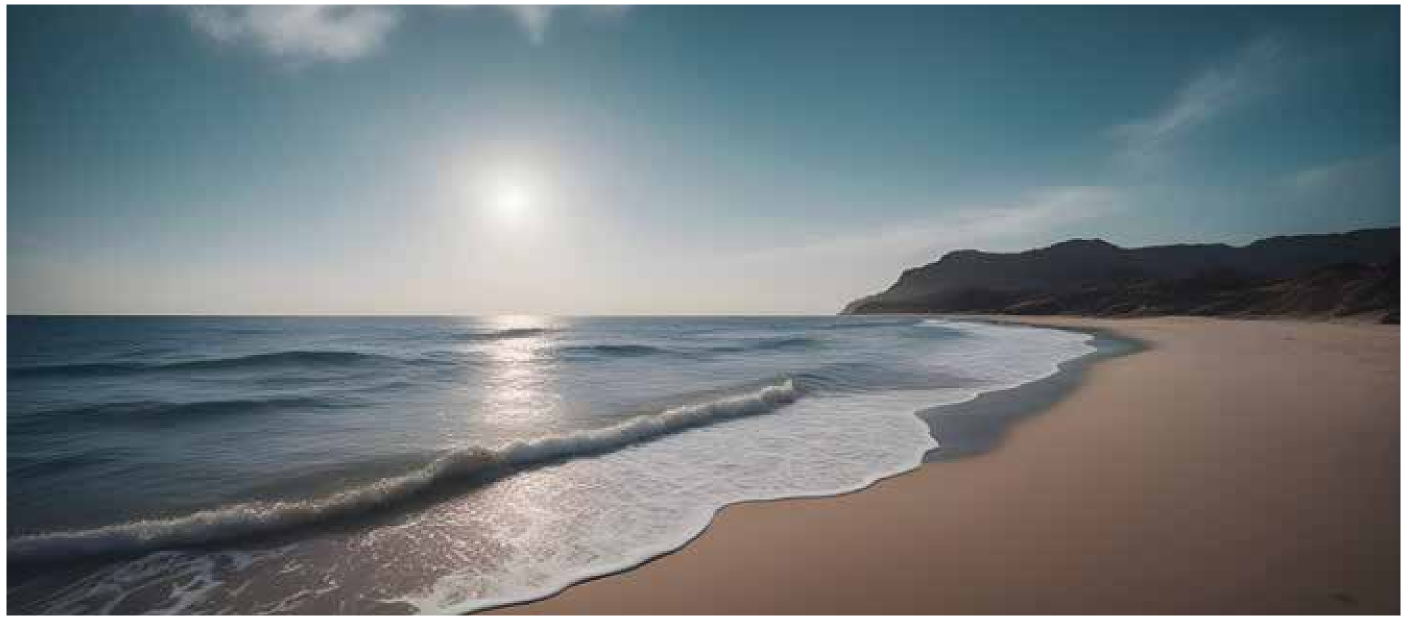
In a recent interview about their caseload of 215, a consult was asked how they manage. The response was simple and emphatic "I can't, that's why I want to leave." On this basis it might be easier to understand why 75% of assignees stated that the relocation management company added to their stress levels. It is an unsustainable premise for employees with such caseloads to proactively manage and support assignees, very often they become nothing more than constriction points in a process answering emails retrospectively based on how loud someone is shouting!

