

THE GLOBAL TALENT IMPERATIVE
HOW COMPANIES ARE LEVERAGING
TOP TALENT FROM AROUND THE
WORLD



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ABOUT ENVOY

Founded in 1998, Envoy Global is a global immigration services provider offering the only immigration management platform that makes it seamless for companies to hire and manage an international workforce by combining expert legal services and proprietary technology. Envoy provides immigration services in 100+ countries and serves 1,000+ clients from promising tech startups to Fortune 50 companies.

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SECTION

1

FAST FACTS

Six things everyone needs to know about global talent



FAST FACTS



Immigration is and will continue to be a key driver of U.S. economic growth and competitiveness, especially in the innovation sector.

- 51% of unicorn companies were founded by first-generation immigrants.¹
- Immigrant households contributed \$405 billion in taxes in 2018.² That is almost 4x the combined 2018 budgets of the U.S. Department of State (\$45 billion), Department of Homeland Security (\$40 billion), and Department of Justice (\$28 billion).
- In 2017, immigrant inventors were responsible for 29% of all patents filed in the U.S., despite immigrants composing 19% of the total population.³



U.S. and world economies are facing an unprecedented shortage of skilled workers.

- Global shortage of 40 million high-skilled workers by 2020.⁴
- The Smithsonian STEM Imperative projected 2.4 million unfilled STEM jobs in the U.S. at year-end 2018.⁵



Higher education is one of the key drivers for high-skilled migration into the U.S., but declining international student enrollments are concerning.

- Foreign nationals make up 40% of all Ph.D. candidates in STEM fields at U.S. universities, and the share jumps to 50%+ in computer science fields.⁶
- U.S. university systems saw a 4% decrease in international student enrollments in 2017.⁷ Meanwhile, just north in Canada, international student enrollments jumped 20%.⁸



Leading organizations are realizing that global talent is a two-way strategy: high-skilled U.S.-based employees want international opportunities.

- 71% of millennials in the American workforce want an overseas assignment.⁹
- Early tenure and shorter employee assignments are trending up, while long-term, executive relocations are becoming less popular than in past decades.



Global talent is not just about filling skills gaps; employee diversity and multicultural teams have been proven to outperform homogenous teams.

- Ethnically diverse companies outperform industry norms by 35%.¹⁰
- Building diverse organizations has become a board and CEO-level priority.



Business and HR leaders can take concrete actions to better harness and retain global talent regardless of their company's size or industry.

- This report outlines tactical strategies for leveraging global talent, featuring real-world examples and insights.

SECTION

2

THE GLOBAL TALENT IMPERATIVE

Defining global talent—its impact on cities, individual firms and the evolution of the talent function



THE GLOBAL TALENT IMPERATIVE

Introduction

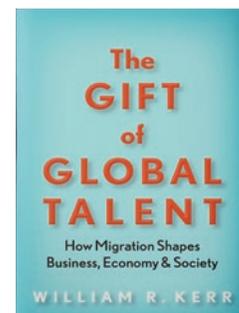
“ Every aspect of the American economy has profited from the contributions of immigrants. — John F. Kennedy ”

Immigration’s impact on U.S. industry and society is well known. From Alexander Graham Bell to Elon Musk, the value that talented immigrants bring to our economy has become folklore in American culture. However, substantive changes to the Future of Work and skills shortages across the U.S. economy, as well as emerging markets for talent, are creating noteworthy shifts in how companies harness and deploy talent. The goal of this report is to illuminate key trends driving innovations in talent mobility and to present best practices for talent engagement and retention.

I. Immigration Drives Innovation

Today’s global talent landscape in the U.S. economy

It is well documented that high-skilled migration both seeds and sustains vibrant innovation economies and cities. Professor William Kerr of Harvard Business School coined the phrase *Talent Clusters* to refer to these highly productive and diverse innovation communities. These clusters, such as the San Francisco Bay Area, are fueled, in large part, by the high-skilled immigrants that have invented and brought new technologies to market throughout the 80s, 90s, and 00s. Thirty percent of all new businesses created in the U.S. in 2016 were started by first-generation immigrants.¹¹ In San Jose, California, immigrants were responsible for 41% of all new businesses that were incorporated in 2016.



