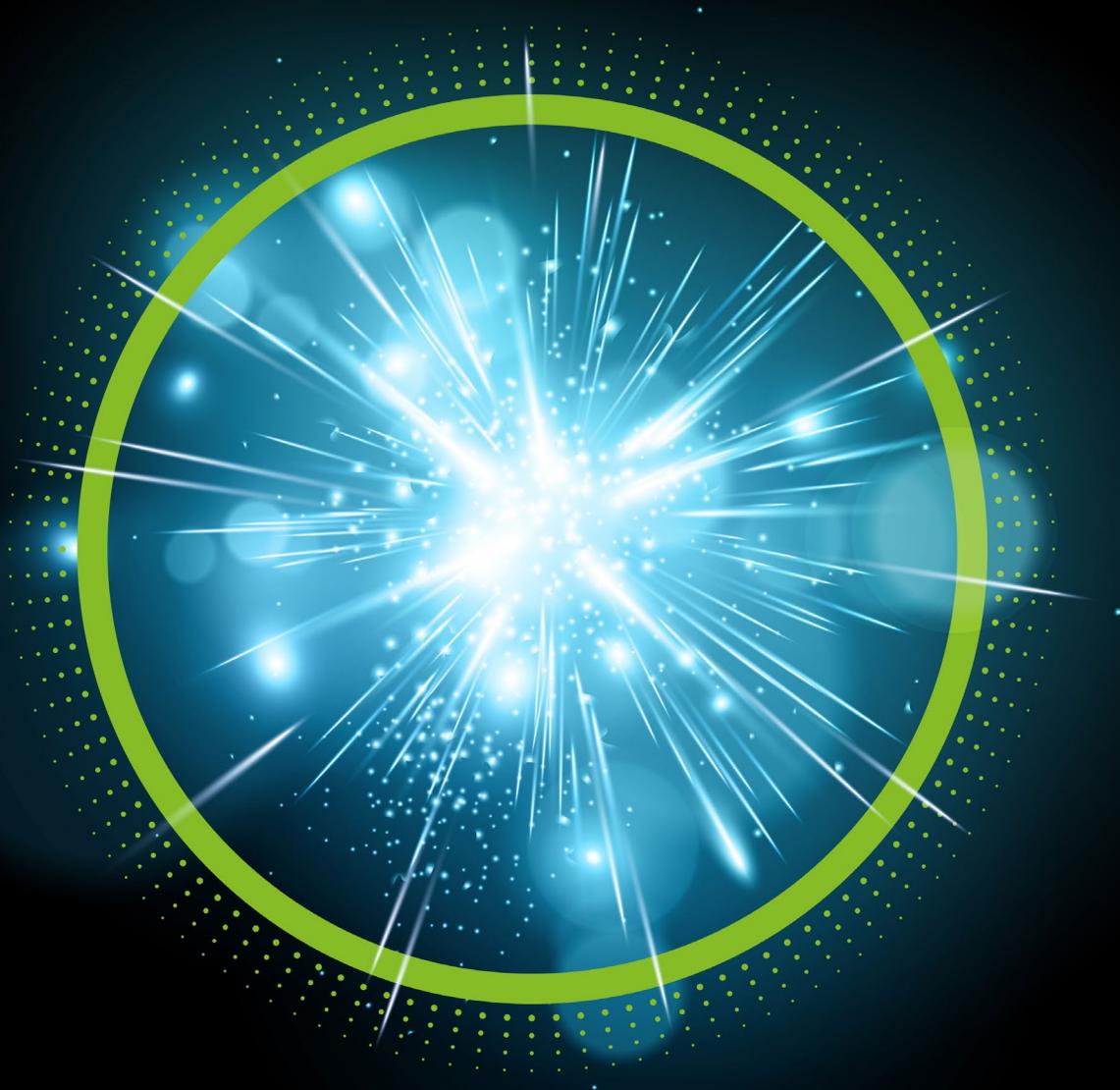


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From efficiency to
resilience: Redefining
operational excellence in
global talent mobility

February 2026

Operational excellence for global talent mobility programs now goes beyond cost-effective relocations, complex procedures, and managing accruals.

