

# Think GLOBAL PEOPLE Relocate

## **CROSSING THE POND: WHERE IS THE TRADE GROWTH?**

A walk on the wild side

Admissions mean business

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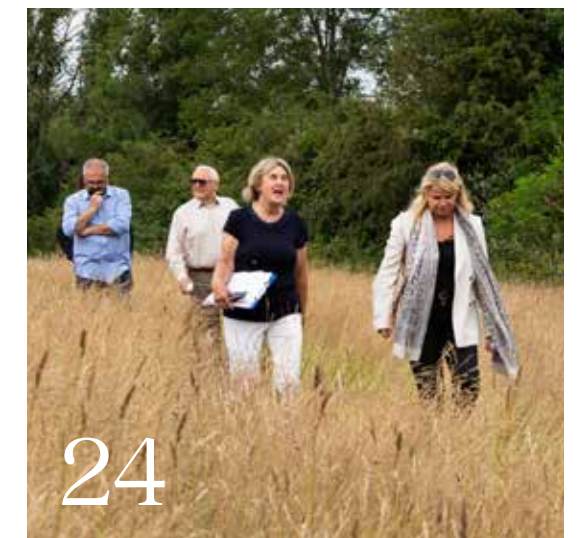
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## THE TEAM

**Managing Editor:** Fiona Murchie  
editorial@relocatemagazine.com

**Design:** Phase One Design

**Contributing Writers:**

Ruth Holmes  
David Sapsted  
Dr Sue Shortland

**Advertising:** Alessandra Gnudi  
Media sales and sponsorship

[ads@relocatemagazine.com](mailto:ads@relocatemagazine.com)

## ADDRESS






Relocate magazine  
Spray Hill  
Hastings Road  
Lamberhurst  
Kent TN3 8JB  
T: +44 (0)1892 891334

## ADVERTISING & EDITORIAL

T: +44 (0)1892 891334

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## EDITOR'S LETTER



"The concept of 'A new kind of thinking' will underpin our new Centre for Global Excellence & Leadership."

As the reality of returning to the office begins for many companies in the UK and Europe, the new world of work is emerging. In many parts of Asia, Australia and New Zealand the picture is very different as lockdowns continue. It has never been more important to refresh, reconnect and collaborate to support growth.

David Sapsted updates on the UK trade deal situation, which helps spotlight the up-and-coming relocation destinations. Reading the signs for development and inward investment in the future will provide a pathway to growth for many in the global mobility sector supporting both inbound or outbound assignments.

In future issues and on the website, we'll cover developments in specific industry sectors, mapping which companies are expanding or opening in a new region and why, particularly after months of supply chain disruptions.

In this edition Ruth Holmes explores what healthy workplaces look like post-Covid, from employee wellbeing to flexible working and diversity and inclusion. She reveals some healthy trends on business transformation and the role of HR.

We have insights from Dr Sue Shortland on the future of international mobility and two contributions from the Global Mobility of Employees research project to keep you up to speed with latest trends.

With the new academic year upon us, we look at what record-breaking exam results mean for the future of work. Don't miss how leading schools have reframed their approach to admissions.

In July, we took a walk through the Kent countryside to renew, rethink and connect. This helped to consolidate the concept of 'A new kind of thinking', which will underpin our new Centre for Global Excellence and Leadership. Watch the video and share your thoughts on the benefits for you, your business and the world. We want to know what you want to be included and why. This really is your opportunity to be proactive in enabling transformation and growth.

Join Professor Vlatka Ariaana Hlupic's Transformational Leadership Programme and don't miss Sarah Rozenhuler's workshop "How to find and follow your purpose for career success", on 7 October.

**Fiona Murchie, Managing Editor**

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Winter 2021/22 next issue.



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with Professor Vlatka Ariaana Hlupic

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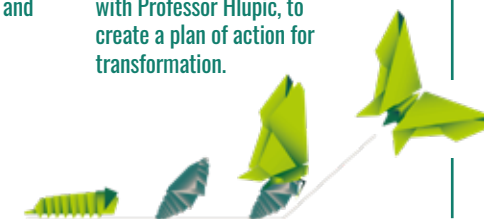
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# CROSSING THE POND: WHERE IS THE TRADE GROWTH?

With a number of free-trade deals under discussion, new horizons are opening up for global expansion and people mobility. **David Sapsted** explores the UK's potential future trading partnerships.

As Brexit became a reality at the start of the year, Prime Minister Boris Johnson sounded bullish over the prospects for future trade agreements. “We are going to open a new chapter in our national story, striking free trade deals around the world, adding to the agreements with 63 countries we’ve already achieved,” he said.

Except that “new chapter” has not proved quite so easy to achieve as Mr Johnson might have hoped. And those already-achieved agreements he mentioned with 63 (now 69) countries were, in fact, nothing more than rollover deals the nations already had with the UK when it was an EU member.

Little else seemed to have been achieved until summer rolled around, when word emerged that a free trade agreement (FTA) with New Zealand was in the offing and that talks were progressing between the UK and the likes of Australia, Canada, Mexico, India and various other Asian nations, with a UK-Singapore “Digital Economy Agreement” seeming close at hand.

But many practical obstacles still exist, with the whole exercise being somewhat undermined by the fact Mr Johnson is now attempting to rewrite the Brexit trade deal he signed with the European Union only last December, because of problems over the Irish Sea border, which is restricting the ability of British companies to send products to Northern Ireland.

“It certainly does raise questions about the trustworthiness of this government,” says L Alan Winters of the UK Trade Policy Observatory at the University of Sussex. “I don’t think it will lead to the complete cessation of negotiations between the UK and other countries, but I think it will make it a little bit more difficult.”

Meanwhile, the chances of landing the biggest prize of all – a free trade agreement with the United States – have receded since Joe Biden moved into the White House. Even the most optimistic do not believe now that such a deal will be struck for at least another two years.

So where do negotiations between the UK and its would-be FTA partners stand? Here are some of the runners and riders.





Secretary of State for International Trade, Liz Truss, in trade talks between the UK and New Zealand.

Credit: Andrew Parsons, No 10 Downing Street

## AUSTRALIA

An FTA agreement with Australia was agreed in principle earlier this year after five years of tentative discussions following the Brexit referendum in June 2016. And, according to a report on the PoliticsHome website in August, Mr Johnson and his Australian counterpart, Scott Morrison, will finalise it when they meet at the COP26 climate change summit in November in Glasgow. Others, however, still believe it will not be a done deal until 2022.

It is expected the agreement will remove tariffs on up to £4.3 billion worth of UK exports, including an immediate elimination on tariffs and whisky. In return, there will be an immediate lifting of duties in Australian exports to the UK, including wine.

The controversial aspect of the deal is likely to be the lifting of all tariffs on Australian beef and sheep meat exports within ten years. Fears in the UK over animal welfare standards and the effects of cheap meat imports on the domestic agricultural industry are recurring themes in several other trade discussions. According to a forecast from the UK Trade Policy Observatory, UK sales will grow by just 0.35 per cent from the agreement, compared to a 2.2 per cent jump for Australia's businesses.

The Department for International Trade in London said "A Free-Trade Agreement with Australia is also a gateway into the fast-growing Indo-Pacific region and will boost our bid to join CPTPP (Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership), one of the largest free trade areas in the world, covering £9 trillion of GDP and 11 Pacific nations from Australia to Mexico."

## INDIA

Formal negotiations on an FTA between India and the UK are likely to start in the coming months following the unveiling in May of a 10-year roadmap that included an

enhanced trade partnership (ETP) agreement to reduce market barriers and a commitment to double bilateral trade by 2030.

The Institute of Export & International Trade in London said "A trade deal with India is likely to come as a shot in the arm for the Boris Johnson government as it tries to showcase gains from Brexit. For India, this is an opportunity to showcase itself as an alternative trading partner to China in a post-covid world. It also helps India demonstrate its commitment towards freer trade without much risk of incurring large trade deficits."

The total trade between India and the UK is currently around \$33 billion per year, including \$15 billion worth of trade in goods and the rest in services. The UK is amongst India's top ten exporting destinations while India is UK's sixth-largest non-EU trading partner.

Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, who is also in talks with Australia over an FTA, said recently, "The UK is something which is progressing well. We are working through line ministries to identify areas where we can quickly close the deal in the terms of early harvest, if possible."

In May, the UK launched a 14-week consultation on a future trade deal with India, seeking the views of the public and businesses.

## NEW ZEALAND

All but a few lingering details of a trade deal with New Zealand were resolved after a month-long round of negotiations – the sixth between the two nations – at the end of July. It paved the way for what the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) in London described as an agreement to "give British shoppers and exporters reason to cheer" with both countries ditching tariffs as high as ten per cent on a range of high-quality products.

Those products ranged from chocolate and gin to buses and clothes as far as British exporters were concerned, and from wine and food to lamb and drinks on the New Zealand side.

"Under a new deal, a multitude of UK goods would no longer be subject to import tariffs when entering the New Zealand market, and exporters would gain an advantage over international rivals in the New Zealand import market, which is expected to grow by 30 per cent by 2030," said the DTI.

UK Secretary of State for International Trade Liz Truss described the UK and New Zealand as "big fans of each other's high-quality products", adding, "New Zealand and the UK are natural partners united by modern values. An agreement would reflect those ideals and is a win-win for both countries."

Total trade in goods and services between the UK and New Zealand was worth £2.3 billion last year and is set to increase with a trade deal that pushes back barriers on green and digital trade.

British farmers, however, have the same reservations over an FTA with New Zealand as they do with the potential deal with Australia. They argue that such FTAs could see UK domestic produce undercut by cheap imports, leading to a lowering of environmental and animal welfare standards.

## US

An FTA with America is one deal that the UK will certainly not negotiate – let alone clinch – any time soon. Even the most optimistic accept it is at least two years away. Or, as Secretary of State Antony Blinken put it recently any agreement between the US and UK would take "some time".

Unlike his predecessor in the White House, Joe Biden is not prioritising bilateral trade negotiations and is focusing instead on domestic economic recovery in the wake of the pandemic.

Even when trade talks do eventually begin, they will not be easy. American firms' access to Britain's nationalised health services will be a real bone of contention, as will agriculture. The US National Pork Producers' Council is keen to boost exports to the UK, but there is mounting opposition from Britain's farmers and animal welfare groups. American pork production costs are about half what they are in Britain because of the intensive rearing practices in the States, which would be unacceptable in the UK.

But at least one obstacle was removed over the summer: the simmering, 17-year dispute over European subsidies to its airline makers, which led to former President Donald Trump imposing 25 per cent tariffs on European Union exports worth £5.6 billion a year, including British exports of £550 million. In response, Europe imposed tariffs on £3 billion of US goods because of subsidies going to Boeing.

In an olive branch to the new Biden administration, the UK suspended the tariffs last January and now, with the creation of a working group to resolve the plane-making row, Washington has abolished tariffs on imports of Scotch whisky, construction vehicles, cheese and cashmere for five years.

