



# UnlockTalent

Insights from Deloitte's GES EMEA Talent Leaders' Summit 2024

Lisbon, 1-2 October



## **Contemplate:**

The disruptive forces impacting our working lives

## **Explore:**

How to support your businesses' strategic objectives

## **Develop:**

An action plan to put strategy into practice



**"We've come to the ancient city of Lisbon, renowned for its voyages of discovery, to explore and push our boundaries and to start our own journeys of exploration."** Guy Seeger

# Welcome

In Lisbon, we brought together some of the best talent management minds at our inaugural EMEA Global Talent Leaders' Summit. The aim? To solve the challenge of managing our organisations' most important assets – our people – in an increasingly complex and dynamic world.

The discussions, insights and ideas from our Summit have led to this publication. In it, we explore our shared experiences so we can

unlock the power of global talent.

Our hope is that you can also use some of these insights to fuel your own passion and excitement as you start the next phase of discovery in your own organisation.

Together, let's drive insight into action.

**Guy Seeger,**  
Global Employer  
Services Leader







We explored four macro-challenges organisations are dealing with – navigating the polycrisis, addressing the skills shortage, the shifting regulatory environment and the age of AI.

### Navigating the polycrisis

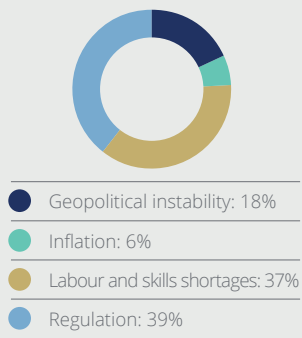
We're dealing with geopolitical instability, inflation, labour shortages and increasing regulation. And many organisations are still experiencing the aftermath of Covid and Brexit.

Organisations are facing persistent and simultaneous challenges and when layered on top of existing business complexity and cost pressures, it can make today's environment extremely difficult for talent and mobility leaders.

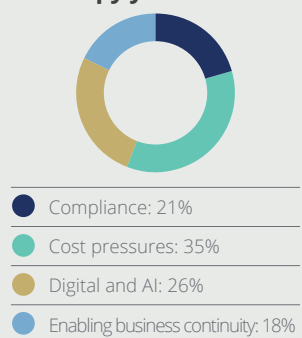
Take skills, for example. We need to place people who are digitally fluent. We need green capabilities. But there's a growing political narrative around reducing immigration. How do you manage that? And at the same time we're being asked what value we bring. What's the ROI when it comes to global mobility? Is there any tangible way to quantify it or is it all about impact?

It can feel like getting the right people to the right place – navigating immigration changes, evolving demands as we move to a green AI-enabled future, and a whole host of emerging legislation like the EU Pay Transparency Directive – has never been harder.

#### Which of the major shifts outlined below are currently having the biggest impact on your organisation?



#### Looking ahead, what are the areas that are likely to occupy you most?



### Addressing the skills shortage

The challenge is real, it's global and it's affecting almost everyone. In fact, statistics suggest 75% of employers worldwide are reporting difficulties when filling roles.\* But what's causing the skills shortage? And, importantly, what can we do as global mobility leaders to tackle it?

From manufacturing to IT, healthcare to hospitality, businesses are struggling.

Tech talent, in particular, is in high demand with the digital revolution creating a growing need for software developers, data scientists and cyber security experts. The shortage is especially acute in developed economies and it's creating fierce competition among companies, pushing up salaries and benefit costs.

But the technological advancements driving demand mean the skills

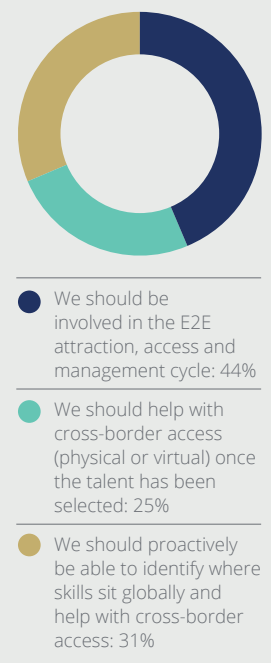
we need now may be obsolete tomorrow, which makes navigating the crisis even harder.