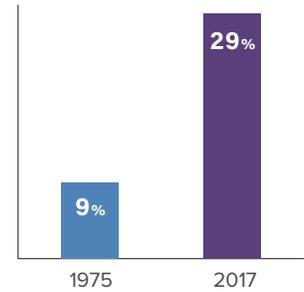
The impact of immigrants goes well beyond new business entrepreneurship. High-skilled migrants also disproportionately fill key positions in both management and engineering. For example, at many of San Francisco’s leading companies, immigrants hold key positions that drive innovation and growth. A study by the National Foundation for American Progress found that 71% of America’s 87 unicorn companies in 2016 had an immigrant in a critical management role, such as CEO, CTO, CFO or SVP of Engineering.¹

“ A chief executive should be thinking about how to recruit immigrants coming to the United States and, anticipating the future, figure out how to better position their company for talent opportunities abroad. ”

— William Kerr, Harvard Business School,
as seen in *Chief Executive Magazine*, Jan. 2019

Kerr's book, *The Gift of Global Talent*, also found immigrant inventors to be responsible for **29% of all patents** filed in the U.S. in 2017, despite immigrants making up approximately 19% of the U.S. population. Interestingly, Indian or Chinese nationals currently living in the Bay Area are responsible for one out of every 12 patents filed across the entire U.S. economy.³ This group alone equals the combined patent creation of 28 U.S. states.

Patents Filed by Immigrants



29% OF U.S. PATENTS IN 2017, UP FROM JUST **9%** IN 1975

II. Higher Education

The opportunities and nuances of the university talent pipeline

~1.1M

INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS
IN THE U.S.



In many ways the entry point in the U.S. economy for top global talent is the university system. There are **nearly 1.1 million international students** enrolled at undergraduate and graduate programs across the country. This may sound like a lot, but it only accounts for about 4% of the total student enrollment at U.S. universities. Despite making up a small portion of our national education system, international students have an outsized impact on STEM education, and they make a significant economic contribution to their communities.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CONTRIBUTED **\$42B** TO THE U.S. ECONOMY¹²

International students earn a disproportionate share of STEM degrees in key fields, such as computer science and engineering. While international students account for only 4% of undergraduate students in the U.S., but that percentage increases by more than **3x** for the share of students enrolled in computer science programs.¹³ The U.S. has been incredibly successful at attracting the world's best research talent. At U.S. institutions, international students represent **79% of all graduate students studying computer science**. Foreign nationals receive about ~40% of all doctoral degrees in STEM fields. That number jumps to over **50%** for computer science.¹⁴

Sergey Brin and Elon Musk both pursued Ph.D.s at Stanford prior to launching their companies.



Sergey Brin, co-founder, Google
"Sergey in China" by Steve Jurvetson is licensed under CC BY 2.0



Elon Musk, founder/CEO, SpaceX
"Elon Musk at the SpaceX CRS-8 post-launch press conference" by NASA Kennedy is licensed under CC BY 2.0

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However, many foreign universities are catching up in their ability to attract international students at high volumes, which is compounding skill shortages in key American industries. U.S. universities are not keeping pace with domestic industry's expansion of tech jobs and skill requirements. A study by the U.S. Department of Labor predicts that there will be **1.4 million open computer science jobs** by the end of 2019,¹⁵ while U.S. universities will only produce enough total graduates to fill **29%** of these openings.¹⁶

Some international students leverage the Optional Practical Training Program (OPT), and thanks to the second OPT extension in 2016, the number of students keeping their skills and talents in the U.S. after graduation has increased significantly. However, there are still thousands of graduates who choose to bring the training they received from U.S. universities back to their home countries. For this reason, human resources teams need to expand their campus recruiting, putting strategic policies in place to access the international talent being incubated in their community. Additionally, HR must build a strategic mobility program that can keep them engaged in the U.S. or abroad.

WHAT IS OPT? The *Optional Practical Training Program* allows a student or recent graduate who entered the U.S. on an F-1 visa to work in their major field of study for up to 14 months after their completion of study. Recent graduates in STEM fields can extend their employment authorization for up to 24 additional months through the *OPT STEM Extension*.¹⁷

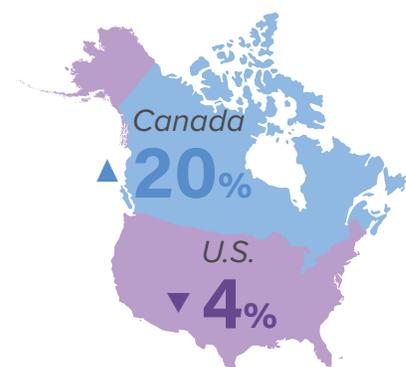


III. Talent's Many Choices

Will the next Elon Musk (Tesla), Indra Nooyi (PepsiCo) or Hamdi Ulukaya (Chobani) choose to bring their talents to the U.S.?