Liz Truss described the agreement as drawing a line "under an incredibly damaging issue and means we can focus on taking our trading relationship with the US to the next level".

## ASIA-PACIFIC

The UK has been desperately wooing the high-growth economies of Asia and the Indo-Pacific region since before Brexit became a reality. And with reason. As Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told the Daily Telegraph in August, "The Indo-Pacific is the growth market of the future." Hence, the UK's application this year to become a member of the CPTPP trade bloc, whose current members are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam.

Joining the bloc could be easier with the sealing of deals with Australia and New Zealand. And if, as suspected, the US decides to rejoin the bloc (Donald Trump pulled out of its predecessor early in his presidency) it could present the UK the opportunity to reach a back-door FTA with America.

The UK also became a dialogue partner in August with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which will allow Britain to attend annual meetings of foreign and economic ministers, giving the country an opportunity to foster greater cooperation over trade, investment, climate change, the environment, science and technology, and education.

Mr Raab also made it plain that he hoped there would be a political gain to "positively influence China" by being involved with ASEAN's ten member states Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

According to the ASEAN Briefing website, the UK's pre-existing trade deals were likely to expedite accession to the CPTPP, although the size of its economy – second only to Japan among the bloc's existing members – could cause jitters among smaller nations.

And, yet again, the UK could face resistance at home over lower cost and lower quality meat imports. "Canada and Japan, among other countries, faced similar hurdles in dealing with politically sensitive constituencies when negotiating the CPTPP. Ultimately, they came to an agreement to enter the deal by securing protections for their local dairy and rice farming industries, respectively," observed ASEAN Briefing, which suggested negotiations to join the CPTPP were unlikely to be resolved until 2022 at the earliest.

## DAILY NEWS

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**"New Zealand and the UK are natural partners united by modern values. An agreement would reflect those ideals and is a win-win for both countries."**

**LIZ TRUSS, UK SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE**





# What do healthy workplaces look like post-Covid?

Global people functions truly stepped up this past year. But as hybrid working becomes the norm, more needs to be achieved, especially around wellbeing and employee engagement writes **Ruth Holmes**.

**S**evere skills shortages are impacting all parts of the global economy as life returns to some kind of 'normal'. A Kelly OCG Global Workforce Agility survey finds 58% of firms surveyed in the UK say their ability to recruit talent has worsened over the last 12 months, compared to 41% globally.

"As restrictions have lifted over the past few months, we have seen employer confidence shoot upwards, and the confidence in hiring has reached a new record high," commented Kate Shoesmith, Deputy CEO of the REC, in reaction to the UK's buoyant employment data this summer. However, the REC also signalled a warning to employers.

"A number of factors, including the 'pandemic', are causing serious staff shortages now. Businesses will have to think hard about their offer if they want to attract staff, not just in terms of pay but also benefits, working conditions, and work-life balance. We have the opportunity to shift perceptions around flexible working once and for all and make it a positive option."

## PANDEMIC HEIGHTENS CHALLENGES

The pivot to widespread remote-working (RW) and international remote-working (IRW) – and now hybrid working models – prompted by government health advice during the first phases of the pandemic to "Stay at Home" was met with widespread approval from UK business representative bodies like the CBI, CIPD and the Institute of Directors after research found productivity increased.

The most recent global research into productivity, published in early September by talent advisory and solutions company, Adecco, and seeking the opinions of 15,000 office-based employees, found 82% feel more or as productive than before with a hybrid working model.

Yet the research is more mixed for employee wellbeing. Some data suggested people were happier working from



**“WORK IS LIKE A RUBBER BALL. IF YOU DROP IT... IT WILL BOUNCE BACK. FAMILY, HEALTH, FRIENDS, INTEGRITY ARE MADE OF GLASS... IF YOU DROP ONE OF THESE, IT WILL BE IRREVOCABLY SCUFFED, NICKED, PERHAPS EVEN SHATTERED.”**

GARY KELLER, ENTREPRENEUR/AUTHOR,  
THE RES FORUM REPORT

home, while others highlighted the negative impact on wellbeing from balancing work and family demands.

A study released in September 2021 by Hitachi Capital Business Finance surveyed a nationally representative sample of senior decision-makers in small businesses. Eight in ten with children still at home were feeling positive about a return to the office. This compared to 53% of those whose children have left home and 69% of single adults without children.

The key reasons were looking forward to a proper work routine (47%), with around a third also citing missing “looking smart/professional” and “being able to see/socialise with colleagues again”. These aspects highlight the valuable role work can have on people’s self-identity and wellbeing.

From an inclusion perspective, the CIPD’s Good Work survey for 2020 found that people with pre-existing conditions reported their health worsened over the pandemic.

For the professional body for HR and people development, the key to successful hybrid working models is ensuring protected characteristics continue to be safeguarded as ways of working evolve, as well as ensuring that young people affected by the pandemic have access to quality jobs and good work.

#### MANAGING PEOPLE RISKS

The pandemic has clearly tightened the focus on people issues in a way like never before. Global HR consultants Mercer Marsh Benefits survey of over 1,300 HR professionals and risk managers around the world found people-related issues featuring in the top five risks for both global and UK businesses alongside challenges like cyber security.

Talent attraction and retention is number two among global respondents and number three in the UK, where

the top concern is managing employee’s deteriorating mental health over the pandemic. Workforce exhaustion also weighs heavily on the UK and global top ten, at positions 6 and 4 respectively.

Interestingly, a study by global healthcare benefits provider Aetna International finds that 87% of expats surveyed believed family healthcare-related employment benefits to be important when considering a job opportunity abroad and more of a priority than the financial package and career prospect of the role.

Dr Hemal Desai, Global Medical Director at Aetna International says, “In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, people understandably want to ensure their families are looked after and are looking to their employers for support.

“We’re yet to understand the mid- to long-term implications of the pandemic on people’s physical, and mental health with the raised anxiety levels globally, both directly and indirectly. No doubt the reported potential delays to treatment owed to hospital and health care system backlogs will only add to people’s stress.”

Damian Lenihan, Executive Director of Europe at Aetna International, suggests, “The pandemic has likely encouraged people to think more about the quality of healthcare they can access. With the value placed on quality healthcare by expats, international employers may need to consider if their healthcare policies meet expectation levels and stay competitive to attract the best talent.”

#### A NEW KIND OF LEADERSHIP?

Amid talk of a national mental health crisis and employees based at home cautiously returning to the office, getting employee engagement right is going to be critical to the post-covid economic recovery and workplace renewal.

A Mercer Marsh report with the Rewards and Benefits Association (REBA) finds that HR teams are well aware of the challenges. The top four areas that HR teams will increase their focus in are:

- 85% employee wellbeing
- 84% flexible working (time/location)
- 68% diversity and inclusion for minority ethnic and racial backgrounds
- 65% diversity and inclusion by gender.

With HR this past 18 months more than proving its fundamental role in delivering sustainable business and good work over the pandemic, consultancies and professional bodies are supporting HR teams to consolidate the leadership role of the people function and the standing it has worked incredibly hard to develop this past 18 months.

Debi O’Donovan, Director of Reward & Employee Benefits Association commented, “In this time of turbulent change it is crucial that HR not only work more closely with their CEOs and CFOs to drive through business transformation, but within HR they need to remove silos between disciplines and encourage flexibility.

“For example, Reward has to work with the CSR team, Talent with Pensions, Development with the D&I team, and so on. The interplay today is crucial in achieving true workforce transformation and engagement.”



#### FLEXIBILITY AND PERSONALISATION

In the global people and mobility sphere, the RES Forum’s 2020/21 research report, International Remote Working: The emergence of a new paradigm, ties all these themes of flexibility, wellbeing, inclusion, engagement and productivity together in a research-based practical framework for action.

It cites three trends in international mobility that have come to the fore in the pandemic that are likely to persist:

1. Some company-led global assignments will convert to international remote working
2. Talent-led assignments with developmental focus are likely to revert to physical moves
3. Employee-led assignments for personal reasons are likely to increase.

This requires global people professionals to continue to adapt and flex to the demands of the current workplace renewal. “Individuals are on a journey that needs to factor in their work obligations, as well as their personal situation,” says the RES Forum’s report.

“This is expressed well by Gary Keller, ‘Work is like a rubber ball. If you drop it... it will bounce back. Family, health, friends, integrity are made of glass... if you drop one of these, it will be irrevocably scuffed, nicked, perhaps even shattered.’

“It is within this force-field that individuals must find their way. Teams (and team leaders) may include their friends and may have to develop an understanding that part of the rubber ball of work is to be highly flexible when individuals want to undertake temporary IRW.”

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# The future of international mobility

Although the Covid-19 pandemic has slowed down international mobility in a physical sense, organisations still require global moves to fill skills gaps and develop their future leaders. While the nature of international mobility is changing, its future looks bright. **Dr Sue Shortland** comments on recent changes that are shaping the future of international mobility.

Organisations are keenly focused on talent acquisition and development. They see international experience as an integral part of these aspects of employee resourcing. To improve their competitiveness, organisations are examining a wide range of global deployment options – both to ensure skills availability now and for the future. Long-term talent objectives remain a key driver of international relocation.

## THE TALENT AND GLOBAL MOBILITY LINK

Links between the talent function and global mobility professionals are continuing to strengthen and this will have positive consequences for individuals' international careers. The talent function is serving the business through the identification of critical competencies while global mobility plays its part in ensuring their deployment internationally is compliant and provides an excellent employee experience. But the talent/global mobility link is deeper than this – global mobility can guide and support the talent function both in selection of international personnel and understanding their motivations and

hesitations concerning their move abroad.

As the talent and global mobility functions work increasingly closely together so this helps to improve and smooth the relocation experience for those pursuing international careers. This indicates that those undertaking international assignments in the future will benefit from a more positive relocation experience.

## AGILITY AND FLEXIBILITY

Organisations are increasingly pursuing an agile culture that enables global mobility to operate both efficiently and effectively, satisfying both the needs of the business and of employees and their families.

It is notable that policy supporting global mobility is changing to provide a more supportive function. Rather than policy being restrictive in categorising what is allowed and what is not in terms of financial and practical support, the emphasis is moving towards a more guidelines style of approach that facilitates fairness and equity and supports individual needs.

Policies and guidelines are also increasingly reflective of the purpose of the assignment rather than being linked to employee grade. This is also helpful to those



undertaking international mobility as the purpose of their assignment is related more closely to the financial and practical support on offer.

Flexibility in determining and providing employee support has become integral to successful moves. Again this is a positive development for those following an international career as support becomes increasingly tailored to individual and family needs while remaining within an equitable framework that supports business objectives.

### IDENTIFYING TALENT

The requirements of the business of course always come first – and subsidiaries need the best talent possible. This can flow from an open recruitment and selection process but also from a requested employee move approach. Here talent and global mobility professionals play a critical role in understanding employee and family motivations to move. They should not be afraid to say “no” when a move is not in the best interests of the business or the individual concerned.