Today, organizations are embracing a more holistic and dynamic approach to operational excellence, one that goes beyond cost control to encompass agility, innovation, and cross-functional collaboration. This evolution is largely driven by rapid technological advancements, including automation, data analytics, and agentic artificial intelligence (AI), and the need to respond to shifting business priorities in an increasingly complex environment. Organizations are relying more on their global talent mobility teams to support strategic outcomes and need to respond quickly to C-suite enterprise-wide visions and directives. Global talent mobility has the data and technical knowledge to support the organization but needs to work with the enterprise operations across HR, finance, and IT. These relationships and connections will allow global talent mobility to meet today's business challenges.

In fact, driving operational excellence was rated as the topmost priority in a recent 2025 Deloitte Global Employer Services Client Summit survey of global mobility leaders; 43% of participants rated it as their top focus area for the immediate future.¹ While operational excellence is not a new concept, based on participant feedback and what we're seeing in the marketplace, the definition has evolved dramatically from what it used to be. Today, rapid technological advancements, shifting talent expectations, and increasingly dynamic external forces have transformed what organizations consider to be operational excellence, from how it is achieved to the enablers and intended outcomes.

¹2025 Americas Global Employer Services Summit Survey



Where we started: Traditional view of operational excellence: 'Doing more with less'

Historically, operational excellence was primarily associated with cost reduction, process enhancement, and efficiency with emphasis on streamlining workflows to enhance productivity. Operational excellence was largely defined by the ability to “do more with less,” emphasizing standardized processes and resource reduction. For global talent mobility, this meant focusing on several key areas, such as:



Cost reduction

The primary objective was to reduce expenses across all areas of operations, typically accomplished through budgetary constraints and streamlined staffing approaches.



Process streamlining

Efforts were focused on simplifying and standardizing processes to promote consistency, enhance repeatability, and reduce the risk of errors.



Resource utilization

Emphasis was placed on enhancing the utilization of internal resources and external vendors to enhance output and overall productivity and monitoring their success as part of the ecosystem.



Manual operations

Many processes were manual in nature, relying extensively on email and spreadsheets, with limited adoption of workflow automation or integration with external partners.

For global talent mobility, this might be reflected in programs with mandates to cut costs by a flat amount. This was often achieved through headcount reduction and staff augmentation, outsourcing to vendors or shared services, and streamlining assignment packages to simpler, more administratively easy formats (e.g., cash lump sums in lieu of certain managed benefits) or reducing the number of complex long-term assignments in favor of one-way moves.

Organizations also sought to more efficiently leverage vendors to support repetitive operations that internal teams didn't have time for or could not efficiently perform, such as cost estimates, assignment letters, and assignment tracking.

This approach proved most effective for mobility programs in stable environments where predictability and cost control were the primary objectives, allowing organizations to maintain consistent performance and manage expenses tightly. However, this often came at the expense of flexibility, leaving organizations less able to adapt quickly to change and limiting capacity to pursue innovative solutions or respond to emerging opportunities.

While many organizations still operate with this traditional mindset, the results of Deloitte's Global Employer Services Client Summit survey¹ indicate a clear shift toward a different approach is taking place.