Today, employers are facing new talent challenges as a global skills shortage intensifies. Additionally, emerging economies are challenging America's preeminence as the world's most sought-after destination for talent.

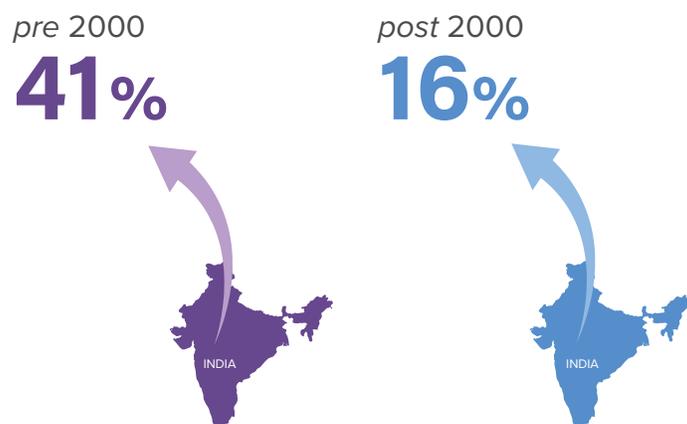
Demographic mapping by the U.N. shows that people with a college degree are **3x** more likely to live outside the country in which they were born. Attracting and retaining talent to the U.S. is becoming harder as other countries open their doors aggressively to skilled migrants. As the economic stability in many migrants' home countries improves, more talented individuals are choosing to stay put, rather than migrate with urgency to the U.S. Additionally, many foreign nationals consider the process to secure a U.S. work permit to be uncertain and difficult.



Despite being the number one destination in the world for international students, the U.S. university system experienced a **4%** decrease in international student enrollments in 2017.⁷ Meanwhile just north in Canada, international student enrollments increased by **20%**.¹⁸

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) are the top engineering universities in India. They rival the best STEM schools in the world. These schools have produced numerous technology leaders including Sundar Pichai (CEO of Google) and Vinod Khosla (co-founder of Sun Microsystems). Recent survey data shows that the number of IIT alumni bound for the U.S. after graduation is decreasing significantly, while other countries, such as Germany, Canada, the U.K., and Australia have emerged as growing destinations for top IIT talent.

In addition to this trend, a record number of graduates are electing to stay and pursue careers in India. Before the year 2000, 41% of IIT graduates left India upon graduation. Since 2000, that number has dropped to 16%.¹⁹



Sundar Pichai, CEO, Google



Indra Nooyi, former CEO, PepsiCo



Adi Tatarko, CEO and co-founder, Houzz



IV. Global Talent Is Two-way

U.S.-based employees want international opportunities in unprecedented numbers



Changing demographics and social norms have transformed talent mobility into a two-way flow. Global talent is no longer one-way, i.e. bringing foreign-born individuals into the United States. Industry leading talent programs recognize that global recruitment and international experiences for employees work hand-in-hand.

Starting in the 2000s, millennial workers began shifting companies' thinking. Leading organizations began to understand talent mobility as a professional development strategy and retention tool. To engage and retain top performers and specialized skillsets, organizations are embracing an inbound and outbound circulation of employees.

THE GLOBAL TALENT IMPERATIVE

One report by PwC on millennials found that **71% of millennial workers** in the U.S. desired an overseas assignment.⁹ In step with these highly publicized trends, rotation programs swiftly increased in popularity, and HR professionals have begun to leverage international work opportunities in leadership development and retention strategies.

Millennials often get the credit for fueling this change, but it is important to note that requests for overseas assignments have increased among every working demographic, including late-career professionals.

71% OF
MILLENNIALS
WANT
INTERNATIONAL
EXPERIENCES⁹

A Mercer survey in 2015 explored the reasons driving workers' desire for global opportunities. The most common reasons include:²⁰