Mobility is a great connector and a wide range of stakeholders are involved in the process. As such, relationship building is crucial to successful mobility support. This is advantageous to individuals on the move as the efforts being put into building relationships – for example with suppliers external to the business and different functions within it such as reward and talent – have a positive spin off for those undertaking relocation. Increasingly there is recognition of the value of communication in building and strengthening stakeholder relationships. Individuals and their families who are relocating will find this beneficial.

### TYPES OF INTERNATIONAL MOVES

A further area that is changing is the nature of the international move. Organisations are increasingly looking towards local hires to fulfil international roles (potentially using both local and foreign nationals in-country) given the pandemic and its effect on cross-border moves. There is also increased emphasis on working from home and/or working from anywhere. Besides the obvious issues of tax and immigration compliance, these issues influence remuneration packages given as well.

Employee requested moves are also being given

increased prominence – but here again, there has to be a focus on feasibility in terms of compliance and also the effects on individuals and families of taking up such work arrangements. Online or virtual international assignments have increased significantly during the pandemic and may continue in popularity, although this will depend on the nature of the job role and whether physical presence is required on site.

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Minorities have traditionally been under-represented in the international assignee profile and this is an untapped source of talent that organisations simply cannot ignore. The pandemic resulted in more international roles being fulfilled by working from home, online. This widened out the future for international working to a wider range of people who previously found themselves unable to undertake (or excluded from) international opportunities.

As a result, there has been increased organisational emphasis on diversity and inclusion within the international mobility arena. Going forward this is likely to be well supported through more transparent and flexible approaches to policy as well as deployment options. It is notable too that organisations are looking beyond traditional diversity issues. So while gender and LGBTQ diversity continues to receive considerable attention, it is notable now that organisations are widening their horizons and considering race, religion and disability within their assignee profiles as well.

### TECHNOLOGY

A further issue that is assisting with the deployment of personnel internationally is the development of technology to support flexible approaches to policy content delivery. Technology is enabling a guideline approach to policy content to be delivered to support individual needs within budgets in a transparent manner. It also enables the global mobility function to leverage data to demonstrate cost/benefit analyses to the business.

As technological solutions continue to be developed, so the ease and convenience of pre-move tasks will be supported. Home and school finding, the relocation of personal effects, temporary living and a whole host of other factors that have to be considered by those moving internationally can be managed (at least in the

first instance) from the comfort of the armchair rather than necessitating physical moves to visit in person. Of course, the benefits of seeing the destination, its culture and its facilities first hand cannot be negated, preliminary screening using technology saves time, cost and effort for businesses and their relocating employees and families. Thus, technological developments will help improve and smooth the international mobility process going forward.

### COMMUNICATIONS

Organisations' efforts to improve communications between stakeholders have been given a boost during the pandemic. We have all become more used to working online with Zoom and Teams meetings. Paradoxically, being unable to meet face-to-face has resulted in increased communications linking people who before might not have been able to attend meetings and participate in decision-making. Going forward, an emphasis on networking and sharing information should increase.

We have become more accustomed to information availability and this is to be welcomed. Of course, information overload brings with it the dangers of fatigue and so care needs to be taken to ensure communications are appropriate and worthwhile. Nonetheless, international careers in the future can be supported by the use of relevant communications, hopefully ending the ‘out of sight, out of mind’ syndrome associated with global mobility in the past.

### REPATRIATION

No commentary on the future of international mobility would be complete without mention of returning home. This must be taken more seriously in global talent deployment. Repatriation has received considerable attention during the pandemic in relation to health, welfare and wellbeing. For example, emphasis has been placed on the need to manage personnel trapped abroad by border closures and visa restrictions on mobility. This has highlighted the need to be sure of where people are and to have plans in place for evacuation – aspects that have definitely been taken on board by global mobility professionals.

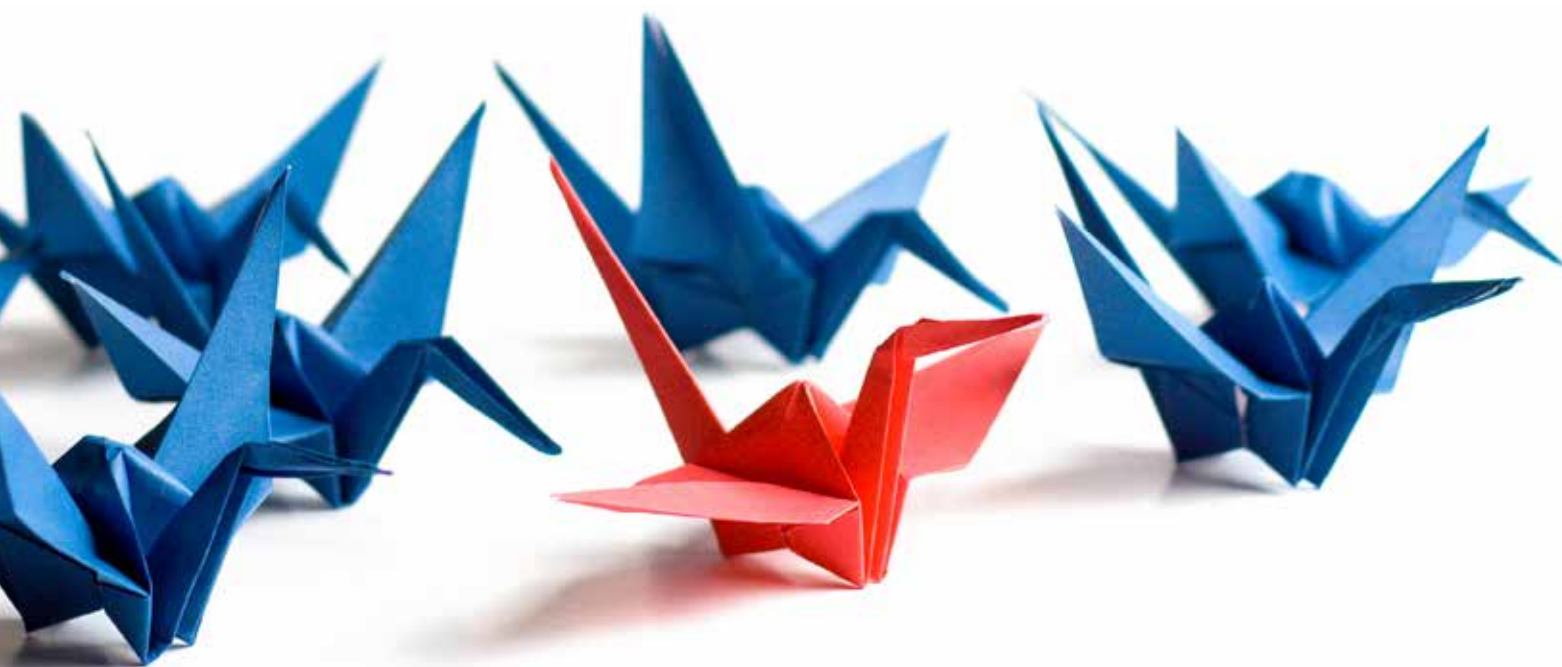
Going forward though repatriation must be more proactively managed. We need to look beyond emergency situations to active career planning and relocation preparation and support for those returning at the end of their assignments. Successful repatriation results in talent retention and positive business benefits. It also results in employee and family wellbeing.

The future of international mobility must ensure a strong focus on a positive repatriation experience. Repatriation is an integral part of the expatriation cycle. Complete it successfully and it supports future global mobility and successful outcomes for businesses and individuals alike. ●

### DOWNLOAD OUR FACTSHEETS

Download the Policy, and Diversity & Inclusion Factsheets from our Global Mobility Toolkit at [relocatemagazine.com/gmt-global-mobility-toolkit-fact-sheet-resource-hub](https://relocatemagazine.com/gmt-global-mobility-toolkit-fact-sheet-resource-hub)

“...while gender and LGBTQ diversity continues to receive considerable attention, it is notable now that organisations are widening their horizons and considering race, religion and disability within their assignee profiles as well.”







# Location threats during & after Covid

Identifying and managing challenges in hostile environments  
by **Monique Raupp** and **Professor Michael Dickmann**.

Covid-19 has made health-related threats abundantly clear. This is a challenge to the health and wellbeing of global workers that affects everyone. However, the hostile environment that was created by this international pandemic and other physical threats such as crime and violence camouflage other types of threats that might be easily overlooked. These include psychological threats, which can impact individuals' mental health, and institutional threats such as uncertainty, volatility and gender/sexual orientation and other biases in regulations that impede us to carry on with "business as normal". This article characterises different hostile host environments and explores what organisations and individuals can do to successfully navigate or even master associated challenges of a post-pandemic time.

## **UNDERSTANDING HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS: BEYOND CRIME AND VIOLENCE**

Going on an international assignment and managing expatriates undertaking these international work experiences is already a complex process in itself. When adding the additional concern of dealing with hostile locations, this can become an even more challenging situation. Assignments to "hardship locations" are already quite familiar

to multinationals where threats such as conventional crime and terrorism require an appropriate strategy. However, there are other overlooked types of threats that a host environment might pose to expatriates and their employer organisations that also require a thorough assessment by HR and global mobility departments.

Through research undertaken by an EU-funded global mobility (GLOMO) project it has become clear that individuals and organisations view hostile environments differently and attribute varying importance on preparation, management and coping strategies to deal with the threats effectively. Individuals view their host environment in a broader sense and are highly affected by more subtle aspects of difficult environments such as the unwelcoming mindset of the local population. The gap between individual and organisational perceptions requires a nuanced understanding of what these adverse locations really consist of. The actual challenge lies in trying to assess the different facets of hostile or unwelcoming environments and appropriately preparing for the threats they might pose.

The research clearly identifies that organisations and individuals need to incorporate threats to the health and wellbeing of assignees that go beyond physical ones such as crime or terrorism. Psychological threats such as feeling unwelcomed by the host country society or facing different



hostile attitudes can highly impact an expatriate's sense of belonging or negatively affect their mental health. At the same time, institutional threats such as unwelcoming country-level regulations (such as those resulting from Brexit and its "hostile environment policy") might impact expatriates even before they embark on an assignment. This includes whether or not going to a host country that they see as institutionally hostile to them.

What shapes the experiences of international assignees and their families? This is a question that needs to be asked when trying to truly assess the quality of a host environment to expatriates. Beyond accounting for statistics and national-level issues such as crime rates and propensity for natural disasters, it is also important to learn from expatriates' experiences in possibly adverse host countries.

#### WHAT CAN BE DONE TO MANAGE THESE HOST COUNTRIES' THREATS?

Companies have a long history of preparing individuals for physical threats through seminars or through response to terrorism or crime training. In addition, organisations provide security measures in the form of gated, secure housing, body-guards or other security

personnel, geo-tracking and emergency response planning and/or passive security initiatives such as bullet-proof cars.