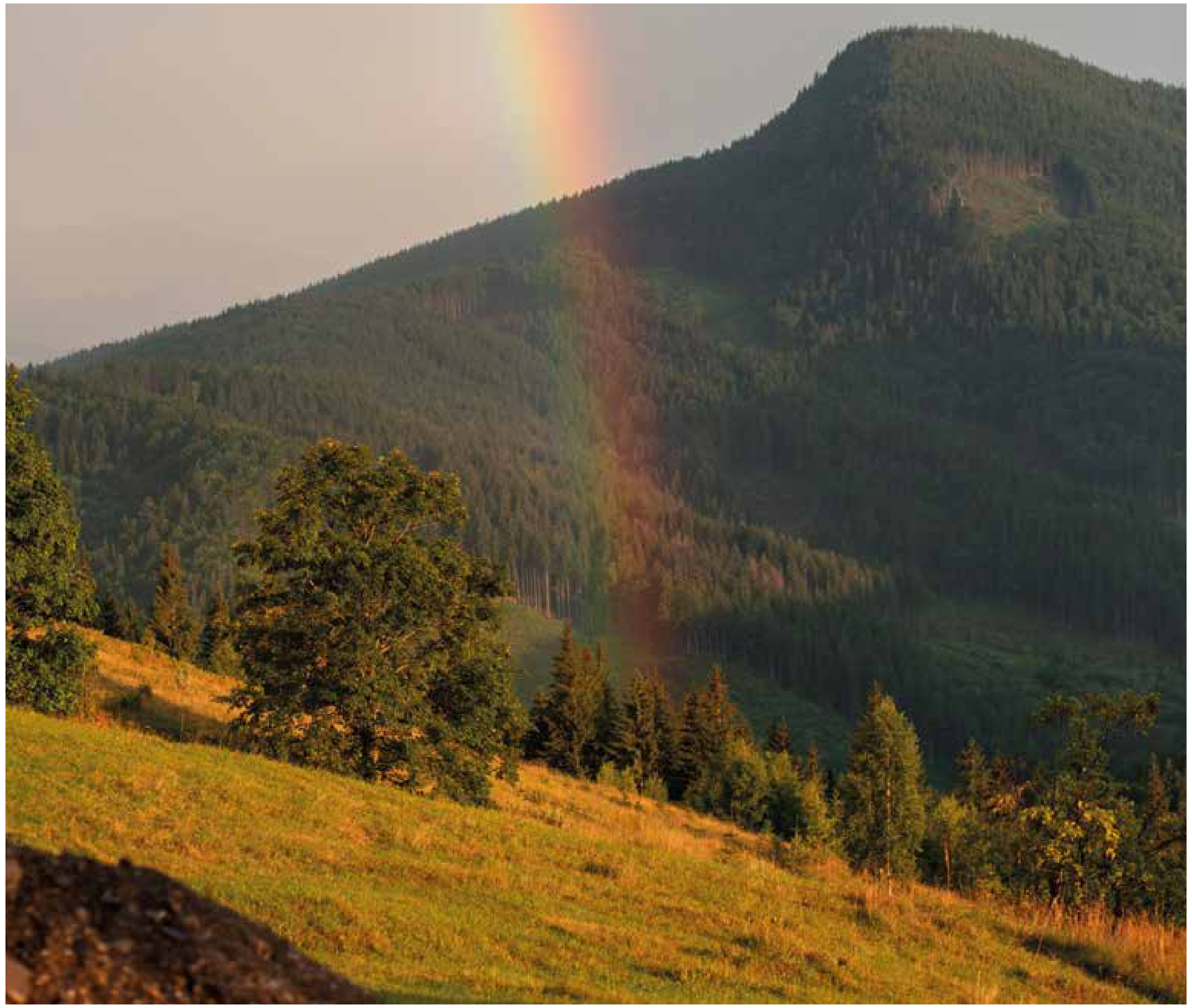
Your service provider should add value

Heart Relocation's 2023 survey of clients revealed some interesting facts about the relationship between companies' mobility teams and relocation management companies. 83% of respondent's indicated that optimum mobility practice was a blend of inhouse capability with outsourced relocation management. Worryingly, 55% of corporate mobility respondents cited lack of performance from their outsourced provider as their biggest perceived risk to a successful mobility outcome. 73% stated that, in their opinion, employee experience is worsened because of working with a relocation management company.

The discussion should focus on value rather than cost. If we all truly value wellbeing, we should look to improve the working lives of the assignees and their families, as well as that of the corporate mobility employees and the relocation companies' employees too.