Some professions aren't attracting the younger generation while developing countries often have a surplus of young skilled people, although immigration laws stop us from moving talent around as seamlessly as we used to. Economies are also grappling with ageing populations and shrinking workforces.

Meanwhile, today's double income, dual career families don't always find relocation attractive, so we need to identify new ways to make physical moves appealing to our people. It's a lot to get to grips with.

\* Forbes, February 2024

#### What should the role of global mobility be in global talent attraction and management?



### The shifting regulatory environment

Various global political, economic and environmental crises are pushing legislators to introduce new regulations and requirements for businesses. And organisations are feeling the pressure to get it right from the start.

For talent leaders, it has meant backfilling regulations based upon current projects and even rethinking entire value propositions. We're having to really consider how the global workforce – and managing that workforce – is impacted by each crisis.

For companies with an international focus, there's a wider challenge to ensure changes in regulation like the EU Pay Transparency Directive and international tax reforms like Pillar Two are equitable and fair. Companies must also consider how they can remain compliant, yet tax efficient, in different jurisdictions.

Compounding the challenge further, changes in political landscapes and governments can result in the same regulations and legislations being

interpreted differently. It presents a problem for organisations that are trying to respond and plan ahead.

Take work permits and visas. Increasing complexity means that immigration and mobility have become key regulatory hurdles. And a lack of certainty around the future of regulating a global workforce means that some companies are moving away from an international mobility policy to more national ones.

But there is still a demand for global talent and there will always be exceptions to the rules. Organisations need clarity on how to handle

#### What is the greatest risk your organisation faces in managing the global workforce amid evolving regulations?



### The age of AI

Use cases have soared in recent years. And so have mobility professionals' attitudes towards it.

We asked a room of talent mobility specialists for the word that best summarised their perspective on AI. The top responses? 'Hopeful' and 'excited'.

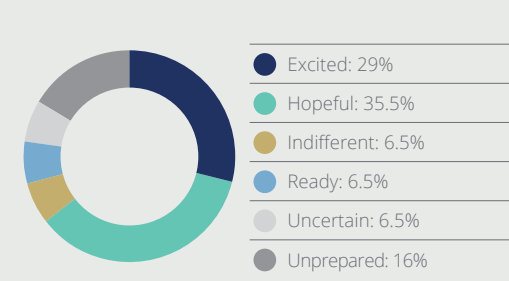
The mood has shifted. Just one year ago, more professionals were saying they were 'indifferent' or 'unprepared'.

At Deloitte, we've been successfully using machine learning models for five or six years. For example, we trained them to classify expenses transactions for employees on assignment. AI makes the predictions for us and gives our people the space to focus on less administrative tasks.

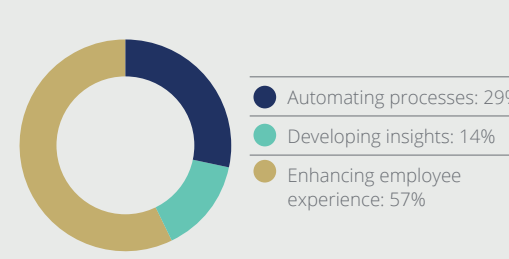
Machine learning AI, however, is very different from Generative AI, where there are blockers and concerns around risk – particularly surrounding data security and factual accuracy.

Nonetheless, many organisations are already using this tech, whether through Microsoft Copilot or an in-

#### Which word best describes your main emotion when considering AI in the workplace?



#### What objectives do you have when thinking about the impact of AI within your business?



those exceptions from a regulatory standpoint. Until then, creative ways around navigating borders for hiring talent continue to be sought.

Technology, meanwhile, is rapidly evolving. There has been a huge increase in AI-driven projects within companies, which regulators have had to introduce rules and regulations around.

GDPR has been in place for a long time now as a way of processing and protecting data and privacy. AI really puts GDPR back in focus, because often it needs to work with personal data, which can be a concern.

And now, with the introduction of the EU AI Act, organisations will need to make sure their AI systems are trustworthy and respect the rights of their workforce, while continuing to save time and money.

house ChatGPT tool. And bespoke applications in the mobility space are emerging.

For example, a chatbot or AI-powered assistant can be grounded in policy documentation or tax technical data, immigration guides or social security data. The user – an employee or a case handler in HR – asks a question in natural language, then gets an answer derived from that information.