¹2025 Americas Global Employer Services Summit Survey



The present: A broader, tech-driven perspective: 'Doing more with tech'

Today, many organizations are embracing a more holistic and dynamic approach to operational excellence, one that goes beyond cost control to encompass agility, innovation, and cross-functional collaboration. This evolution is largely driven by rapid technological advancements and the need to respond to shifting business priorities in an increasingly complex environment. Key developments include:

- **Digital transformation and automation:** Many organizations are leveraging automation to streamline operations, reduce error rates, and enable global mobility teams to focus on higher-value activities such as strategic business advisory. According to Deloitte's Global Employer Services Client Summit survey, 57% of respondents reported leveraging internal technology solutions to support operational excellence within their programs.¹
- **Data-driven decision-making:** The adoption of real-time analytics and business intelligence tools empowers organizations to identify inefficiencies and make faster, more informed decisions. For example, reviewing processes and their operational outcomes can highlight areas that are creating bottlenecks, such as the amount of time needed to secure business approvals.
- **Enhanced collaboration:** Cloud-based platforms and automated data-sharing (e.g., application programming interfaces [APIs]) facilitate integrated internal and vendor ecosystems, resulting in more efficient workflows and seamless information-sharing without relying on email.
- **Employee experience:** Operational efficiency is now closely tied to the employee experience, driving better candidate and policy selection, clearer and timely communications, more accurate budgeting, efficient compliance, and risk mitigation.
- **Agility and adaptability:** Many organizations increasingly prioritize the ability to respond rapidly to market changes and disruptions, whether launching new policies or addressing geopolitical risks.
- **Talent supply chain optimization:** There is a heightened focus on enhancing talent acquisition and management to navigate disruptions, access critical skills in key locations, and control costs.

¹2025 Americas Global Employer Services Summit Survey

Operational excellence today encompasses speed, flexibility, and value creation, extending far beyond traditional cost considerations. Many organizations leverage technological advancements, such as automation, artificial intelligence, and real-time analytics, to implement smarter, more adaptive processes that can quickly respond to changing market demands. This modern approach positions efficiency not only as a means to enhance mobility return on investment (ROI) but also to improve employee satisfaction. As a result, operational efficiency is increasingly viewed as a strategic asset that supports long-term growth and resilience.

Deloitte's Global Employer Services Client Summit survey data also showed global talent mobility leaders are increasing integration across vendors and internal partners, as well as

placing a greater emphasis on upskilling team members and aligning mobility with broader business initiatives: 63% of respondents chose team upskilling as their top focus area in enabling operational excellence for their global talent mobility function and team, such as enhanced advisory skills to better guide the business and AI technical skills to enhance productivity.

The future of global talent mobility is poised to center on a more predictive, human-centric, and resilient mobility program, leveraging enhanced advisory capabilities, data-driven insights, and processes that can be automated along with other HR processes.



The future: Predictive, human-centric, and resilient: 'Strategy over routine'

Looking ahead, operational efficiency will be increasingly driven by the integration of advanced technologies and a heightened emphasis on people. This enables mobility to be more strategic, make data-driven decisions, create autonomous processes that are truly touchless, and enable people to spend time where it matters. Emerging attributes of leading global talent mobility programs include:



AI and machine learning integration

The adoption of Generative AI (GenAI) and agentic AI and machine learning is enabling the automation of complex tasks, the generation of deeper insights, and the enhancement of employee experiences. As a result, human roles within global talent mobility are evolving to focus more on creativity, strategic problem-solving, and collaboration with talent and business stakeholders.



Hyper automation

The convergence of AI, robotic process automation (RPA), and low-code/no-code platforms is enabling seamless, enterprisewide automation of business processes.



Predictive analytics

Advanced analytics capabilities are empowering organizations to forecast future outcomes and proactively develop strategies based on anticipated trends.



Human-centric technology use

Technology is increasingly being leveraged to augment human capabilities, allowing global mobility teams to dedicate more time to higher-value, strategic activities.



Continuous improvement culture

Efficiency will be viewed as a continuous journey, necessitating ongoing evaluation and refinement of processes to ensure sustained improvement and adaptability.

Technology and technical capabilities are key attributes to the future of global talent mobility. Deloitte's 2025 Global Human Capital Trends survey found that the top two business case drivers for investing in new technologies were enabling a workforce to do more, faster and decrease cost. Respondents said the most important drivers are enabling workers and machines to create value together, enabling the workforce to create new types of value and improving worker well-being.