The good news is it can be done. Heart Relocation has limited its consultants' caseloads to a maximum of 30. We also currently have a net promoter score of 92 amongst assignees surveyed. That means we're not adding to the stress of the assignment. Instead, we're improving the employee experience, which helps improve the return on the companies' investment and add value throughout the programme.





Expat wellbeing is a concern throughout the supply chain

Global Mobility Manager, automotive sector, Germany

If you hear the word wellness, your first association will possibly be a relaxing spa day. It's certainly unlikely to be the world of Global Mobility (GM). However, as someone who deals with expats day in, day out, I can confirm that wellness – or rather wellbeing – is very much a priority when it comes to international assignments.

Happy expats are usually easy-going, grateful and less likely to cause trouble. On the other hand, unhappy expats will cause you the most work and the most sorrow. They will often escalate situations up the hierarchy, which in turn lead to exceptions and make other expats mad. Because if we know one thing about expats, it is that they always talk to one another.

The majority of expat complaints are about service providers. Chief among these is about the tax provider. However, a close second place goes to the relocation service provider, particularly those that cut corners to save money. Under-resourced, overworked employees of the relocation company cannot pay enough attention to the specific situation of the expat. In these cases, the expat will, rightly, complain about their experience to their colleagues in GM and HR. Trying to get a relocation service provider to perform their tasks as agreed is nearly impossible if they structure their costs on cutting corners and overloading their employees. In the end, it's a lose-lose situation.

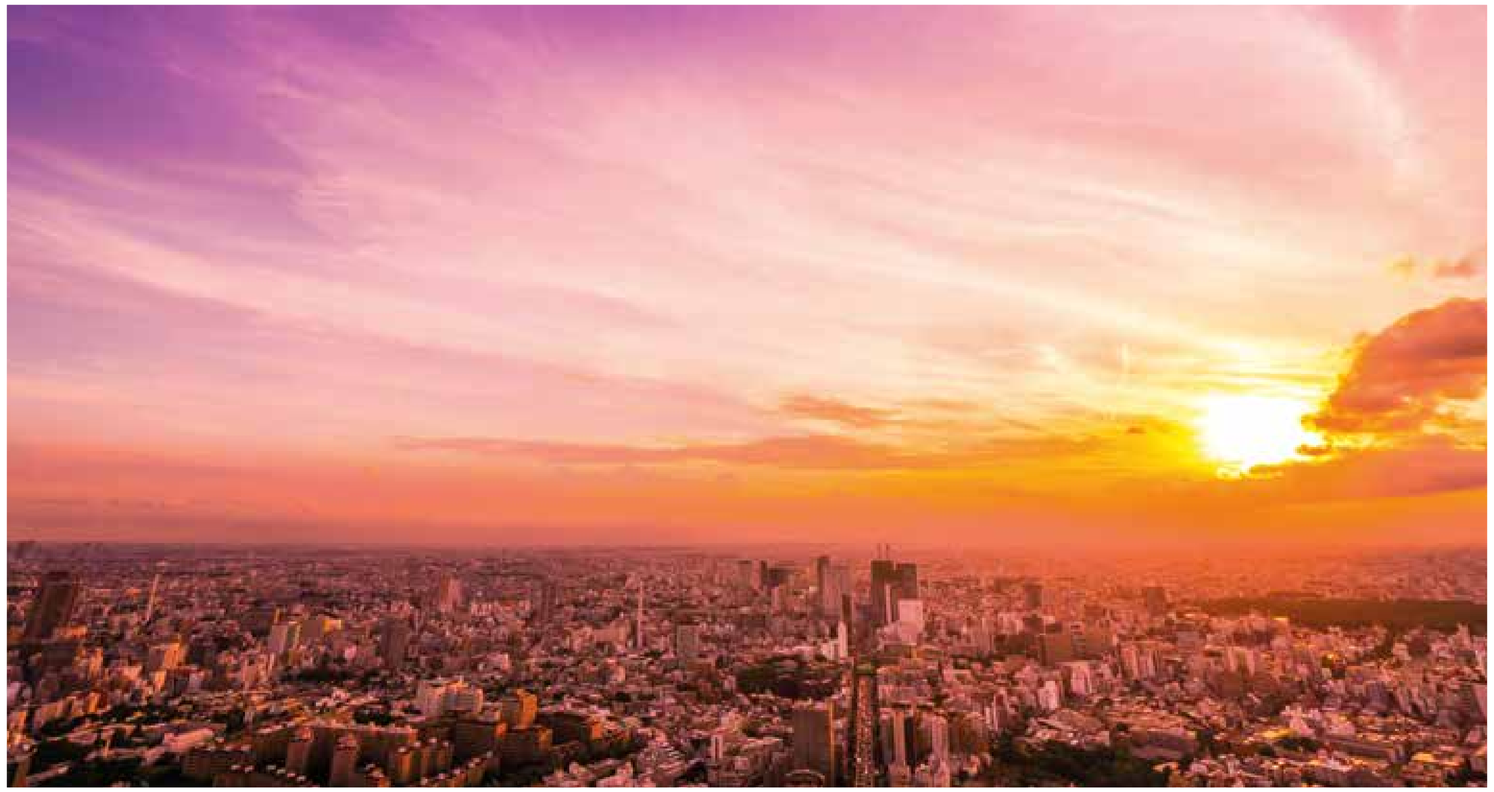
For this reason, hiring at least two relocation companies per host country has proven effective. If one fails, you have a fallback option. Plus, it pays to get to know the owner of the company. What is their attitude towards their employees? Do they have a correct understanding of what a relocation means, whether for a family or just a single expat? This alone may give a key indication who you are dealing with and if they're the right fit for your business and your expat employees.

