

## When Fatima met Ezeibe ... Lessons for managing mobility in a post pandemic environment

"Fatima Johnston is a Director in our Business Travel Advantage team and was a founding member of the team.



Fatima has worked with more than 20 organisations on the design, development and deployment of their business travel and remote work programmes and is regularly called on to contribute to and speak at industry events. Outside work, three children and a fur-baby called Margot keep Fatima busy."

**We are excited to have you here today Ezeibe, for the launch of our series, thank you for joining us. Let's start by introducing you and your role at Equinix**

I have been part of the Equinix Mobility team for the past three years and Head of Mobility since November 2021. This includes managing all things cross-border including business travel compliance and permanent moves. The most recent change to the programme is our response to flexible cross border workers – people who request cross border working, rather than people who are fulfilling a business need.

Global mobility reports into talent management team at Equinix so we have a talent slant which obviously results in a very broad and exciting programme.

We are transforming as an organisation. It's a dynamic place to be which means we have the opportunity to do in practice what is just conceptual in a lot of organisations. It's not just about a compliant move from A to B to fill a skills gap but about using our programme to deliberately develop talent and do it in a way that fosters diversity, inclusion and belonging. **It's also about creating flexibility in where and how people work which is a new challenge for us.** There is so much opportunity and goodwill where we are. It's super exciting and we sometimes even find time to sleep!



## From there to here – Ezeibe’s career path

I have a legal background and began my working career as an immigration solicitor. I’ve always had an eye on the bigger picture though and, after an immigration blog I wrote was spotted, I was invited to start a conversation with Sapien and then invited to join the mobility team there. This is where I soaked up knowledge and experience from colleagues and external vendors. I also drew on experience of two years in Boston where I held a regional and then global role.

When the balance of the role for Sapien became more operational, I looked for a new challenge. The Equinix role looked like it had a lot of build in it, a lot that had to be created. I recognised the trajectory of the business and thought it would be nice to get in and influence the direction of development. But mostly I was responding to a challenge from a colleague who invited me to “build the future of mobility together at Equinix.” That’s what we’re doing.

## The past 24 months have brought about significant challenges, what was your biggest professional challenge during this period?

At the time the pandemic hit, we were already in the process of transforming our approach to mobility – the pandemic just added another string to our bow. The biggest challenge the pandemic threw up was how to respond to cross border requests and the first part of that challenge was dealing with people who were stuck. They were stuck everywhere! Having identified where people were, we were then faced with the challenge of how we supported our people while maintaining corporate compliance. We are a very people centric organisation and the pandemic showed exactly how much mobility is a personal thing. We began dealing with individuals who wanted to continue to work but be closer to family – these were often deeply emotional conversations. We were helping facilitate the movement and retention of people in ways we had not normally done.

## Did you have the right tools or processes to deal with the situation?

It was a very disruptive situation, and no one could have had all the right tools. Ironically, as business travel paused, we were in process of implementing a fantastic business travel tool but we had nothing that dealt with employee-initiated remote work requests. We had to adapt and adapt quickly. We wrote new processes and new policies after envisioning the future for Equinix and what would be needed. We are now in the process of putting in place a tool which will automate remote work evaluations to help speed up and inform our decision making.

## So, in addition to creating a process to enable employee initiated cross border requests you implemented a new business travel compliance solution – how is that performing?

The pandemic threw up a challenge in increasing remote working requests, but we did not want to address this and lose sight of our business travel enhancement plans.

It was critical that we created a highly **automated process** that delivered compliance but that was simple for the travellers and the business. With Deloitte’s support we were able to implement an automated process that assesses compliance risk, delivers on any actions required (e.g., PWD notifications) and that supports oversight across all travel happening within the business. Employee involvement is deliberately limited. The process uses data they have entered into the SAP Concur online booking tool – **so it’s seamless**. The new process has been well received with both our leadership team and business travellers. It has also **freed up our team** to the extent that we can start to focus on other areas.

### Finally, what is your advice for a mobility professional facing today's mobility landscape?

1

Remote working is on the rise. Seriously consider implementing a tool to support you with this! We should not be creating additional manual processes to manage this – that is not a scalable solution.

2

Ensure there is a compliance mindset in your company so that folks understand why this is important. This period has flagged travel risks to many companies and more and more people understand that they need to comply with travel obligations. Technology will be your friend in creating business travel solutions that are accepted and adopted by your business travellers.

3

Act now. Leverage one good thing to have come out of the pandemic – take advantage of the goodwill and willingness to engage in compliance actions to have conversations in your business to understand what infrastructure you need to monitor and manage.

### Ezeibe in 5 ...

Early Bird

Night Owl



Early adopter

Reluctant latecomer



Introvert

Extrovert



Beach

Ski



Dog

Cat





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