MOBILITY™

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ALTERING THE MOBILITY LANDSCAPE

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MORE LIKE FACEBOOK?

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AND

MOBILITY

Meeting transferee expectations of the online relocation experience in an age of Pokémon Go

By Steven John, SCRP, GMS-T

*S*everal years ago, while I was reading through a stack of transferee surveys, I came across the following comment, which has stayed with me ever since:

"Why isn't your system more like Facebook?"

However unfair it might be to compare a relocation portal to the $350 billion internet gorilla, the comment made me realize the competitive landscape within mobility was much broader than I previously imagined. It is clear that customer expectations regarding the online experience are not judged by the features and functions offered by the mobility industry, but rather more by the transferee's engagement with the internet as a whole.

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As relocation industry providers, our offerings are not compared to one another as much as they are compared to such sites as Facebook, Google, and believe it or not, Pokémon Go.

Facebook, Google, and other websites and applications represent the pinnacle of today's online environment. They set the standard for what today's customer expects from all companies they engage online. What are the elements that set these applications apart? What elements should we focus on in the mobility space to best meet the online needs of our transferees and other constituents?

EASE OF USE

Certainly the most important aspect of a relocation web portal, but often the most overlooked, "ease of use" or "intuitiveness" can make the difference between a portal that adds to the transferee experience or one that simply adds to the frustration. The relocation provider–transferee relationship is, by its nature, brief and transitory. For small to medium-sized employers, the mobility function is rarely a top priority. Users rightly question the need to learn one more app and store one more set of user IDs and passwords. As a result, the relocation application is one that users will engage only if it is to their advantage. The user interface must be one that is aesthetically pleasing, easy to access, and simple to navigate. If the transferee or HR user must read 30 pages of instructions to effectively use the system, it simply will not be used.

MOBILE ACCESS

Ironically, given the mobile nature of the transferee population, mobile access has only recently become a priority for many relocation management systems

(RMSs). According to SimilarWeb's "State of Mobile Web–U.S. 2015" report, roughly 56 percent of consumer traffic to the leading U.S. websites comes from mobile devices. While demand continues to grow, many of the available relocation mobile apps are in their infancy. As a result, many of today's apps offer only a basic level of functionality. This will change as newer versions of mobile access apps are developed.

At a minimum, the relocation web portal should be mobile-friendly, so that full functions that are available from a desktop are also available on tablets, phones, or other mobile devices. Ideally, the web portal will utilize a method known as "responsive design," which is a way of designing a website that is flexible, regardless of device. The site automatically orients itself based on screen size and presents the most appropriate icons, menu options, and graphics for the best user experience. More ambitious efforts will provide a true mobile app. The advantages of a mobile app are personalization, interactivity, offline access, and use of native hardware, such as cameras for expense or document submission. The downsides of a true app are increased development costs, and the necessity for users to download and update the app for new or improved features.

INTEGRATION

Whether it's "big data" or just your own data, accessing data across disparate systems and databases can be the bane of many applications. Providing real-time global access to data requires true integration among platforms, and not just periodic data feeds. Today's cloud-based storage combined with application program interfaces (APIs) can help to ensure that data is available for all users alike: transferees, HR personnel, and providers. Customers should be wary of providers that rely on multiple platforms or cannot provide 24-7 real-time access to synchronized data.

REPORTING AND DASHBOARDS

For HR professionals, the demands for information are dynamic and increasingly complex. Status communication, regulatory reporting, and financial and operational analysis require ready access to sophisticated and relevant reporting. Customers should look for systems and providers that allow for 24-7 self-service access to real-time reporting tools. Your access should provide regular delivery of standard

reporting in addition to providing ready access to your own data so that last-minute questions or issues can be easily addressed.

Dashboards have developed and expanded over the last decade. More than just charts and graphs, dashboards provide a variety of visual analyses that allow you to delve deeply into the trends and relationships within your relocation activity. Dashboards should always be real-time and reflect changes as activity occurs. The dashboard in your car, for example, would not be very useful if it displayed only how fast you were driving yesterday.

Dashboards should not create more questions than answers. Top-of-the-line dashboards allow users to drill through to more detailed reporting and even to underlying databases. This allows the user to quickly identify trends and issues via the dashboard, and then, with the simple click of a mouse, drill down to see the underlying file or expense item driving the anomaly.

SECURE

Finally, systems and applications must be secure. Incidents of hacking, phishing, whaling, and spoofing are on the rise. As these intrusions into our data and privacy become more sophisticated, our ability to recognize and thwart these threats grows ever more complicated.

