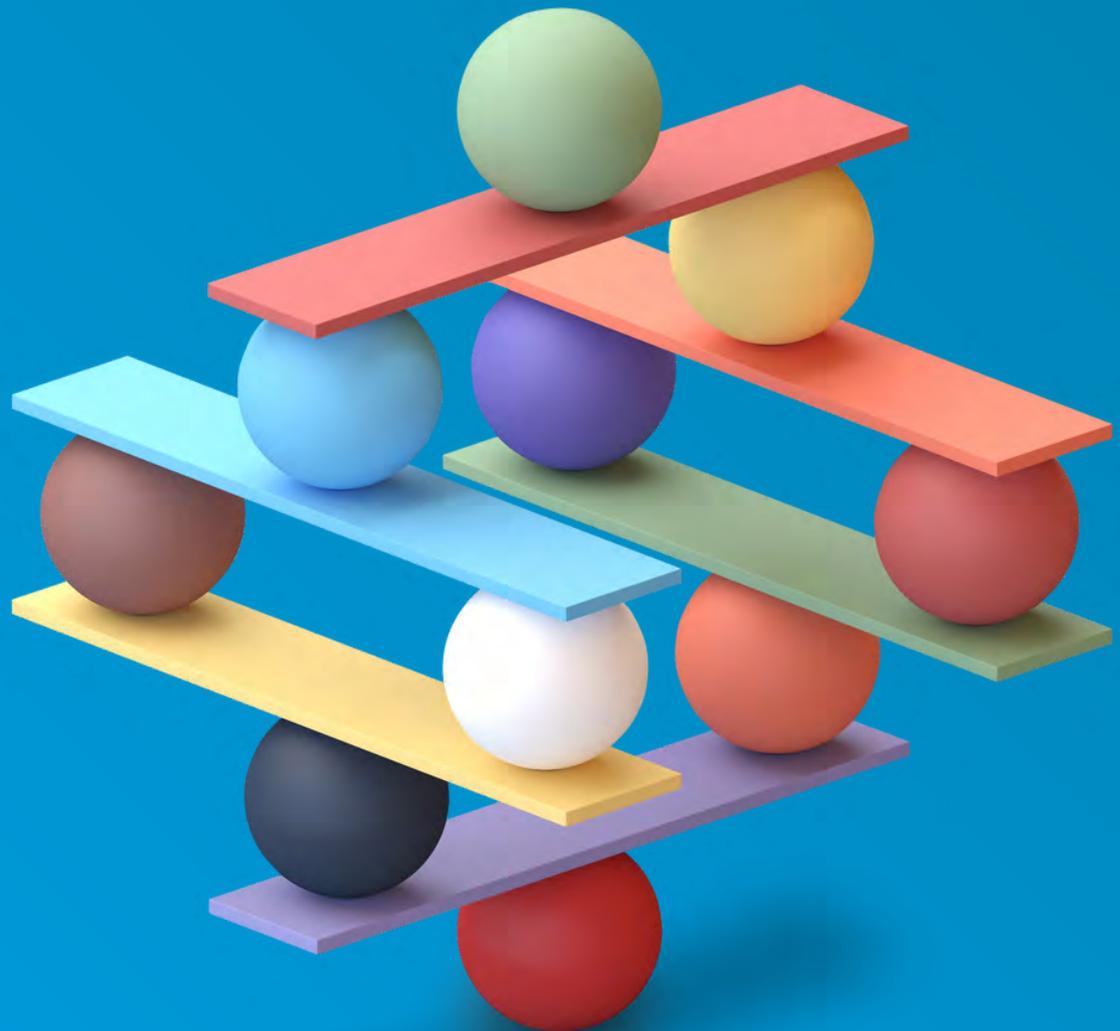


Leveling up with mobility technology

Case study





An organization’s mobility platform can have a “make or break” impact on the employee experience. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of this link as they continue their digital transformation journeys. The right software solution can also be transformational for the global mobility team, making programs and processes more efficient and freeing up staff for more critical tasks.

Here’s how Beiersdorf AG not only transformed its digital mobility platform but also enhanced the employee experience by implementing Mercer’s Mobility Management Platform.

Mobility challenges

The company had just begun a major review of its assignment policy when it realized it was time to look for a new technical solution as the system that was currently in use was no longer supported. The existing system was a standalone tool with limited functionality. Though it gave the team the ability to calculate balance sheets, it lacked a workflow functionality, had no interface with the company’s other HR infrastructure and had no direct connection to Mercer’s data. This resulted in a heavy workload for the team, since data had to

Beiersdorf AG

German-based personal-care products company Beiersdorf AG, known for global brands NIVEA, Eucerin and La Prairie, has more than 160 affiliates worldwide. Beiersdorf’s Global Mobility Team is responsible for managing more than 180 active assignments and adding approximately 80 new starters every year. Its global mobility program covers temporary assignments in 120 country combinations, with larger hubs in Dubai and Germany.

be imported manually. In addition, only the Global Mobility Team had access to the tool, which meant communication among HR, employees and the team was restricted to email.

One of Beiersdorf's main goals was to improve the employee experience and to improve transparency for all stakeholders, including the board, the business, HR and employees. The company wanted to create a single point of truth, with a solution that would eliminate the burden of manual administrative processes. Beiersdorf hoped to free up capacity for the function to add value to the expatriation process and wanted to enhance the employee experience.