Generative AI is also being deployed to get more out of data. It's pulling out key pieces of information from thousands of pages of unstructured data and summarising it or turning it into something structured.

The increase in applications is in contrast to conversations taking place a year ago, but scaling AI in the mobility space still comes with some challenges.



# UnlockAgility

With agility as the new strategic imperative, it's clear that staying ahead means continuously evolving – both geographically and in terms of talent. But what does this mean for global mobility leaders?

In today's landscape, change is the only constant – and it's accelerating. As businesses look to enter new markets and transform their models, the pressure to stay flexible, scale effectively and explore new technologies has never been greater.

But nearly half of CEOs have an eye on costs,\* even as they expand and transform products and services.

Global mobility leaders are being tasked not only with ensuring compliance, but also driving innovation while delivering real value and doing more with less.

The questions on everyone's minds are: How do you attract and retain the right talent in a world where competition is fierce? How can you maintain operational efficiency while meeting evolving expectations around flexibility and employee experience? And, most importantly, what does agility in action really look like?

\* Deloitte 2024 CEO Survey



### What you need to consider

- What do you need to do to become more agile, so you can move and scale up or down as the business needs it?
- How can you put the right person with the right job? Do you need to put one person on the job? Or do you choose skills and combine them into one task? How do you do it more effectively as technologies evolve and become more complex?
- How can you do more, quicker and for less?
- What do you automate, delegate and keep within your team?

**“It’s not what has happened, but what will happen. You have to adopt that perspective so you can deal with uncertainty.”**



### Perspectives on unlocking agility

- “You need data points to feed into your discussions. It enables better choices.”

“A dedicated taskforce of specialists can help focus on the most important KPI – maybe cost.”

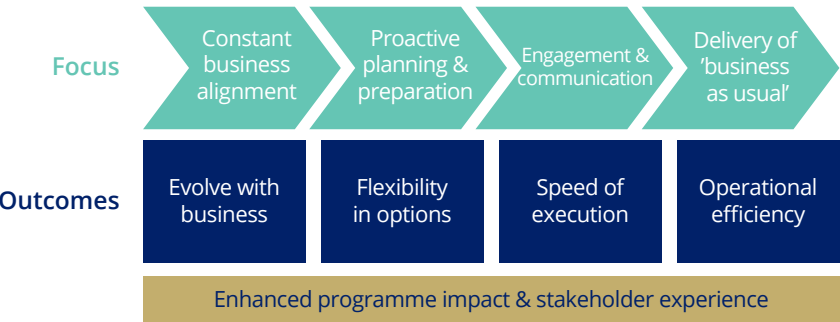
“We can focus on the obstacles and all of the reasons why something can’t work. It’s about getting the team to focus on how you can make it work – if someone needs five things, are there three that are critical and
- are two nice-to-haves? How do you make those three happen?”

“Can we get to a point where there are no policies, no assignments, no transfers? We’re just mobile.”

“You need foresight. Otherwise, you build the thing that fits today, but not tomorrow.”

“You can’t drop operational excellence but what the business is challenging you to do is the other half of the coin – the strategy.”

### Talent agility in action



### Key reflections

1. Listen to the business, understand what it wants and align with business strategy.
2. Interact with, and educate, the right people across the business to elevate your role and ensure that global mobility is brought in when decisions are being made.
3. Balance strategy and operations – each should complement the other.
4. Get rid of labels – you do, and are expected to do, so much more than simply move people.
5. Demonstrate your value and ask for what you need to keep delivering this – skills, resources, technology, funding, agency, etc.

### Agility at a glance

**79%** of CEOs will have new business strategies ready by the end of 2024

**81%** of board members say business disruption caused by skills shortages is a top workforce risk to growth

Source: 2024 Gartner CEO & Senior Business Executive Survey

### CEOs are keen to expand their global footprint to:



Source: Fortune/Deloitte CEO Survey, 2024

**87%** of mid-market businesses globally want to increase overseas expansion in the next year – **42%** are looking to expand significantly, with Western Europe, North America and Northern Asia the top **3** locations

Source: The Interpreneur survey: Mid-market global business trends, Kreston Global

**10%** of UK domestic businesses – around **450,000** – intend to expand beyond borders in the next year

Source: More UK firms are looking to go global for growth, HSBC, Nov 23

**16%** of international businesses, particularly from Europe, identified the UAE as a top growth opportunity

Source: International expansion is a growth driver for businesses, Santander Trade barometer, 2024



# UnlockDigital

Exploring topics ranging from data architecture to reporting capabilities, we consider the barriers to success.