By combining both objective data and individual perceptions of it, organisations can go beyond a simple focus on physical threats and include psychological and institutional elements in their HR and global mobility policies. Having a more holistic approach to account for the specific issues expatriates tend to face in more hostile locations will allow organisations to improve the management of their assignees and allow for a better expatriation experience both from the employee and the company's side. Based on the GLOMO research, offering local mentors, coaching and counselling sessions are some example options for dealing with some of the non-physical threats. In addition, a strategic training of host teams or assignees themselves can improve mutual understanding and avoid some cultural misconceptions.

#### INTERNATIONAL WORKING WITHOUT MOVING ABROAD

If we look at current discussions on "the future of global mobility" after Covid-19 from the perspective of expatriation to hostile environments, this might bring additional opportunities for dealing with threats that an assignment might pose to expatriates. Some threats could be eased, or even avoided altogether, if assignees do not need to physically relocate to their assignment's host countries – such as avoiding the so feared physical threats.

At the same time, the decreased and remote contact with their host countries, its culture and networks, might also bring additional challenges for expatriates and their employer organisations. Some of the key problems of virtual international working lie in knowledge transfer and the needed trust, understanding and cultural cohesion that organisations rely on to operate successfully. Another of the articles in this series on GLOMO research will cover these issues in more depth. The balance between remote, hybrid, in situ and flexible working arrangements will shape the future of global mobility and the responses that are needed to address issues such as those arising from hostile host environments. •

#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**MONIQUE RAUPP** is a Research Fellow at Cranfield University (UK), part of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network and researcher of the EU Horizon 2020 "Global Mobility of Employees" project. She is currently working towards a PhD in Leadership and Management at Cranfield School of Management on the topic of Expatriation to Hostile Environments. Beyond her academic work, Monique is actively involved in industry discussions about global mobility, multicultural work environments, and international careers – especially pertaining to Europe and Latin America.

**MICHAEL DICKMANN** – see next article for bio.

Identifying emerging issues of expatriate work, while assessing implications for policies at national and international levels, is the objective of GLOMO ([www.glomo.eu](http://www.glomo.eu)), a pioneer project that has received funding from the European Union's H2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 765355. Researchers from a variety of countries have generated knowledge about the success factors, effects, and implications of the mobility phenomenon. To read more articles generated from the research see [relocateglobal.com](http://relocateglobal.com)



# EMPLOYEE WELLBEING DURING THE PANDEMIC: CREATING THE RIGHT SUPPORT STRUCTURES

The pandemic has impacted the mental health and wellbeing of expats around the world. Experiences of forced isolations in an unfamiliar country and/or struggles to live and travel overseas have been extremely challenging for global workers. What role can the employer play in maintaining work engagement and an overall sense of wellbeing among employees? Tania Biswas, Professor Michael Dickmann and Liisa Mäkelä report.





The coronavirus pandemic has had a major psychological impact on public health and has raised serious concerns for those infected or at risk. Isolation and reduced social contact to contain the spread of the virus have restricted people to seek out support from their family and their social networks. This has, in turn, elevated the risk for increased anxiety and depression symptoms among individuals. Businesses have experienced disruptions in operations and tremendous financial losses have been reported. Specifically for the employment context, workers are at risk of developing high stress and anxiety due to job insecurity, reduced autonomy, unfavourable work-from-home conditions and concerns for future employment. Both individuals and organisations are affected. Excessive occupational stress, if not managed, can lead to employee burnout, an occupational phenomenon recognised by the World Health Organization. This article highlights how stress associated with Covid-related changes for global work affects wellbeing in employees, and provides recommendations for organisations and individuals to face these adversities more successfully.

### WELLBEING AND WORK STRESS DURING THE PANDEMIC

The World Happiness Report argues that the unemployed are significantly less happy than those who are in work. Staff experiencing hardship associated with the pandemic and facing extreme unhappiness at their job are also more likely to resign from their positions or are at risk of losing their jobs. This will further reduce the sense of wellbeing associated with job loss, making it a vicious cycle of labour economics.

The above challenges have pushed organisations and scholars to explore new ways to achieve expected outputs from traditional forms of global work. This prompted the use of global virtual teams and hybrid international assignment approaches. The working lives of employees during the current pandemic crisis have been uniquely characterised by working in isolation, dealing with

additional job-specific demands due to working online, lacking guidance/advice from peers and challenges to maintain regular communication with work teams. This might be especially pertinent for expatriates as they often have less extensive local networks. These specialised working conditions have created immense reliance on information and communication technologies, which often triggers “technostress”. Technostress leads to negative psychological responses such as feelings of anxiety, fatigue, and scepticism. Concerns can also be raised that the use of these modern tools have allowed employees to meet their job expectations at the cost of putting in longer working hours and blurring work-personal life boundaries for many. Expatriates are more likely to work across many time zones, which leads to a higher chance of work-life conflict and spill-over effects.

### WELLBEING OF GLOBAL WORKERS

Expatriates work in high-pressure environments and they experience more organisational demands (eg new job roles, longer working hours, enhanced stress, strong performance pressure). In addition, due to living in a host country, they also face more expatriation-specific environmental demands (eg living environment, security risks, language barriers) and enhanced private pressures (e.g., work-life conflict, work-life balance). It can be assumed that expatriates might need to tackle these multiple demands created by the complex and stressful conditions in the expatriation process simultaneously. Expatriates face profound changes in both work and family situations, which is especially true if the expatriate has a partner and/or has children. Consequently, there is an increased risk of conflict in an expatriate’s work to non-work life spheres. These inherent hardships, coupled with the challenges arising from the pandemic, might impact the wellbeing of expatriates and their families even more.

Research done by GLOMO – an EU-funded global mobility project – during the pre-pandemic times shows that expatriates’ job performance and willingness to continue working in the international capacity is affected by organisational and environmental demands, especially when the private pressures are high.

But there are some takeaways to help improve the future of work. GLOMO researchers have found that organisational support is even more crucial for maintaining work engagement among expatriates during these crisis conditions as compared to normal times. Researchers have also identified that expatriates’ burnout levels dropped during the pandemic, which might be indicative of some positive effects of remote work when handled strategically.

So, what can be done to successfully tackle these challenges?

### HOW SHOULD ORGANISATIONS RESPOND TO THE CRISIS TO HELP MAINTAIN EMPLOYEE WELLBEING?

While adjusting to the changes in work styles and increased workload, many employees need to establish better strategies to make the most out of their work from home opportunity. Even though the physical safety and comfort of working from their home can be beneficial for some, the reality of it comes with challenges. These include additional responsibilities for working parents who have young children at home to care for. It can be

“Numerous researchers suggest that the failure to implement workplace wellbeing provisions can affect the psychological needs of employees thus creating concerns for their wellbeing.”

difficult for these parents to find a balance between their job responsibilities and childcare without affecting their emotional and mental wellness. These situations call for strategic and responsible planning from both individuals and employers.

Numerous researchers suggest that the failure to implement workplace wellbeing provisions can affect the psychological needs of employees, thus creating concerns for their wellbeing. Employers around the globe are putting in efforts to tackle their employees’ wellbeing risks. There is an increasing emphasis on staying connected with co-workers beyond the requirements of work through arrangements like virtual pizza lunches, coffee breaks, extra time during regular meetings for non-work-related chats etc. These activities designed to improve the climate and to further team cohesion and understanding are often proven to be beneficial for individuals, teams and work effectiveness.

All interventions addressing employee wellbeing are commendable, but more structural solutions with long-term plans need to be in place. It is imperative that employers around the world recognise the risks associated with work-related stress and take on some responsibility for their employees’ mental health and wellbeing. Responsible employers are expected to develop and adopt employee-friendly work practices that might aim to limit any unnecessary stress at the workplace. These developments could promote policies encouraging employees to stay connected and feel bonded with their peers while allowing flexibility at the same time.

The challenge for global organisations is even stronger as some of the extra demands on expatriates and their complex situations have to be factored in. The GLOMO research has shown that for global roles the additional workload demands and the spill-over effects between work and home need to be mitigated by relaxing workload expectations, setting realistic goals and encouraging better work-life balance. In a post-pandemic era, organisations have to work towards rebuilding the social contracts with their employees through creating a new culture of care, trust and transformative, people-centered leadership. Mutual trust across country borders will encourage employees to share their mental-health challenges and can be used to prepare an effective crisis management plan to ensure the wellbeing of employees wherever they work in the organisation. These strategies will have strong implications for the future of businesses, global staff and, by extension, their families. •

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**TANIA BISWAS** is a Project Researcher at the University of Vaasa (Finland), part of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network, and a researcher in the EU Horizon 2020 “Global Mobility of Employees” project. She is currently working towards a PhD in Human Resource Management on the topic of Wellbeing in International Employees.



**MICHAEL DICKMANN** is Professor of International Human Resource Management (HRM) at Cranfield University and the Director of the Cranfield Masters in Management. His research focuses on human resource strategies, structures and processes of multinational organisations, cross-cultural management, international mobility and global careers. Michael has published in a broad range of academic journals and he is the lead author of several books on international HRM and global careers. Since 2017, he is the Senior Editor-in-Chief of The International Journal of Human Resource Management.



**LIISA MÄKELÄ** is Professor of Human Resource Management at the University of Vaasa, School of Management, Finland. Her research interests are a combination of management and work psychology and she has Doctoral degrees on both disciplines. Liisa’s research focuses on the international workforce and occupational wellbeing, career paths and work-life interface among international professionals. Leadership and gender issues are also part of her areas of interest. Her publications have covered themes such as work-family conflict and enrichment of international business travellers, expatriates and global careerists, and occupational wellbeing among international business travellers. Her publications have also shed a light on dual career and gender issues related to the international work context.

GLOMO ([www.glomo.eu](http://www.glomo.eu)) is a pioneer project that has received funding from the European Union’s H2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 765355. Researchers from a variety of countries have generated knowledge about the success factors, effects, and implications of the mobility phenomenon. To read more articles generated from the research see [relocateglobal.com](http://relocateglobal.com)







# A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE: UNLOCKING GLOBAL EXCELLENCE AND LEADERSHIP

Find out what is happening in deepest Kent to support international leadership and global mobility – discover all with **Fiona Murchie**.





Building on the success of our international hybrid Relocate Awards ceremony hosted from the beautiful grounds of our offices in Kent, we invited over the summer some of our award winners and global mobility network to experience the power of exchanging ideas, rethinking and connecting in an outside space in our Rethink and Renew workshop.

You can watch the video [here](#).

Being a company that is built on our global reach, we were then delighted to be able to invite Award winners who couldn't attend this event in Lamberhurst to a virtual Rethink and Renew and workshop in another first for the sector. Guests attended from Japan, India, Australia and UK. The responses

and experience of this Zoom workshop were as powerful and original as the live walk-and-talk held in June.