98%

career development/
opportunities

61%

discovering
new countries & cultures

32%

learning/studies

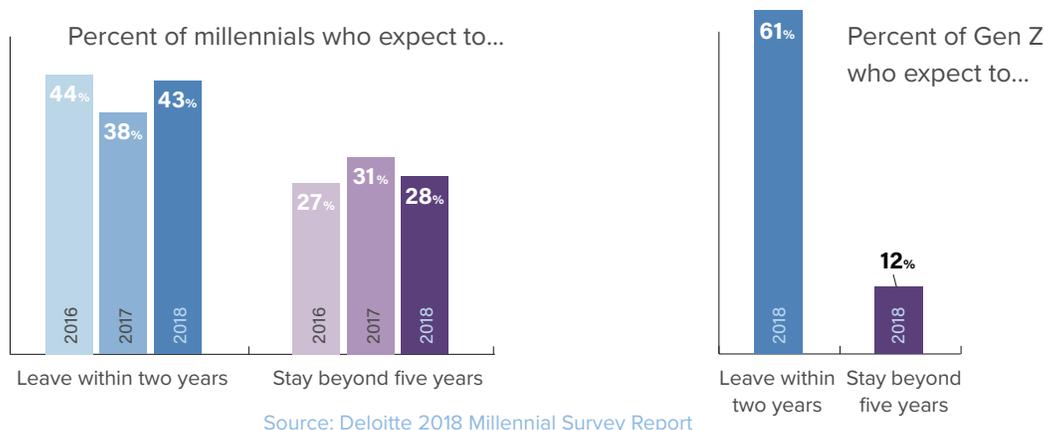
27%

higher compensation
long-term

3%

family

Retention challenges will likely continue, especially at firms that depend on a younger, tech-savvy workforce. Global mobility and creative professional development programs will be important tools for both acquisition and retention going forward. A 2018 survey of younger millennial and Generation Z workers found that 61% of Gen Z workers plan to leave their job within two years, while only 12% plan to stay more than five years. For millennials, those numbers are 43% and 28%, respectively.



Rotation programs are often seen as an expensive and complex perk offered by large companies, but there is ample opportunity for innovation. Small and medium-sized employers are leveraging short-term assignments, progressive travel policies and secondments to give employees global opportunities in a cost-efficient and scalable way.

“ A global survey of millennials found that 38 percent of them want to quit. Why? Many don't feel invested in. Sponsor development opportunities, and shout them loud and clear. ”

— **Kathryn Minshew**, founder and CEO at The Muse,
as seen in *Entrepreneur Magazine*, September 2017

V. Global Talent and Organizational Diversity

Diversity is a board and CEO-level priority, impacting talent acquisition, performance and retention

Global talent is not just about filling skills gaps and promoting employee retention. The long-overdue appreciation of ethnic and gender diversity's role in building better products and increasing performance at large and small businesses has rapidly proliferated across board rooms nationwide. Josh Bersin Insights found in a recent study of 450 leading multinational corporations that inclusive companies are 1.7x more likely to be innovation leaders in their market.²¹

“ Diversity & Inclusion needs to be something that every single employee at the company has a stake in. ”
— **Bo Young Lee**, Chief Diversity Officer at Uber,
as seen at the HR Uncubed Conference 2019

Promoting diversity in a company's approach to talent can also improve recruitment and retention. A Glassdoor study found that 67% of job seekers said a diverse workforce is important when considering job offers, and 57% of employees think their company should increase diversity. Meanwhile, only 14% think that their company does not need to do more on the topic of diversity.²²

Job Seekers/Employees:

Said a diverse workforce is important when considering job offers

67%

Think their company should increase diversity

57%

Don't think their company needs to do more

14%

Source: Glassdoor Insights 2015 Survey

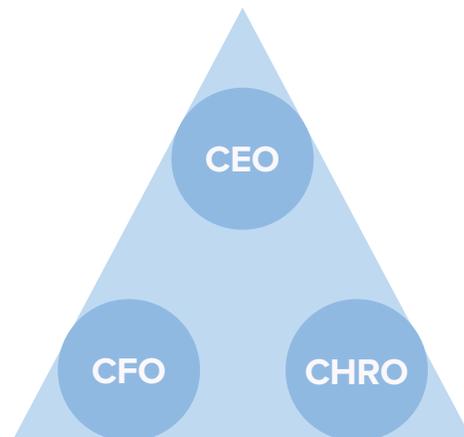
McKinsey & Co. analyzed 1,000 companies and found that the most ethnically diverse companies are **35%** more likely to outperform their peers in profitability and long-term value creation.¹⁰ They found that companies performed best when they embraced diversity, not only in absolute representation, but also in celebrating a variety of ethnicities and cultures within their organizations. Diversity builds better corporate cultures and leads to building the most creative and profitable business units.