These responses present a new reality that complicates the ROI equation. The value case for the new technology investments must capture not just process efficiencies or a simple set of inputs and outputs, but also the tech's impact on less easily measurable results

traditionally associated with human capabilities, such as innovation, ways of working, and human performance and outcomes. The value case also needs to account for additional investments or changes necessary to realize the technology's promise.²

Global talent mobility teams should consider working within HR and IT to inventory data and technology that will enhance their programs to gain greater efficiencies, streamline processes, and allow the function to shift from being operations focused to added strategic value within HR and for the business.



²Victor Reyes, David Mallon, and Amy Sanford, "New tech. New work. Your old value case isn't enough," 2025 Global Human Capital Trends, Deloitte Insights, March 23, 2025.

How to start

The concept of operational excellence within global talent mobility has undergone significant evolution over time:

1

Educate

Educate yourself in the *usage, risks, and capabilities of AI* to establish a baseline of knowledge through training. *Understand prompt engineering* to achieve desired results and develop a prompt library of successful prompts.

4

Value

Develop a business case demonstrating the value of investing in GenAI through experience enhancements, cost and time savings, and better decision-making capabilities. *Create a roadmap and plan for how you will pilot GenAI* on your team.

2

Research

Understand your *organization's AI strategy* and identify *opportunities to integrate and harmonize* your priorities with any existing infrastructure. Research tools or solutions available or being developed internally and externally. Request demos.

5

Examine

Review your data. What data do you have available, and how can it be leveraged? What insights do you want to be able to identify, and what kind of information do you need to collect? What are your privacy and confidentiality considerations around data collection and usage for training for potential solutions?

3

Assess

Make sure your team is prepared for change. Review end-to-end processes, roles, responsibilities, and skill sets to assess if your team *is performing the right jobs* and if there is *a need to upskill or identify new talent* to bridge the gaps.

6

Implement

Identify tools and *solutions that can be leveraged today or developed with your current resources.* This technology is evolving rapidly and there are many tools already available to help drive toward better efficiencies, experiences, and data insights.

This progression reflects a shift from manual, cost-focused operations to technology-enabled agility, and ultimately toward intelligent, resilient systems that prioritize adaptability and innovation.

Organizations should begin by assessing their current state to determine whether they are primarily focused on traditional efficiency or actively embracing digital transformation within global talent mobility. Exploring emerging technologies through targeted pilot projects, (e.g., perhaps in specific countries or mobility profiles) can help future-proof operations. Global talent mobility teams should assess technologies used within their vendor ecosystem and understand how they are building for a better-connected future. As an example, Deloitte is utilizing a data integration platform that allows clients and their external mobility alliances to collaborate and connect. We understand that employees and HR teams want to move away from entering duplicate sets of data to facilitate global relocation and comply with tax legislation. Deloitte's GlobalAdvantage platform is streamlining the development of APIs so clients can manage all the global talent mobility data in one place. In addition to the automation we're developing for our own tools, we are supporting clients with upskilling their global talent

mobility teams with AI learning, identifying processes that can be enhanced through AI and activating an integrated ecosystem.

At the same time, investing in people is essential; upskilling mobility teams for more creative and strategic roles, such as aligning team members by business unit and involving them in global workforce planning with a "buy, borrow, or build" talent perspective, will enhance organizational agility. Finally, fostering a culture of continuous improvement by encouraging regular review and adaptation of processes and policies will ensure ongoing relevance and sustained success.

The journey to embrace and actively implement the evolving market definition of operational excellence marks only the beginning for organizations. Global talent mobility programs serve as strategic levers for enhancing organizational capability, driving innovation, and supporting sustained long-term growth. Companies that deploy dynamic mobility programs by integrating emerging technologies, investing in the upskilling of mobility teams, and maintaining a commitment to continuous review and improvement of processes and policies are well positioned to thrive in today's global marketplace.



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