

Remote, hybrid & virtual work

During the pandemic employees became accustomed to working from home. Today, requests for remote and hybrid work and virtual assignments are common. Employees look to their employers to support these requests.

SUPPORTING ALTERNATIVE WORK PATTERNS

Global mobility professionals need to weigh up the potential advantages and disadvantages of supporting employee requests for remote, hybrid and virtual working. There are implications for talent management, compliance, and relocation policy.

In deciding how to approach this, employers must consider the benefits of these types of working both for employees and organisations. But the drawbacks must also be thought through. All can potentially cause difficulty for team cohesion and the face-to-face leadership of the workforce.



DEFINING TERMS

International remote work refers to employee requests to perform their duties for varying periods of time in a different country from where their job role is formally based.

Hybrid working usually refers to a mix of working from home combined with employment duties being performed on site in the work location.

Virtual work refers to employees undertaking an international role while remaining in their home country. It does not involve physical relocation.

TALENT IMPLICATIONS

Organisations want to attract, motivate and retain the very best talent. Employees look for flexibility in where they can work and remote, hybrid and virtual work are attractive.

Employees may wish to undertake periods of remote work to extend their trips to visit family or to continue working for a while in their vacation location.

Hybrid working enables employees to spend time at home while working such that they can manage domestic issues more easily and reduce commuting times. This offers work-life balance advantages.

Virtual assignments enable individuals to remain in their home country with their family members, meaning no disruption to children's education or their partners' careers. Undertaking a virtual assignment offers career enhancement without the disruption and stress associated with a physical relocation.

Virtual assignments can also facilitate those who are unable to relocate to gain international experience. This is particularly helpful to widen diversity in the international assignee workforce.

COMPLIANCE ISSUES

Working in a country that differs from the employment location generates compliance issues. Employers need to be aware of the tax and immigration ramifications that flow from this and any costs arising. These must be balanced against their desire to offer a competitive talent strategy to attract, motivate and retain skilled individuals.

Employers thus need to review whether remote working is possible in the specific location requested by the employee. They also need to decide for how long remote work can be carried out.

RELOCATION POLICY

The organisation should have a policy to frame how the employer will manage these forms of international working. To manage remote work effectively, it is important to have technology that can track days spent in the international remote work location.

The policy should also provide details on support that will be funded by the employer in respect of costs associated with, for example, immigration, tax, travel, housing, and medical.

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