Event feedback showed participants really enjoyed both experiences, reporting they found it immensely stimulating to look at common problems and share insights.

We therefore would love to share some aspects of these workshops with you. We invite Relocate and Think Global People readers to watch the video and help shape the way forward for our workshops and programmes.

This is a great opportunity for you to have your say on what you would like to see included in our new Centre for Global Excellence and Leadership, which we trailed in the summer issue.

We would love your thoughts around:

- What the Centre for Global Excellence and Leadership will look like
- How it will be different
- What the benefits would be to you, your business and the wider world
- What you would like to be included and why.

Please do take the opportunity to respond to the survey on our website and help shape a really important innovation that will help connect global mobility professionals with influencers and leaders and stakeholders across the much wider international business market.

### OVERCOMING SHARED CHALLENGES

The Centre for Global Excellence and Leadership is about sharing knowledge and expertise, learning about other industry sectors and their challenges, and finding solutions to shared problems and big issues. With so much knowledge already in the global mobility community, connecting and collaborating will also help to provide education and rewarding work for the next generations.

Back in autumn 2020 we cemented our dragonfly-eyed view of the world encompassing the three perspectives of global mobility; international leadership and sustainability; and talent development and education. This vision now forms the basis of the new Centre for Global Excellence and Leadership. See the diagram on the right.

We will be offering a local,

regional and global perspective not only to our traditional audience of HR and Mobility professionals, but also our wider corporate audience of global leaders, managers and industry experts and their extensive network of service providers.

We will tell the stories from across global mobility and the wider international management community that inspire and help organisations to flourish and grow. People will be at the centre. Together we are helping to shape better workplaces where individuals can do their best work.

### THE RELOCATE AND THINK GLOBAL PEOPLE AWARDS EVOLVE...

It is also important to celebrate achievements. The Relocate and Think Global People Awards will be evolved further to reflect innovation, ambitious targets to grow and make a difference in sustainable organisations.

In this issue you will read about some of our award winners and their achievements to trigger ideas on how to do things differently and also to appreciate how different sectors fit into the wider picture. The value of this is evident. I was particularly struck by the comment







“Having people from different parts of the sector is really interesting. What is changing within their worlds automatically affects how we need to operate and what we need to change in our own environment. I found that very interesting and very effective.”

**REBECCA HOLLANTS  
VAN LOOKE, FRASERS  
HOSPITALITY**

from Rebecca Hollants Van Looke from Frasers Hospitality who attended the Rethink outdoor experience.

“Having people from different parts of the sector is really interesting. As I was saying to some of the colleagues here earlier, I’m rather on the receiving end of the process they start. It is very interesting to see how their worlds have changed. What is changing within their worlds automatically affects how we need to operate and what we need to change in our own environment. I found that very interesting and very effective.”

We therefore invite you to get involved. Please watch the video to understand more about how to Rethink and Reconnect, and take the survey to tell us what activities and resources you want to see in the Centre for Global Excellence and Leadership.

#### **FRESH INSIGHTS FROM KEY EXPERTS**

As a taste of the leadership development opportunities available through our community, we are extremely privileged to announce that Professor Vlatka Ariaana Hlupic will lead an exclusive, small-group, transformational leadership programme for senior leaders in October/November. The world of work is shifting. Are you ready to embrace the “Big Shift” for innovation, growth and profit in the new world of work? Find out more on page 30.

Author of *Powered by Purpose: Energise you people to do great*

work and Relocate Award winner 2021, Sarah Rozenhuter will be leading a live, interactive workshop on 7 October. Join Sarah for “How to find and follow your purpose for career success”. Inspired by the growing movement of purpose-driven business, we will explore how you can start to tune into your own sense of what is yours to do.

In addition, our highly successful International Education & Schools’ Fair will be back in November with a raft of new webinars and videos and editorial for parents, employers and the relocation professionals supporting international families on the move.



#### **WATCH THE REPLAY**

Watch the replay of the Relocate Awards 2021 at [relocateglobal.com](https://relocateglobal.com)

#### **DISCOVER MORE...**

Book your place on the Sarah Rozenhuter and The Management Shift webinars at [relocateglobal.com](https://relocateglobal.com)

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Sarah Rozenhuter

**Thurs 7 Oct**  
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Fiona Murchie  
[centre@relocateglobal.com](mailto:centre@relocateglobal.com)  
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# It is time to transform management and leadership practices to survive and thrive

Employees are looking for purposeful roles, happy workplaces and trusted leaders. How does your organisation stack up? By **Professor Vlatka Hlupic**

Perhaps you have been affected by this pandemic significantly and you had to let go of some of your key talent. Perhaps you realise that you need to go through transformation, but you do not know how. Or perhaps you know that the management and leadership style used in your organisation is not fit for purpose anymore, but you do not know where to start and how to change it.

Now imagine working for an organisation where people are happy, purposeful, fully engaged and go the extra mile for your customer. Imagine working for an employer where everybody is purposeful and intent on making the world a better place by working for your organisation. Imagine your workplace is engaging, innovative, highly productive, and profitable.

This article shows how you can reinvent your management and leadership practices, and not just survive but also thrive today and tomorrow. We need this transformation because even before the global pandemic started, we could see that there were many problems in a lot of organisations. For example, only about 13% of employees were fully engaged at work before the pandemic. Only about 25% of people are passionate about their work. Just 20% of employees trust that their leaders will tell the truth when confronted with a difficult issue. And in the last 50 years, corporate life expectancy and performance have declined by 75%. Different surveys paint a similar picture – with the vast majority of the global workforce dissatisfied with their work.

Various studies have looked into what employees need from leaders right now and concluded they need clarity, purpose and clear goals, because clarity will contribute to resilience. They need to be able to trust their leaders and trust will lead to better communication. Employees also need psychological safety, so they can express their views in a safe way, knowing that their voice will be heard and

then any reasonable action will be taken as needed. People want leaders to give them some sense of autonomy and how they achieve goals, and they understand they need to be accountable for the results. And finally, they want compassion. They want to be led by compassionate leaders who will support their wellbeing.

## WORKPLACE RENEWAL

Many organisations have to be very innovative now as they move out of the pandemic to hybrid workplaces. They must reinvent, create new workplaces, new opportunities, new markets, new products and new services. Innovation and creativity are crucial moving forward. Leaders also need to figure out what kind of culture they need right now for new hybrid workplaces, and how to attract and keep talent. For example, a recent survey by Microsoft in Sweden found that more than 40% of employees are seriously thinking about leaving their employer when the lockdown finishes. So how can we create cultures and working conditions so that both leaders and employees get what they need and want, right now?

In order to do that, we need a new type of management and leadership. We need to move away from traditional pyramids with hierarchical command and control, standardisation, specialisation, strict rules and regulations, centralised command and decision making. This worked well in the first industrial revolution where productivity and efficiency were the key, but it is very detrimental for performance in modern organisations, which are largely comprised of knowledge workers. We know knowledge workers need to be treated as associates, not as subordinates.

## 5 LEVELS OF THE MANAGEMENT SHIFT FRAMEWORK

Based on many years of research, I figured out that there are five levels that our individual mindset is going through and there is a corresponding

organisational culture at every level (see Figure 1 on the next page – more details are provided in my book “The Management Shift”). Every level is characterised by specific thinking patterns, language, emotions leadership style and organisational outcomes. We cannot skip the levels and we can only go up one level at a time, but we can have pockets of different levels within the same organisation.

At level 1, the mindset is lifeless, culture is apathetic and not much gets done. There is a lot of fear and blame at this level. People are depressed, they just want to escape such a workplace.

At level 2, the mindset is reluctant and culture is stagnating. At this level, people do a minimum they can get away with, just to get a paycheck. They bring their body to work, but their hearts and minds stay at home. They would rather be anywhere else but at work.

At level 3, the mindset is controlled and culture is orderly. At that level, we follow the rules and regulations, we obey, we comply, we are micromanaged. We tick the boxes, we achieve KPIs. And we are led by big leaders who often have big egos.

The majority of organisations today predominantly operate at levels 2 or 3. This is one of the key reasons why we see low levels of engagement, low passion for work,





## EMERGENT LEADERSHIP



Figure 1: Five levels of The Management Shift framework

“At level 4, the mindset is enthusiastic and culture is collaborative... when we reach this level, everything changes.”

VLATKA HLUPIC

low trust, low productivity and low profit. To achieve high performing, engaging, inspirational workplaces, leaders and entire organisations, we have to go through the “Big Shift” and move from level 3 to level 4.

At level 4, the mindset is enthusiastic and culture is collaborative. The key words/phrases here are: teamwork, collaboration, self-organisation in communities, trust, transparency, purpose, having fun working, and making this world a better place. When we reach this level, everything changes. We see a step change increase in performance, innovation, engagement, and profit.

Occasionally, we can reach level 5. At level 5, the mindset is limitless and culture is unbounded. There are no limits to what can be achieved when we tap into the energy of level 5. At this level, we work intensely on some amazing innovations for humanity.

The objective is to be anchored at level 4 and then occasionally reach level 5. If we go through

some difficulties, we can slip down temporarily to lower levels, but we can bounce back quickly and easily once we anchor at level 4.

I have researched many organisations operating at levels 4/5 (more details are available in my book, “Humane Capital”) and here are a few examples.

#### THE CITY OF GLASGOW COLLEGE – INSPIRERS

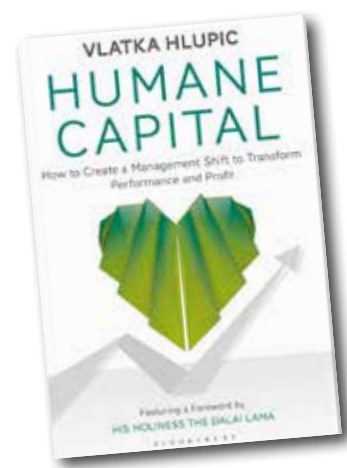
In the City of Glasgow College, the senior leadership team went through The Management Shift Senior Leadership Development Programme, which lasted four months and has brought several benefits for the College, including winning more awards and better grades for students.

At the heart of transformation of the City of Glasgow was a transformation of their leadership approach that was previously rooted in the impulse to control everything. The difference is not just a different set of skills of competencies, but a different mindset and different philosophy. They embraced a leadership that prepared them to be agile in uncertainty. In the college, they used every single space inside and outside classrooms as a learning space, fostering peer learning and social learning as students can also learn from each other. Educators saw themselves as being inspirers rather than lecturers and the teaching staff became more open and communicative embracing

social media and continuous communication with students.

Their conscious move to a level 4 culture was concurrent with the move from eleven old campuses to one modern campus. They formed affinity groups to establish real human connectivity, to be empathetic and mindful. This ensured that in decision making and in the creation of the system structure and plans they put in place, the human connection had to be maintained. The Management Shift Programme provided a structured vehicle to achieve their objectives and to ensure that they retained and developed their talent.