From a digital perspective we’re seeing two key shifts. The first is towards consumer-grade expectations, not just across mobility but more generally across HR. The other is a move towards the importance of understanding the ecosystem. There’s a recognition that exists within the broader HR, finance and payroll ecosystem that the data has to work, as does the user experience within that.

But when it comes to maturity, clients are in different places. Some are very evolved and doing some pretty advanced things, but this isn’t the case

for everyone. If you’re still using spreadsheets, you’re not alone.

Our advice is that if you are still paper-based, trying to jump all the way to AI might be a huge leap. Take a step back and look at what you’ve got going on. Create an inventory of all the projects and platforms you’re using, then set yourself a roadmap. Use this to steer yourself towards digital maturity.

## Talent barriers in a digital world

### Vendor management

- Data quality
- Data classification
- Data security
- Data privacy
- Data integrity
- Integration
- Integration costs
- Complexities
- Unwillingness to collaborate

**“Vendors need to stop being so protective about the information they have. They’ve all got to play together because that’s the only way we’re going to be able to tell the stories.”**

### Employee experience

- Expectations versus reality
- Cost constraints
- Measuring success
- What is a good employee experience?
- Data from differing viewpoints
- Too much data to prioritise trends and performance

**“We’ve got the data, now it’s just what do we do with it.”**

### Talent deployment

- Complexity
- Lack of talent marketplace
- Visibility of skills
- Viable talent deployment options
- Integration with talent acquisition
- Investment
- Type of technology and platforms
- Adequate data
- Demographic and policy data
- Data to inform succession planning
- Mobility not being involved early enough
- Budget expectations
- Attitude to risk
- Lack of awareness around compliance

**“Mobility can help inform the decision-making process around candidate selection.”**

**“We use AI as a prompt to break the back of a particular puzzle or question.”**



## Moving from insight to action

### Global workforce of the future

With geopolitical instability ever present, the focus is no longer on where and how we deploy people, but how we maintain business continuity in a compliant way that meets our regulatory requirements and works for the business.

To create the team of the future we need to explore the role of data. Currently, there seems to be a few parallel shifts. One is that skill sets – or the skill sets needed within future mobility and talent functions – will need to be rooted in data, rather than leverage data.

There’s also the question of whether that data should be driven by vendors and providers or sit in-house. Also, to what extent can AI or GenAI be used at the function or enterprise level? Should it be designed to elevate existing roles rather than take away?

### Tech integrations

People are talking about integrations, but how can you integrate if you haven’t started to automate? Do that first, then you can start talking about integrations within your organisation.

Once you’ve explored this, how do you start to share that data internally within HR, talent or finance teams and then think about external vendor services? How do you pass data around the vendor ecosystem?

The protectionist nature vendors have today has to start breaking down – then you can move into the world of innovating. Innovation is how you enter the world of AI, because that’s the next level of maturity.

Currently, companies are saying they have the data but they haven’t got the systems to share it, or the vendors have it but need to share it.

So how can you fund innovation? There are different funding models, for example, could you charge your business for your services to help you prioritise your initiatives?

### Data and AI

Lots of businesses are talking about employee experience use cases, or case handler use cases, that are underpinned by GenAI. But it’s clear there are companies at different ends of the experimentation spectrum.

People who are starting to test are focusing on areas like GenAI governance to limit the capability of AI assistants to do something counterproductive. This might mean restricting use cases to more routine questions that are, for now, quite safe to answer.

If you’re thinking about what could be achieved, we suggest first looking at the fundamentals – your governance structures and data integrity. These will help prepare you for a future we know is coming.

We know AI can free up time for humans but people like dealing with people, not machines. Our message is that the focus of AI is not to replace humans but to allow humans to do things they really need to do.



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“Think big,  
start small...  
but just start!”

**Rumi Das, Head of Global Workforce  
Consulting, Deloitte LLP**

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