Finding the right solution to level up

Before they could make a change, the team had to convince leadership that a new tool was necessary, and they had to justify the cost. Furthermore, working on two projects in parallel — the policy review and the implementation of a new tool — required greater capacity than the team had. Each project heavily influenced the other. Timelines between both projects had to be aligned so the results of the policy project would be reflected in the tool.

Adding to the complexity, a new tool would have to be implemented not only for Beiersdorf but also for its subsidiary Tesa, which had its own requirements and policies. Compliance with the GDPR was also a concern. Since Mercer's Mobility Management Platform (MMP) is hosted by US-based ServiceNow, the team needed to verify that the tool would meet GDPR requirements. Mercer confirmed that ServiceNow data centers would be located outside the US and arranged in pairs. Production data would be stored securely in two data centers, with the main server in Frankfurt and a backup server in Dusseldorf.

Beiersdorf's Global Mobility Team conducted an extensive pre-study as it was clear that the function needed a tool that could support future needs as well, such as workflow functionality or access for other stakeholders. It was also important that the new tool could free up staff from burdensome administrative work, enabling them to add greater value. In addition, the front-end access for employees would help bring transparency into the processes and also enhance the employee journey.

In comparison to other options available in the market, MMP would be a cost-effective tool.

Benefits

Beiersdorf decided to deploy Mercer's Mobility Management Platform, and the system went live on January 1, 2022.

Their Global Mobility Team now has a new modern balance sheet, with crucial data, such as exchange rates and service dates, available in real time. Numerous customized special functions, such as exception management and services and benefit rules, help the team to be more transparent.

According to Kerstin Hoffmann, Global Mobility Consultant for Beiersdorf, the outcome of the implementation has been positive: "I can already say that we are very happy with our new MMP tool. It's a very intuitive tool. And Mercer made it possible to include almost all our requirements."

Because the function needed an internal single point of contact, Kerstin Hoffmann's role evolved, and she has become a "super-user" of the tool. Once everyone on the team is fully trained and working with all available features in the tool, Kerstin Hoffmann feels it will help the team reach its target, alleviating the need for manual and administrative processes. It's already apparent that the per-case documentation will help the company to be more compliant and transparent, with easy-to-use yet detailed reporting functions helping to keep stakeholders better informed.

The rollout of the workflow functionality is expected to help the team become even faster. “In combination with the HR and especially the expat front end,” says Kerstin Hoffmann, “this will be a big game-changer.” Employees are now able to see all milestones on a timeline progress bar, upload and download relevant documents, and also browse through tailored information regarding their host countries.

Lessons learned

Kerstin Hoffmann identified the following elements as crucial to a smooth implementation:

Allocate dedicated resources and adequate time for the project

Implementing a new digital tool is a complex process. Undertaking two major projects in parallel streams — the tool implementation and the policy review project already underway — added a layer of complexity that was extremely challenging. In hindsight, it would have been good to have a designated project team with sufficient operational experience, capacity and interest to understand the tool from the beginning. End users need to be kept well-informed during the implementation process, however, the project team needs to be responsible for the decision-making. This way a reasonable timeline, which was set at the start of the project, can be met.

Communicate with stakeholders

End users of the tool need to be well informed about the coming changes. A new tool will require a learning curve, and the users should understand in advance what will be changing.

Creating a bridge function between the client team and the Mercer team is crucial to balance expectations against what's feasible. Take the time at the beginning of the project to ensure everyone is clear on the concept and has an in depth understanding of the tool functions and capabilities. Beiersdorf kept in close contact with Mercer by setting up status updates, change requirements and using the test tool.



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Kerstin Hoffmann, Global Mobility Consultant for Beiersdorf



Be prepared to make compromises

Organizations can expect to make some compromises when implementing a new technology solution. Any process changes that are necessary should be clearly communicated during implementation. Be prepared to make quick decisions on how to deal with the changes, such as differences in the calculation logic between the old and new tools.

It's also critical to think about the change process within your own team and within the overall organization. You will need to train users and conduct user acceptance testing.

Next steps

Beiersdorf sees potential for expanding its use of MMP. In December 2022, they soft-launched the HR and employee portals along with new workflow functionalities.

In 2023, the company plans to implement its interface to Employee Central — its first internal interface to an existing HR infrastructure. The team is excited to begin creating insightful reports for stakeholders and improving data quality by using all the features of the MMP tool.

Future plans include handling more cross-border moves and possibly adding assignment contracts and annexes to the system, which are still being processed outside the tool due to a high level of complexity. Beiersdorf looks forward to future MMP updates once HR and employees have become comfortable using the tool.

Recommendations

Kerstin Hoffmann has three recommendations for organizations embarking on a similar project:

- 1. Have a clear concept of what you want to achieve.** Determine your future processes and who will be using the new technology before you start the project.
- 2. Involve the right people.** A designated project team should be assigned from the start. Make sure your people have sufficient operational experience, capacity and interest. Organizations should also be prepared to provide change management support throughout the project.
- 3. Be patient.** Keep in mind that implementing a new tool is hard work, and you won't see the benefits right away. It takes time to train your people, and some adjustments will likely be needed. Increased efficiency may only be measurable a few months after implementation.



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