THE GLOBAL TALENT IMPERATIVE

VI. HR Is The Answer

The strategic imperative for talent competitiveness

Global talent is imperative to the success of U.S. companies and to the competitiveness of America's innovation economy. It is critical that HR and business leadership are aligned in implementing strategies to mobilize and retain talent across borders. By adapting to key talent migration trends, implementing employee retention and engagement strategies and staying committed to multiculturalism and employee diversity, HR practitioners can lead their organizations through the uncertainty and challenges posed by global skills shortages and the complexities of global talent management. In the knowledge economy, human capital is the most critical resource to attract and incubate.



“ There’s more scarcity of talent than there is capital. There’s a lot of capital looking for ideas and opportunity, and it’s talent that’s the scarce part, and that’s a phenomenon of our times right now... one of the biggest investors in the world is BlackRock, and you go to the seventh floor of BlackRock and the person sitting beside (CEO) Larry Fink’s office is Jeff Smith, who’s the Chief Human Resources Officer. That’s deliberate... to be a good business leader, you need to understand HR. I hope we’ll see more CEOs coming from the HR function, and we’ll see more line leaders spending time in HR. There has to be a transformation there. ”

— **Dominic Barton**, former Global Managing Partner at McKinsey,
as seen in Quartz, April 2018

SECTION

3

TAKE STRATEGIC ACTION

Four actionable practices and focus areas to improve a company's acquisition, retention and mobilization of global talent



From Transactional to Strategic

Immigration and mobility considerations have often been viewed as transactional. Given the modern global talent imperative, organizations must bring executive and strategic focus to these functions. Organizations of all sizes should make global talent a company-wide priority. Brief your CEO on the immigration and talent mobility capabilities of your company and HR team. Executives should understand and have a strategic viewpoint regarding global talent initiatives and goals in the short and long term.

Here are four strategic areas of focus for your program development:

A. Enable a Competitive and Data-driven Global Talent Program

Policies and procedures must be in line with human capital needs. Build market-leading, transparent, scalable programs and consistent policies across all departments and geographies.

A1) Leverage data analytics and competitive intelligence

- ☑ Put in place routine analytics to evaluate the marketplace (e.g., talent trends, benefits, policies, labor flows) and benchmark against peers
- ☑ Leverage a data-driven service provider, so you can make real-time analytics and data visualization part of your immigration and global mobility programs

A2) Ensure end-to-end global mobility benefits

- ☑ Consider travel allowances for annual trips to home countries for holidays, family needs, etc.
- ☑ On arrival, provide support resources for the new hire and his or her family (e.g., language classes and cultural support)
- ☑ Educate hiring managers on these policies and how to find and talk to global talent

A3) Provide a competitive path to permanent residency

- ☑ Early green card sponsorship can establish more certainty for the employee and his or her family, while making key talent stickier. Employers are offering green card sponsorship as an acquisition and retention strategy
- ☑ Leverage best-in-class third party data sources and the latest global mobility and immigration insights (e.g., Envoy Immigration Trends)

66% of employers start the green card sponsorship process within the first year of employment. Companies are recognizing the importance of retention and certainty for their foreign national population, especially those with specialized skills.

Source: Envoy Global 2019 Immigration Trends report

B. Put Employee Experience at the Heart of Your Program

Foreign national anxiety about U.S. immigration is at an all-time high. Emphasize specialized policies and service standards to keep talent meaningfully engaged.

B1) Reduce foreign national anxiety before, during and after the visa process

- ☑ Be transparent regarding case process, timelines, and request for evidence and denial rates.
- ☑ Communicate realistic expectations throughout the journey and track compliance
- ☑ Emphasize responsiveness from your immigration and relocation providers. Employee questions and concerns should be answered in hours, not days
- ☑ Empathy from HR, attorneys, providers and business unit leaders is critical
- ☑ Communicate in clear, crisp messages and avoid unnecessary legalese; extend your support resources to spouses and trailing dependents
- ☑ Proactively monitor news events and address hot button topics clearly and communicatively with your foreign talent base

B2) Make talent mobility policies inclusive and mindful of international contexts

- ☑ Create a policy for safety precautions and support of LGBTQ+ employees traveling abroad
- ☑ Think about other employee demographics, such as women and minority populations that could benefit from specialized mobility policies and protections

B3) Keep employees that are traveling, working remotely or consulting on projects abroad highly engaged with the operations and culture at your head office

- ☑ Always give the person dialing or conferencing in the first and last word in meetings
- ☑ Make employee onboarding memorable
- ☑ Treat remote workers like VIPs when they visit HQ

In 2018, 63 CEOs from leading companies penned an open letter to the Secretary of Homeland Security to express their concerns about the rhetoric and policy changes that have increased foreign national anxiety to unprecedented levels.