As a result of all this development they have established stronger, more trusting relationships, which have led to the ongoing success of this educational institution.



#### SALESFORCE – INNOVATION & VALUES

The next example is Salesforce, one of the largest cloud computing firms in California. Salesforce was founded upon transparency of goals, shared purpose, absence of micromanagement, and minimisation of bureaucracy. These founding principles are very much aligned with level 4 leadership style and organisational culture.

It is interesting to explore in more detail what practices Salesforce has adopted. One of the key principles around Salesforce’s approach to their culture and leadership was, for example, collecting ideas from all employees, which is very important. For example, Salesforce has an internal social media platform called Chatter, which is used by the firm’s 18,000 employees. If anyone has an idea, they can post it on Chatter and seek offers of help with innovative ideas. The platform is also used for surveys, questionnaires, and innovation in general.

They are also aligning individual and organisational values and purpose. Their values are articulated by the acronym v2mom, which was created by its founder Mark Benioff. It stands for vision, value, methods, obstacles, and measures. Vision helped them define what they wanted to do and set out the principles and beliefs that guide behaviour. The values established what was important.

Some of the questions around that are “How do you want to change the world? And what do you want to do? What methods obstacles and challenges are you going to meet in your attempt to create that vision? Do you need the organisation to help you meet your goal? If so, how do we invest in that and how do we make that happen? Everybody in the company is aligned around these questions.

They also have their 1 1 1 Programme where they give 1% percent of their equity, 1% of all employees’ time and 1% of their product back to non-profit organisations. Employees get paid time-off to contribute to the society. A few years ago, they handed about \$75 million to non-profit organisations.

Salesforce believe that those who don’t move from level 3 to level 4 are going to be threatened by companies that do. Exceptionally talented

people don’t want to work for level 3 organisations. They want to work at level 4 and level 5.

#### HANDELSBANKEN – LEADERSHIP CULTURE

Handelsbanken was created in its present form in 1960. It has held to the principles of co-operation rather than relying on excessive hierarchy and they went through some profound transformation in the late 1960s where a new management model was introduced and retained until today. Some of the key principles include striving to do better than their peers by removing absolute goals and cutting costs. They introduced one single financial goal which was to have higher return in equity than the average of their competitors. It was all about doing better than competitors.

They have been using these principles and they haven’t done any budgeting over 40 years. They do not believe in fixed planning, and they believe that in order to achieve their goals, they needed to excel in two areas. One area was to have the highest level of customer satisfaction. The other area was to have lower operating costs. Another strategy is to empower people who are best suited to understand the needs of customers. This means that their pyramid is flat. They got rid of layers and layers of middlemen and empowered local branch managers to make key decisions to serve their customers.

The main belief is that if you actively encourage people to take responsibility, those people will not run off and take silly decisions. Instead, they will become even more prudent and even more careful when it comes to ensuring that the correct decisions are made. The whole purpose of the Handelsbanken’s Head Office is to support local branches. It does not tell branches what to do and discipline is maintained. This is an example of Level 4 leadership/culture.

Since the bank introduced these ways of working, it has achieved a higher return on equity every year for over 40 years. And it has consistently scored highly in independent customer satisfaction surveys. They even went through the international banking crisis in 2008 without needing support from stakeholders or the state. The other notable principle they used was to move away from the bonus culture towards a profit-share model. They do not

pay bonuses, which is consistent with their approach of avoiding sales targets and short-term goals. There is a strong emphasis on recruiting the best people and pay is competitive. The profit-sharing system, which was introduced in the early 70s, is called Octagon. Profit accrued from the average return on equity for the industry goes back to the staff in the form of a foundation. That profit is then divided by the number of employees, which is then converted into a fund that invests mainly in Handelsbanken shares. These profits cannot be withdrawn by employees until they reach the age of 60 even if they leave the bank. The profit-sharing scheme encourages long term objectives and the focus on customer satisfaction, and it also encourages cooperation.

The key is to break away from short termism and short-term targets. With these principles, Handelsbanken has been very successful for decades.

These case study examples illustrate how three organisations working in very different industries, but using similar principles of level 4/5 leadership and organisational culture can achieve amazing results and outperform their competitors.

#### NEXT STEPS

We will be running transformational leadership programmes for the Relocate and Think Global People community in October and November. I will be teaching the key principles of The Management Shift supported by individual and organisational assessments that can be applied in your own organisation to improve innovation, performance, engagement, and profit or to make a bigger difference for your learners and society at large. I look forward to seeing many of you on these programmes. ●



#### DISCOVER MORE...

See page 5 for programme details. To **book your place** on these programmes and to join The Management Shift Membership see our Leadership and Development sector at [relocateglobal.com](http://relocateglobal.com)



# PERMITS FOUNDATION CELEBRATES 20 YEARS IN SUPPORT OF INTERNATIONAL DUAL CAREERS



Permits Foundation is the only organisation that advocates specifically to enable direct work access for spouses and partners of mobile employees around the world. The Foundation celebrates its 20th anniversary this year and for the past two decades has helped to facilitate company talent mobility and improve the lives of dual career families internationally.

## HOW THE FOUNDATION CAME ABOUT

Twenty years ago, the concept of governments legislating to enable direct work access for partners of international assignees was in its early stages. Although there were bilateral arrangements between countries for example in the diplomatic sector, policy makers were not consistently making the link between dependant work access, talent acquisition and country investment. Companies lamented the fact that international assignments were failing or being cut short due to the fact that the partner was unable to access work in the host country. Dual careers were on the increase and many accompanying partners (mainly women) were simply unwilling to lay their careers to waste.

The Foundation essentially came about following collaboration between a number of companies, whose representatives are well known in the global mobility community. Several members remain on the Board to this date. Siobhan Cummins, Julia Onslow-Cole, Gill Gordon and the founder and first Director Katy van der Wilk-Carlton – then manager of Shell International's Spouse Employment Centre.

Foundation Chair Gill Gordon recalls, "We realised that we had a shared challenge. With an increasing number of dual career couples, work permit barriers for spouses could jeopardise a successful international assignment. Companies could all benefit if we worked together to improve the whole family's experience in the host country. This would help employers to attract and retain talent and benefit employee diversity and integration. It started with around 20 of us but resonated with many in the public and private sectors and so sponsorship gathered pace from there."

Initial sponsor companies in 2001 included Akzo Nobel, AstraZeneca, ECA International, Heineken, PwC, Schlumberger, Shell and Unilever. Permits Foundation is now supported by over 40 companies and other organisations, with several chief executives of major companies acting as patrons.

Today, more than 30 countries worldwide have legislated to enable accompanying partners or spouses to access employment while in the host country. The Foundation recommends that where possible, same

sex partners, non-married partners and other family members be included in the definition of dependants that are eligible to access work. Country information is tracked via the Permits Foundation's interactive world map of mobile spouse and partner work authorisation. This provides a global snapshot of good practice, but also details government legislation and the Foundation's advocacy efforts per country.

For Permits Foundation Board member Dr Anne Cockwell, Head of Global Assignments at Volkswagen AG Germany, "Partner employment authorisation is an issue that continues to be so important for companies. With a more challenging mobility environment since the pandemic, we are now giving extra attention to the family unit of the mobile employee pre-move. This includes a stronger focus on partner employment expectations and greater awareness of mental health and wellbeing."



Katy van der Wilk-Carlton



Julia Onslow-Cole



Gill Gordon



Siobhan Cummins



## 2021 SURVEY

This September, the Foundation will be launching a highly significant worldwide survey of both global mobility professionals and dependants of mobile employees, tracking the changes that have occurred since the pandemic and current expectations relating to dual careers in the global workplace.

Foundation Co-ordinator, Françoise van Roosmalen urges participation in this survey as it will help to effect change for the better and for families on assignment across the globe. "Though we have carried out country-specific research, our last survey at this scale was back in 2012. So much has changed since then, particularly since the pandemic. We have seen changes in the make up of the mobile family, increased reliance on dual incomes, a shift in the types of assignment – including virtual – and greater focus on inclusion (mental) health and well being. For companies looking to improve their employee experience and for families on assignment or who are considering a move, please do take part and share the survey link within your network."

The survey will run through October and will be made available on Permits Foundation's website at [www.permitsfoundation.com](http://www.permitsfoundation.com). First findings will be announced at the upcoming Permits Foundation Anniversary Conference in November. The full report will be online early 2022. ●



## Interview with Permits Foundation Director, Helen Frew



### WHY SHOULD EMPLOYERS GET BEHIND YOUR MISSION?

One question is why not? Partner employment concern is a key contributor to a refused or failed assignment. We don't know of any employers who would not want to further knowledge transfer, gender equality, inclusion or to improve employee experience, health and well being on assignment. Support for the Foundation essentially shows your employees that you are proactively converting CSR policy into action. Companies can affect change collectively in a way they perhaps can't individually. When we meet with government officials, we provide sound evidence from our network surveys and show our impressive list of sponsor logos. These two actions make all the difference. The greater the level of support the greater the chance is that we can affect change in a country – and more quickly.

### WHAT HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES OVER THE YEARS?

We have seen so many significant moments dating right back to 2001 in the US when our advocacy helped spouses of intra-company employees, traders and investors gain work access. Since then more countries have improved legislation. Our work helped directly to inform policy in the UK, India, Brazil and across Europe. The EU Intra-Company Transferee Directive was a personal highlight. Today, in almost all Member States, family members of ICTs [intra-company transferees] are able to access employment

and self-employment upon recognition of their dependant status. Progress was possible because of our practical and evidence-based approach. But change requires perseverance. It took over four years to convince key stakeholders as well as representatives from the institutions to support amendment to the original proposal. Now we look upon the EU as an area of best practice and the revised Blue Card Directive – adopted this month – maintains direct work access for dependants. We hope for similar success in many other countries as we work behind the scenes and aim for further progress in the US, Ireland (which opts out of these EU Directives), India and South Africa. We also want to broaden our work in China and the APAC region."

### HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED TO SUPPORT THE PERMITS FOUNDATION AND WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

For company representatives, becoming a sponsor will help to bring about sustainable improvements to work permit legislation. This will support your HR strategy and underpin your policies on mobility and dual careers, DE&I and your image as an attractive, best practice, international employer. If you are a service provider, it will demonstrate to your clients how you are helping to improve global mobility. For mobile families, raising issues means service providers and HR managers are aware of what is important to you. We ask our sponsor organisations to donate a relatively small amount of money and time. Typically, we look for feedback on key countries and issues and we create opportunities to work together to raise the dual careers issue, providing timely intelligence on policy development. This is a chance to be a driving force behind change for the better. A brochure with further information is available on the sponsor page of our website [here](#).