In the GM department itself, leadership needs to back consultants, while sensitising them to the difficulty expats face. It is all too easy for GM consultants to dismiss expats' complaints about the complicated relocation process. After all, if you've never been through it yourself, it is hard to imagine why someone might dare to complain, given the high remuneration and generous benefits they typically enjoy.

This is why it is important for leadership to encourage empathy and understanding. After all, wellbeing can simply mean having someone listen to your struggles. All too often a kind smile and understanding words are enough to calm people down – because they feel heard. It doesn't cost anything and often improves satisfaction and avoids escalation.

As recently as just two decades ago, emotional and mental wellbeing had little place in large corporations. Fortunately, this has changed, with leadership far more aware of the legitimacy of these factors. Because, let's face it, nobody wants to be angry, unhappy or dissatisfied. So, it's about time to take wellness in GM as seriously as the rest of the organisation. And that can start with little more than a smile and a conversation.

Wellbeing throughout a Relocation - the benefits of providing the employee with the best support.



Global Mobility Leader, technology sector, Netherlands

I still hear one of my former colleagues stating that the four biggest stress point in life are the death of a loved one, divorce or separation, long-term illness, and moving. I couldn't agree more. Moving country is a major stress, not only for the person whose moving for a job, but also for the whole family. Together, they leave behind a routine, familiar people, and the things and places that they know, to go to a place where they must re-learn everything.

The business, on the other hand, typically expects the employee to be ready to work from day one, demanding they integrate as quickly as possible. The Global Mobility (GM) professional, and those supporting them (direct colleagues, relocation support, moving companies, etc.) must make the move as smooth as possible for the employee and their family if they are to meet the company's expectations.

The only way this can be achieved is to keep the wellbeing of the full family at the forefront. This means being sensitive to the needs of the partner throughout the moving process, considering they may believe they are leaving more behind. It also means paying attention to the children who must make new friends and find their way in a country where they may not have even the basic grasp of the language.

This makes the role of the GM professional unique. Not only do they look at the professional side, but they are also very close to the personal life of the individuals. And they must be sensitive to both. It is, therefore, imperative for GM to have the right resources available to them if they're to support the employee in a way that allows them to meet the businesses objectives and expectations. In this way, we support the wellbeing of the individual and meet the needs of the business.

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