

transcript

mobility matters, episode 8: the evolution of talent management

WITH KAREN WILKS AND BILLY HO



karen:

Hello, and welcome to Mobility Matters, the official Cartus podcast. I'm your host Karen Wilks, Vice President of Strategic Growth at Cartus. And on this episode, I am so excited to be joined by Billy Ho, CPA Talent Mobility Senior Manager at Electronic Arts. Billy leads the global talent mobility function at EA and also serves on the Bay Area Mobility Management (BAMM) board as a corporate advisor. His passion is to help evolve mobility into a strategic function within his company and automate processes to enable self-service, ultimately simplifying relocation and allowing relocating employees to focus on their role delivering their best work. Welcome, Billy, we're so happy to have you on the show.

billy:

Thank you for inviting me to be the guest. I'm so excited to share my two cents and what makes mobility matter.

karen:

Thanks, Billy. Listeners, Billy is a true influencer within the global mobility realm. And when it comes to the latest and greatest trends, Billy is a man in the know. Today I really want to hear about EA's talent management journey, how it's evolved, and where do you see it headed over the next 12 months or so. But first, if you could start off by giving an overview of your mobility program, for example, is it domestic? Is it International? What are the key policies you have in place?

billy:

Our talent mobility team consists of four pillars: relocation, immigration, tax, and flexible work. And this is how we support the business and both business-driven and employee requests and moves around the globe, which are also our key policies.

karen:

I love that you have these four pillars. I think having an internal framework like that really helps to hone strategy and objectives. Speaking of which, we know from our own [research at Cartus](#), the employee experience and program optimization are top priorities for the Global Mobility professionals at this moment. But what have been EA's key drivers, your biggest mobility challenges and priorities this year?

billy:

Very good questions. I would say intentionality is embedded into our mission, and as always, our North Star for everything that we do at EA. And so, our focus continues to be the consultants to our business and partners on how to be intentional and provide the flexibility of choice for employees, from an experience standpoint. Just because I strongly believe as well as my team, believe in allowing the employees and family to be part of building their mobility journey, will always result in the best experience.

Now one of our challenges is, how do we simplify the wealth of mobility information and equip others to make a well-informed decision, allowing others to understand the rationale and our recommendation, without the need to become an expert? That is the key of how we provide the services. Luckily, the opportunity is made possible by the curious people that we have within EA where they ask multiple questions is because they're very curious about everything that they do. And our team is also motivated to share knowledge to streamline the operation as one of the outcome.

karen:

Thanks, Billy, you certainly hit on a key challenge that many in this industry are facing right? How to simplify the wealth of mobility information and equip others to make well informed decisions, frankly, without having a graduate degree in relocation. So, let's take a look at EA's assignee population. Now you obviously have to manage a lot of creative people, more so than in other industries. Does having that employee-type help to shape your talent management strategy?

billy:

It's very interesting you ask, especially, yes, we do have a lot of creative people. That's how we create games. And creativity is one of the six EA values. And so absolutely, I use this mind before that everything starts with an idea. So, we always encourage anyone to share feedback, but most importantly, to come with suggestions. And then therefore, that's how we can improve and grow together by investing in one another. And that really is how it influenced our talent management strategies. With that said, we highly recommend collaboration which for example, is how our internal mobility policy came about is through listening to feedback collaboration, especially listening to the employees' feedback and coming up with the internal mobility policy that helps to drive and develop our management strategies.

karen:

Yeah, I couldn't agree more how crucial collaboration is. Well, you know, the theme of this season of Mobility Matters is, "optimizing the employee experience." And as a part of that, it's super important to ensure our employees feel listened to. I know there's been a lot written about this trend of "quietly quitting," this relates to employees doing the minimum work required to keep their job. It's a trend that has been linked more closely to the younger generations and in our experience, Gen Zers certainly want more than just monetary gain and promotion from their employer. They want to be seen and heard, they want to know that they belong. Are you seeing a similar shift in what employees expect from their mobility program, specifically younger assignees? And is that being reflected in the type of relocation support you're offering them?

billy:

I'm glad you asked this question. So, funnily enough, to say I'm clearly not a Gen Z, no matter how much I want to pretend that I'm young but I do have a similar mindset that I want to contribute and make a difference in what we do. And that speaks to, "I belong." That is also one of the drivers in building employee choice programs, it allows people to be part of the journey or part of the equations. And we do see more in the younger generation needing less of the traditional offerings, which makes the perfect time to enable the choice. That's how we're testing that model. And, again, in terms of adapting to the Gen Zers' ask and what as we continue to develop that population.