# THE POWER OF CELEBRATION: LEARNING FROM THE RELOCATE AWARDS

This year's Relocate awards offer a number of valuable lessons for all those involved managing people and global mobility. **Dr Sue Shortland**, head judge of the Relocate awards, reflects on some of the key lessons learned from the 2021 awards.

The past year has been one like no other. No one could have predicted a pandemic that could take such a toll on human life and on the way we live and work. This year's Relocate and Think Global People awards focused on how organisations involved in the management and mobility of individuals and their families dealt with the extreme challenges that resulted from Covid 19. The response from human resource, education and global mobility professionals and service industry firms was tremendous and the standard of entries was the best ever.

## THE VALUE OF FLEXIBILITY AND WELLBEING

The immense downturn in global mobility had the potential to destroy or significantly damage many businesses as turnover fell away. Yet, as we learnt from the awards entries, new avenues were explored and services tailored to the changed working environment. A key aspect of this concerned flexibility. The awards entries demonstrated how a flexible approach to managing staff and clients' mobility issues paid dividends.

Besides a revised and flexible focus on business opportunities, it was notable that the level of care invested in staff and clients rose significantly. Wellbeing came to the forefront of business activity – and this clearly made a huge difference to the service outcomes experienced by clients. When staff are engaged, motivated and appreciated, and their own personal concerns are considered and addressed, productivity goes up, interest in and service given to clients improves, and business outcomes are positive. And so we saw this year with the awards entries. Despite the difficult business conditions, staff played their part over and above what might have been expected, service standards rose as did client delight.

## SHARING OUR LEARNING

Selfless sharing of information also proved to be an unexpected benefit from the pandemic with a plethora of webinars, research publications and networking discussion groups becoming freely available to disseminate learning. This was in

evidence across the whole range of awards entry categories as businesses reported back on how they were managing particular issues. And, as unlocking continues with the success of the vaccination programme, this sharing of information is continuing – and is to be much welcomed as it improves practice for the benefit of all.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GLOBAL MOBILITY PROFESSIONALS

The pandemic also gave rise to a potentially unexpected opportunity for the global mobility profession. With global mobility restricted due to lockdowns and as visa restrictions were placed upon personal movement, so new ways of working came to the fore. Working from home/working from anywhere took hold and became the new normal. While it cannot be denied that home working or working in a different jurisdiction from the job location was already taking place pre-pandemic, working internationally but not where the role was based took on a hugely increased level of significance last year. With this came all manner of tax and immigration compliance issues – and who were best placed to handle these? Up stepped global mobility.

There is no doubt that the pandemic has heightened global mobility's presence and contribution to the talent agenda. This will serve global mobility professionals well going forward – their expertise is recognised and celebrated. Their advice is not only welcomed but positively sought after both in relation to compliance but also in terms of managing employee expectations when their desire to live in particular places may need to be accommodated or declined depending upon the compliance regime. As such, global mobility can move forward in its desire to play a major part in shaping the talent agenda. It can contribute effectively to managing talent deployment and devising policy with respect to advising on the feasibility and implications of working in different jurisdictions.

## CELEBRATING SUCCESS

A final reflection concerns the power of celebration. Working together in the face of adversity brought out the very best in those

working the service industry, and within professionals in the human resource, education and global mobility fields. The challenges faced heightened collaboration and facilitated productive partnership activity. The awards entries were of the highest standard this year and it was clear that entrants wanted to celebrate their success. The power of that need to rejoice shone through the awards ceremony. The delight expressed by all involved was clear to see.

After a tough year, the power of celebration can never be underestimated. And that for me is the main lesson learned from the awards. While entering means participants reflect back on what they did well and what they learned from it, the excitement of the ceremony itself brings out shared joy – celebration is a powerful motivator for going forward into whatever next year brings for us. ●

## AWARDS REPLAY

Watch the Relocate and Think Global People Awards at [relocateglobal.com](https://relocateglobal.com)



Peter Graham, Santa Fe Relocation



# Admissions mean business

There are many compelling reasons for corporate employers and relocation professionals to look to international schools to ensure their globally mobile people thrive in new locations. As the admissions cycle for 2022/23 begins, we show why, taking a look at outstanding approaches to admissions and advancement from entries shortlisted in the Relocate Awards writes **Fiona Murchie**.

**L**eading cities around the world have attracted top international schools to their region. There are often many excellent schools and plenty of options.

Yet as Director of Advancement at the International School of Brussels, Dr David Willows, points out, it is hard for families relocating to Brussels, for example, to choose the right school for their children.

This might seem surprising, but it is true for many families. Every parent wants the best for their child and their education. In international schools, future talent is being nurtured to take on the complexities of a global economy.

Until relatively recently, even the most experienced expatriate family relied on word of mouth and school reputation to narrow down the options. Less knowledgeable HR and mobility teams also regarded admission to a particular school as a hurdle to be overcome, rather than a choice for the child and family that can make or break a successful relocation.

Yet the coronavirus pandemic has reinforced how vital schools are in settling international families. It calls for a new partnership with international employers, international schools, the relocation supply chain and individual families.

*Experience room at The International School of Brussels*



## "EVERY CHALLENGE PRESENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO RETHINK, REFRAME AND REIMAGINE."

JULIA LOVE DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS, THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF KUALA LUMPUR

### MORE THAN JUST A SCHOOL

As entries submitted to the Relocate Awards highlight, international schools are far more than simply an educational setting for children and young people. Their pastoral role has expanded hugely during the pandemic to include reassurances around health and safety protocols, as well as sharing local knowledge and inter- and cross-cultural learning with students and their families built up over many years and easing important transitions.

Finding the right school also often triggers other final key relocation decisions, including the neighbourhood to set up home, and ultimately has a serious impact on the success of an assignment and a child's future wellbeing. By understanding these factors, employers and globally mobile populations can ensure every family member transitions well according to their unique needs and circumstances.

### REDESIGNING ADMISSIONS

Dealing with admissions can seem intimidating and complicated. As David Willows says in one of his blogs, "School admissions really shouldn't be this game of snakes and ladders." In a subsequent blog, he describes the journey the International School of Brussels took to redesigning its admissions experience.

"In our quest to discover the core of the admissions task we found ourselves chipping away at what we knew and designing a game in which each member of the prospective family played a crucial role. Every member of the family had something to contribute. We were [also] learning to listen and not feeling compelled to speak."

### BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, the importance of engagement was growing. A significant number of families were declining or prematurely ending international assignments for family reasons, including not wanting to disrupt their children's education.

Now, with employees are on the move once more, it is even more important to factor schools into the equation for how to deliver a successful assignment. A good relationship with the admissions department really does mean good business for corporate employers and every stakeholder concerned, including pupils, parents, the school and the local economy.

Dr Willows confirms that ISB's admissions team are far more focused today on listening to families and understanding their situation first. They recognise that these life transitions can be stressful and give families the time to talk about their fears and anxieties through this process.

The ISB Experience Room was developed with a conviction that the admissions and advancement team role is "not just to feed facts and information, but to help families learn whether we are the right school for their children," says Dr Willows.

"At the International School of Brussels, we have developed a truly unique and innovative space to support families," says Dr Willows. Three years in the making and backed by significant investment, the Experience Room is a modern glass and technology-rich structure within the grounds of the school's 19th century chateau.

At the heart of the experience is an invitation to families to play a "game" in which they each select what is important for them when choosing a school. "An exceptional-quality and personalised mobility experience is at the heart of the philosophy behind the design of the Experience Room," explains Dr Willows.

Dr Willow concludes, "We have learned as a team that, if we are to be effective in supporting families, we need to have a constant eye on how our website, our admissions experience, and our school is perceived by families on the outside. We have developed a culture that is iterative – always adapting, improving, and making incremental change."

### RELOCATION EXPERIENCES IN MALAYSIA

Julia Love, Director of Admissions, The International School of Kuala Lumpur (ISKL) – a fellow Relocate Awards shortlisted entry alongside ISB in the School Providing Outstanding Relocation Support category – agrees the pandemic has created unprecedented hurdles for relocating families, agents and client companies at every stage of the relocation cycle.

"It has not been easy, especially in Malaysia with border restrictions, lockdowns, and fluctuating periods of on/off campus learning. However, every challenge presents an opportunity to rethink, reframe and reimagine."

Julia Love refers to ISKL's reimagined Panther Carers Relocation Programme, which has been highly successful in reducing the uncertainty, anxiety and isolation associated with relocating in a pandemic.

"In addition to regular support activities, we reframed our approach, introduced new initiatives and made the most of opportunities to provide in-person interaction, as well as optimising every online challenge possible to

communicate and connect," says Julia Love.

"What differentiates our programme is its personalisation and focus on wellbeing at an individual family/student level. These new initiatives created a positive relocation experience regardless of the challenging circumstances," says Julia Love.

ISKL went even further by delivering Panther Care packages to relocation agents and client companies during lockdown to share positivity and demonstrate they care about their wellbeing too.

"Strong family connections contribute to positive relocation experiences, which in turn supports the performance and outcomes of client companies and agents," she explains – a point that cannot be overestimated by employers planning international assignment budgets for 2022/23.

### AWARD-WINNING WELCOME TO VIETNAM

At the International School of Ho Chi Minh City (ISHCMC) – overall winner of the 2021 Relocate Award for School Providing Outstanding Relocation Support category – the pandemic's disruption transformed how the school helps families relocate and transition to their community and Vietnam.

It developed one of Asia's first virtual school-tours, crafting a personalised guided tour specific to each family's needs and interests before arrival. Recognising the impact of the pandemic on family wellbeing and the role of schools in supporting families, ISHCMC has also invested in staff training around safety and wellbeing, communication skills, advanced customer service and empathy skills.

Mrs Kim Green, Head of School, said, "At ISHCMC we aim to create a vibrant, safe and tight-knit community, making our families feel at home throughout the entire relocation process."

Parents can also enrol their children completely online at ISHCMC, with applications and assessments taking place virtually before the "Transition to Campus Learning (TTC)" programme begins. Parents also receive information on the city and relocation tips and are added to WhatsApp groups with parents of similar language and/or nationality to help with settling in. You can read more in the Relocate Awards Supplement – Summer 2021.

Mrs Kim Green, Head of School, International School of Ho Chi Minh City



Students from The International School of London







Above:  
Students  
from TASIS

### PRESERVING MOTHER-TONGUE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Retaining links with home cultures and native languages and making positive transitions are also important aspects of successful international relocation for families and self-identity. The Highly Commended School in this category, The International School of London, is an IB School with an embedded mother-tongue language programme of 22 languages. It is an incredibly diverse, multicultural and inclusive place where every cultural identity is embraced and celebrated.

“Everyone receives cultural awareness training,” says Claudine Hakim, Head of Advancement, Transitions & Student Support. “This is driven by our visionary leaders feeding into a school strategy group focusing specifically on Language Stories & Cultural Worth’.”

