

# Policy review coming up?

"We are reviewing our policy(ies)" is a common statement in the Global Mobility field.

Every so often comes the time to shape and reshape your policy(ies).

Whether you are doing it for the first or hundredth time there are fundamental aspects to keep in mind along the way.

It may seem obvious but everyone involved shall be able to answer a pretty simple question: Why are we doing it?

That is to say to clearly identify core topic(s), motivation(s) and the context that brought the review and most importantly the goals to be achieved.

Your approach will be drastically different if the context is driven by HR transformation, practice alignment, cost optimization or something else.

You will also have a particular perspective depending on your industry and whether you are a fast growing business facing an increasing need for expatriates or if on the contrary you are at a more mature stage with a stable population and need to consolidate your practices. Each review carries the temptation to "reinvent the wheel" and hide the core topics with the risk of ending with cosmetics changes and not truly addressing the goals.

Having clearly identified topics and goals helps focus and streamline each review.

There is not a defined pace for policy review, it actually requires constant follow-up, adjustment and development.

The worst that can happen is that you realize one day that it is no longer appropriate to your business, expatriates profile and industry.

On the contrary your review shall not become permanently "under construction" paralyzing decision making and clear rules and standpoints.

Too often we hear statements such as "this has been inherited from the past", "it has always been done like this" or "this is an exception". Every inheritance or exception must be confronted to company's new reality.

While undergoing your review, preserve coherence with existing policies and assessed impact on the overall program, company's business and expatriate need is essential.

Let's imagine that you are working on reducing the cost of your expatriate package. You must be able to determine the exact nature of the savings you are going to generate and its effect on the budget and package attractiveness.

The most telling examples are the spouse support or the intercultural courses for which some would say "this knows to be expensive for a few sessions here and there when most of the content can be found online through forums".

If you exclusively look at the face value it is not cheap and if you add it to all the other things the company pays for at departure it indeed represent an important amount.

If you ask expatriates and their families about this support most of them will tell you that it is greatly appreciated and extremely important for them during the transition period. They interpret it as company's representation of caring for the well being of their expatriates and families.

Now if you take into account that this "expensive support" is a one-timer and if the cost is spread over the entire duration of the assignment you may find it less pricy than you thought.

By reducing or cutting on the intercultural courses you are not, in the eyes of the expatriates and their families, reducing a cost but taking away a support and a visible sign of company's engagement in their transition.

Every company culture is different and what may be the "spouse support" in the Pharma industry will be the "annual return" in the Oil & Gas for which many employees are sent on field on a non-accompanied basis.

Many Global Mobility executives run a more or less comprehensive benchmark within their peers and network not necessarily arising from their industry. A benchmark must only remain an indicator helping during the decision process by bringing new views and practices.

Another and probably as important point for a successful review and later implementation is to share and explain to all stakeholders and internal clients. This includes finance but also business functions and HRBPs.

Many misunderstandings or unfulfilled expectations come from mobility's policy interpretation and core purpose of these programs.

This is not only communicate and notify but accompany the change and (re)explain the motivations, assess the impacts and the expected goals. This requires proper timing and good knowledge of company's business players.

One of Global Mobility's function challenge still is to become a fully integrated and a permanent trusted advisor.

It is about its faculty to have and understand the "big picture" and its direct or indirect impact on company's business.

#### *About the author*

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