“

We write to express our serious concern about changes in immigration policy that are causing considerable anxiety for many thousands of our employees while threatening to disrupt company operations.

”

— Business Roundtable, open letter to former Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen

C. Adapt Hiring Requirements to Tap Into Nontraditional Talent Pools

Broaden the purview of available talent by contextualizing things like degree requirements abroad and by engaging with local universities and vocational training programs.

C1) Local colleges and universities are often rich with untapped global talent

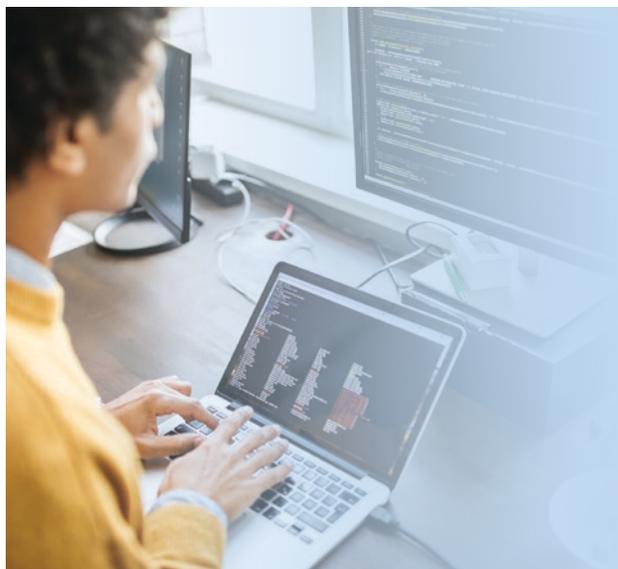
- ☑ Understand how on-campus foreign talent can fill specific talent gaps for which you struggle to find qualified U.S. workers (e.g., software engineers, data scientists, mechanical engineers, among other skills)
- ☑ Thousands of talented individuals do not leverage OPT to work in the U.S. after graduation; know how to leverage the program and convey your willingness to sponsor students for work permits after their OPT expires

C2) Enlighten your recruiting standards with the locally adjusted degree types and credentials of global university systems

- ☑ Make sure to equip your recruiters with the right context and language for both university and vocational degrees in new markets for tech talent (e.g., the vocational system in Germany and the technical colleges of India)

C3) Are college degrees relevant for most positions?

- ☑ Be open-minded to creative backgrounds in candidates, especially those with tech skills
- ☑ Familiarize your talent acquisition team with the reputable code academies and certificate-based programs in your area



Retraining Case Study

LinkedIn is an innovator in the employee retraining space. Last year, LinkedIn launched its *Reach Initiative*, an engineering apprenticeship program for people with non-technical backgrounds, including veterans, teachers, mothers who left the workforce, and athletes. Participants get trained for in-demand skills and launch careers in product and engineering roles at LinkedIn. Graduates of LinkedIn's program include a former food truck worker, teachers and even a former NFL kicker!

D. Make Global Rotations Something in Which the Majority of Your Employees Can Participate

Take global assignments from a purely senior executive program to a core career development vehicle, company-wide. Explore innovations to make global rotations and overseas experiences successful, efficient, retention-minded, and scalable at any size program.

D1) Shorter and more thoughtful placements

- ☑ Assignments can be 60-90 days; this allows for simplified administration and compliance, cheaper overall cost and less disruption to teams
- ☑ Select markets strategically (i.e., allow employees to travel/work in countries with the most efficient tax and immigration requirements)

D2) Prioritize employee experience and autonomy

- ☑ Take care of essential services, but give employees the autonomy to design rich experiences while abroad
- ☑ Leverage these short-term opportunities as a perk for continued tenure or performance, keeping top talent highly engaged
- ☑ Choose the right providers to ensure scalable administration for HR and terrific customer service for your employees

Rotations Case Study

A U.S. technology services company has a leadership development rotation program which allows high-potential early-tenured employees to spend time at multiple overseas offices and in different business units. The program typically has over 25 participants from a wide range of functions including technology, product, analytics, finance and marketing teams. The company utilizes existing overseas offices and strategic placements to keep costs efficient.

SECTION

4

CITATIONS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



CITATIONS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was written by Envoy Global's Insights Team. The team compiled leading research, data analytics and expert commentary on topics related to global talent. For more information on Envoy and the team's resource library visit [Envoy Insights](#). Contact the author at insights@envoyglobal.com.

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