Throughout lockdown, ISL also played an important role connecting with families and colleagues around the world. “With lockdowns causing delays and uncertainty in the global mobility industry, we supported education and relocation colleagues worldwide by sharing insights of benefit to the industry,” continues Claudine Hakim. “Our transition team featured in numerous webinars, virtual events and presentations contributing to the global conversation on successfully navigating challenging times.”

Watch the ISL webinar “Crossroads: ISL transitions programme” replay from Relocate Global’s International Education & Schools Fair.

ISL also offers a vibrant parenting club with a Virtual Transition Parenting workshop series, hosted by an experienced family therapist and parent. Each of these initiatives proves that relocation care is at the heart of the school community and an ongoing journey.

### INDIVIDUALISED SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Carfax College in Oxford specialises in supporting students’ transitions to UK independent boarding schools and universities as well as students with SEND and specific learning difficulties.

This bespoke approach supports students as they relocate from anywhere in the world and in response to individual goals, progress and changes in circumstances, so no part of a student’s education and experience is disrupted due to relocation.

TASIS The American School in England is a leading-co-educational school educating over 600 day and boarding pupils. Situated 18 miles southwest of London, and 8 miles from Heathrow, it boasts a beautiful 46 acres campus, combining historic buildings with modern facilities.

Its admissions and onboarding programme is consistently complimented by families, as illustrated by a recent testimonial from a family experiencing an abrupt move to the UK.

“I felt you have gone above and beyond in helping us get everything sorted in a very short timeframe and I have felt fully supported in every step of the way.”

Surely this is just what every family wants, and every corporate client needs?

### DISCOVER MORE...

#### Webinar replays with Relocate Global

ISB – <https://bit.ly/393dPrn>

ISCHMC – <https://bit.ly/3CaPBYD>

ISL – <https://bit.ly/3nthUNX>

TASIS – <https://bit.ly/3z5q3dx>

# FIND YOURSELF

# AT ISKL

Praxis Practitioner

Passionate Environmentalist

Inspiring Educator

Enthusiastic Explorer

The Visionary Leader

Pursuits Pioneer

IB Scholar

Dedicated Parent Volunteer

Environmentally Conscious Cyclists

**PANTHERS OF ISKL**

Scan the QR code or head to ISKL's Blog to read more stories of our ISKL Community.



# CLASS OF 2021: WHAT DO RECORD- BREAKING RESULTS MEAN FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK?

This year's International Baccalaureate, A level, GCSE and IGCSE cohort nudged attainment even higher. The results also saw a rise in STEM subject uptake. Despite their disrupted education, could Generation Covid be more future-ready than ever? **Ruth Holmes** reports.



Marymount International School  
Rome, IBDP, American Diploma

**R**esults from this summer's exam season for 16–18-year-olds completing GCSE, A Level, B Tech and IB studies met with claims of grade inflation as well as relief and celebration.

Only Scottish National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher grades slightly fell below last year's outcome, yet remain up on 2019 – the last year formal exams took place.

Top grades in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – as well as for students internationally studying International Baccalaureate curricula and IGCSEs – were the highest ever, after exams were widely replaced with teacher assessments.

## OVERVIEW OF 2021 RESULTS

For the International Baccalaureate's Diploma Programme (IBDP), the first to release results in June, the global Class of 2021, which included students taking exam and non-exam routes, boosted the average diploma score to 33.02 points, from 31.34 last year. Average diploma grade and pass rates were also up on 2020, rising to 5.19 and 88.96% respectively.

At TASIS, the American School in England, students achieved a 100% pass rate, with 20% in bilingual diplomas and an average score of 36. Head of School, Bryan Nixon said: "Our congratulations to our students who have grown through adversity and demonstrated their commitment to their life-long learning journey."

Nicki Crush, Director of the International School of Luxembourg (ISL), whose 2021 IB cohort also achieved well above the global average, also highlighted how impressive the results are this year "if you think about how challenging the two last years have been and it undeniably attests to the high-level of resilience of our students."

A level, GCSE and IGCSE pass rates fared similarly. While A level passes declined slightly, more candidates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland achieved top outcomes. Pass rates at A-A\* rose by 6.3 percentage points. Independent schools accounted for around two-thirds of A-A\* grades.

For GCSEs, 79.1% of entries were graded 4 or above – equivalent to a pass – increasing 0.3 percentage points on last year. Figures also show 7.7% of entries at grade 9 and 30.0% at grade 7 or above, representing increases of 1.1 percentage point and 2.4 percentage points respectively in 2020.

For IGCSEs, local Covid-19 scenarios meant most Cambridge International IGCSE candidates around the world were able to sit final exams, according to the exam board. Cambridge IGCSE attainment rose slightly by between half and two-thirds of a grade when compared to June 2019 results – the last year all Cambridge students took exams – and are slightly higher than 2020's results.

**"Fairness for learners sitting exams  
in 2022 is at the heart of our plans."**

**SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE, SCOTLAND'S  
EDUCATION SECRETARY**





King's Ely GCSE Results Day 2021

“Today’s grades have been painstakingly and professionally established to gauge students’ level of readiness for further study in each subject, probably more accurately and consistently for each student this year than ever before.”

JOHN ATTWATER,  
PRINCIPAL OF KING’S ELY

#### CONGRATULATING THE CLASS OF 2021

Exam chiefs and politicians were quick to offer their congratulations to students, exam centres and teachers, acknowledging the determination, hard work and effort of all parties in the face of uncertainty.

Dr Philip Wright, Director General of the Joint Council for Qualifications, which represents exam boards AQA, City & Guilds, NCFE, CEA, OCR, Pearson, SQA and WJEC, commented, “On behalf of JCQ and the exam boards, I would like to congratulate all students receiving their results.

“The impact of Covid-19 has undoubtedly provided a difficult chapter in their education journey and their resilience is to be applauded. We wish them all the best as they take their next steps in life. We would also like to express our sincere thanks to teachers, exams officers, heads of centre and colleagues who have all worked exceptionally hard to determine grades this summer.”

Headteachers and principals also praised the resilience of students and staff in these unprecedented times, where teachers assessed students over a sustained period of uncertainty through multiple assessments.

“This year’s system of teacher assessed grades has demanded real maturity, flexibility and resilience from our students and exceptional dedication and hard work from teachers,” commented John Attwater, Principal of King’s Ely, where GCSE students achieved 94% of outcomes at Grades 9-5 with 19% at Grade 9.

Acknowledging claims of grade inflation in this year’s national results, John Attwater continued, “Some people are writing about ‘spikes’ in grades this year because of the lack of exams and teacher assessment replacing it.

“However, today’s grades have been painstakingly and professionally established to gauge students’ level of readiness for further study in each subject, probably more accurately and consistently for each student this year than ever before.”

#### WHAT OF 2022 AND BEYOND?

The debates about teacher assessment and baked-in grade inflation are likely to continue. With schools around the world just starting the new school year, examination regulators are looking to 2022, recognising the ongoing impact of the pandemic on education.

In England, examinations watchdog Ofqual will announce this autumn term the grading approach for 2022. Speaking in late August, a Department for Education spokesperson said, “Students have worked incredibly hard during an extremely challenging time and they deserve their qualifications. Exams are the best form of assessment, and we intend for them to go ahead next year and subsequent years.”

Schools in Scotland returned in August when the SQA announced examinations will take place “if public health advice allows”. Scotland’s Education Secretary, Shirley-Anne Somerville, announced that exams will take place next year if safe to do so, adding that “fairness for learners sitting exams in 2022 is at the heart of our plans.”

The SQA has already made assessment modifications for courses for the next academic session. It has also made contingencies for further Covid disruption, including teacher-assessments based on “normal in-year assessment” if final exams can’t take place.

“These contingencies offer stability for teachers and learners in the coming academic session and will

allow their focus to be on normal practices in teaching, learning and assessment,” explained Shirley-Anne Somerville.

For exams regulated in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Times Education Supplement reports discussions are at an early stage that would potentially mean A levels graded numerically instead of alphabetically – similar to GCSEs – from 2023. The change could see the newly graded A level results pegged to 2020’s results as a means to control grade inflation.

#### TAKING STOCK

While dialogue around grade inflation is important to ensure fairness and the stability of the university admissions system, it risks detracting from progress in areas of longstanding importance to the future global workforce and inclusion – and the resilience and adaptability of students and educators much in evidence over the past 18 months.

In a summer where economies are recovering from the impact of the pandemic, and in the UK recruiters and employers report record vacancies, these latest exam results do also herald some good news.

More students achieved A levels in STEM subjects this year than last, continuing the appeal growing take-up of science and maths subjects. At university level, figures from UCAS, the university admissions body, also show more students seeking vocational degrees and greater numbers looking to study for a degree post-18.

Bhavina Bharkhada, Head of Policy & Campaigns at Make UK, the body that champions engineering

and manufacturing, said, “The increase in top grades awarded in maths amongst female students and high number of young people sitting STEM subjects is fantastic news – especially for the manufacturing sector who are looking for the next generation of innovators, creators and makers.

“The pandemic has shown just how integral our science, technology, and industrial base is the UK and we hope these young people are inspired to join our sector to help to tackle the big societal challenges we face as we come out of the Covid crisis.”

“We urge young people to look at wealth of opportunities and options available to them including apprenticeships when considering their next steps.”

BHAVINA BHARKHADA, HEAD OF POLICY  
& CAMPAIGNS, MAKE UK



Students at Taunton School look at their IB results



## OPTIONS FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING POST-18

With more options to study T levels, BTECs and take up an albeit declining number of apprenticeships, the future is also bright for young people who opt not to study at university from age 18.

"We urge young people to look at wealth of opportunities and options available to them including apprenticeships when considering their next steps," said Bhavina Bharkhada. "Despite the difficult year, almost 6 in 10 employers are continuing to make these opportunities open and accessible to all young people across the whole of the UK."

The CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development, is working with employers and mentors to give the next generation a step up in their working lives. The One Million Chances scheme aims to get employers to create a million opportunities for young people (aged 16-30) – be it through jobs, internships, work experience, apprenticeships T-levels or the Kickstart scheme – to help undo the damage done by Covid-19.

Employer representative bodies too have joined the conversation to reiterate that education is about more than exam results. Speaking ahead of the GCSE results day, John Cope, CBI Head of Education & Skills policy, said, "Regardless of whether people get the results they hoped for or not, it's important to remember that grades are just one of the factors employers look for. GCSEs are there to enable young people to take the next step in their learning and broaden their understanding of the possibilities out there."

"Businesses truly believe that education is more than qualifications alone. They also highly prize a good attitude and aptitude towards work. Students who strive to reach their own academic potential, who show creative flair, or demonstrate leadership will have a bright future ahead of them."

*Below: Regents International School Pattaya celebrates standout IBDP scores again this year.*

"Our congratulations to our students who have grown through adversity and demonstrated their commitment to their life-long learning journey."

BRYAN NIXON, HEAD OF SCHOOL, TASIS, THE AMERICAN SCHOOL IN ENGLAND

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