karen:

Absolutely. And leading on from that, how do you see things like duty of care and employee engagement impact the way you approach mobility?

billy:

We have to listen, and we have to stay up to date to what impacts our personal life. This includes staying connected with the different functions and leaders who shared the same responsibility on the employer care. By doing so we continue to enhance our program for relevance, and again, provide support to their needs, so they can focus on doing their best work ultimately leads to the best employee experience. One prime example goes back to our internal mobility policy, we listened, we studied the data, which allows the employee to develop opportunities internally and further their career growth, all of which we also provide the guidance of managers, stakeholders, and employees on a RACI model to ensure everyone is supporting their intent and the great experience by knowing what parts they do and what parts they contribute.

karen:

Thanks, Billy. In recent research, that Cartus conducted via surveying our client population. Our data certainly supports what you're seeing and hearing internally. In addition to the Global Mobility teams and the HR stakeholders, we identified pivotal roles like the selection and receiving managers to ensure employees feel fully supported and engaged, which is the key to the employee having a great experience and a successful assignment.

Okay, so let's move on now. As a mobility professional in the tech and gaming industry, I would be remiss not to touch on the evolution of artificial intelligence. It is such a hot and exciting topic at the moment, especially with the launch of the AI powered language model chat GPT late last year, has AI already impacted how you build a talent management strategy? And does it support or influence the way in which you approach mobility?

billy:

Absolutely. And this is an interesting time, especially with chat GPT and all the AI initiatives being taken on to the spotlights. I will say, I think it's no secret that games have been using AI for decades. Just think about who you're playing chess with on the computer on the other side, those are AIs. As it comes to mobility, it's definitely going to help as the adoption and the tools continue to mature with AIs, to allow more of the operation and research to be streamlined. Again, mainly

because all the information is so readily accessible. That tool is to enable those research and operation to be streamlined, so that our time, our human time can be spent on the consultation and the strategies with the business and employees. Just think about the information being readily available and served to you so that you have a good idea without the stress to find and verify information or at least have a good start by having those information being readily available. For sure.

karen:

We're obviously scratching the surface of AI technology in the mobility space, but I do wonder what the risks are, and what are the ways we would need to be more diligent in using AI in the future. There's certainly more to come on that topic. And Billy we would love to have you back as this continues to evolve. But before we wrap up, I like to ask all our guests what they think the episode's, "WOW! Factor" is. And by that I mean, what is the best piece of advice or information that we've discussed today that you think could be a valuable takeaway for folks at home.

And Billy, I'll give you some time to think of it while I can start off with mine. So, for me from this episode, I would say don't underestimate the power of data and information, but don't drown in it either. As mobility leaders in an ever-evolving industry, we should all be mindful to regularly spending a portion of our time just trying to simplify the wealth of information that's available. This allows our stakeholders, whether senior leaders or whether they're relocating employees themselves to make more timely and well informed decisions around mobility. So, there's so many moving parts. And I leave you with one of my favorite quotes from the great Maya Angelou, "We may encounter defeat, but we must not be defeated."

billy:

That's a very good "WOW! Factor", Karen. So, I really love yours. Now, for me, thanks for giving me time to think about it as well. But definitely one wow factor comes in my mind very quickly. It also touches that collaboration, I'll give you my "WOW! Factor" now, it was for my great friend and a mentor of mine as well, which is to always assume good intentions. And mobility, even the day-to-day work that we do, we work with others with different backgrounds, skills, culture, you name it, they were bound to have these connections. Because of who we are and how we give and transmit information. It's important to always assume good intentions, so that you have the best open mindset to absorb that information without any pre-assumption. That is how we can understand each other's perspective and maximize collaboration.

Don't expect what you expect she or he will do or say (that's a tongue twister right there!). Just think simply, and you'll find information comes across so much easily and so much more clearer. Just be curious and ask the question, because after all, we are very different human beings, we have different culture and experience. So just ask the question, assume good intentions. And just think simply with the information that you have.

karen:

I love that Billy, go with an open mind and always assume good intentions. And, you know, remember, we bring a diversity of thought having different human experiences, and we can all learn from each other. That's a great one. So, Billy, thank you so much. This was a great discussion. It is always a pleasure to talk to you and get your perspective on the current mobility landscape.

billy:

Thank you for having me, I've loved sharing my two cents. And this is what Mobility Matters in my mind.

karen:

Thank you. And thank you to our listeners for joining us, be sure to subscribe to Mobility Matters through your favorite podcast streaming platform. Thank you and take care.

visit cartus.com/podcast for more episodes of mobility matters