The Anti-Phishing Working Group (APWG) observed more phishing attacks in the first quarter of 2016 than in any other three-month span since it began tracking data in 2004, according to the anti-cybercrime coalition's first-quarter "Phishing Activity Trends Report." In keeping with those findings, APWG reported that the number of phishing websites it detected jumped a startling 250 percent between October 2015 and March 2016.

Relocation systems are often entrusted with a variety of personal and confidential data. Addresses, phone numbers, wages, Social Security and visa information, and bank account identifiers are all at risk. Providers should ensure that only the minimum required information is collected and stored and that personnel are provided access only on a need-to-know basis. To prevent fraud, ensure that providers keep their own emails safe and that relocation counselors use only authorized company-based email addresses. Systems should require a two-factor authentication as a safeguard to unauthorized access.

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TRENDS AND NEEDS

We invited a panel consisting of four industry experts to discuss what they believe are coming trends and what is needed to incorporate leading-edge technologies to provide state-of-the-art relocation management systems to our industry. The members were:
- Brynne Herbert (BH), CEO and founder, MOVE Guides.
- Jason L. Arnold (JA), president and chief operating officer, Ineo Relocation Technologies.
- Harry Dayton (HD), president, Servicengine Corporation.
- Michael Bilodeau (MB), managing director, ReloFrog, LC (a subsidiary of Relocation Essentials, LC).

Steven John (SJ): What would you say is the single most critical element to consider in designing or implementing a relocation management system?

BH: There are many elements to consider, such as the breadth of functionality—for the mobility team, employees, supply chain management, and expense management—ease of user experience, data security, and pace of innovation. However, I think the single most critical element is the ease of configurability. Global mobility programs are all different, and it's critical that your relocation management system can be set up flexibly in line with your program workflows, data structure, and reporting needs. With this, you can truly streamline your operations and leverage a single source of data to measure your program outcomes (ROI and more!).

JA: The single most important element to consider is that the software takes into account the wide variety of stakeholders that are impacted by the system. For

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example, a great relocation/assignment management system should take into account the user experience for:
- The assignees and transferees.
- The operational users and management from the mobility team.
- The accounting and financial team members.
- The client:
  » Human resources.
  » Hiring managers.
  » Tax, legal, and payroll.
  » Accounting teams.
  » Executive leadership.
- The suppliers of the services (moving companies, real-estate agents, destination service companies, etc.).
  In the end, if you've met the needs of all of the stakeholders, you have a great system!

HD: Security. The primary concern of our clients is the protection of their confidential data and the compliance with global PII (personally identifiable information) and data sovereignty requirements. The challenge is to continue to provide access, functionality, and reporting while building in the required data protections. One of our guidelines is the OWASP (Open Web Application Security Project), and we remain compliant with their top 10 recommendations. This should be the first question asked about any technology.

MB: Dual-sided performance. The effective RMS is one that allows for the employer to streamline mobility functionality while having immediate real-time availability of data for analysis—coupled with providing the employee with a convenient, clean, and easy-to-use interface that provides simplicity and ease of use across multiple platforms. One, without the other, will circumvent the ultimate goal of every company to maximize profitability and talent acquisition problem-solving.

In this world of millennial talent acquisition, many companies are still afraid of relinquishing much of this process away from the traditional hand-holding

that drove success within the Gen X age. Companies tend to struggle with the element of control, which they believe will hurt their bottom line, when in fact the reverse is true. We live in a technology-driven world where it doesn't have to be clunky or complicated. Social media, smartphones, laptops, and individual independence are all key components that drive this culture.

The combination of these efficiencies within the right framework will ultimately make any company a leading talent destination while providing the much-needed data and profitability that are required to remain competitive in this environment. And it can still be done with a little hand-holding.

SJ: What are you working on today that is new and exciting?

BH: At MOVE Guides, we are continually releasing new functionality for our Talent Mobility Cloud. At the moment, we are very focused on helping companies streamline their core global mobility management activities across assignment and relocation management, and then how they can leverage our Single Mobility View to understand their talent and financial information. By doing so, we unleash our customers and our concierge-style MOVE Advocate team to deliver a great employee experience together.

JA: We are always investing in expanding functionality and enhancing our users' experience. We have made tremendous investments in global compensation and international tax functionality, and we are developing new mobile apps to service assignees, mobility users, and suppliers. We are also adding great functionality surrounding document management, reporting, and workflow tools. And, although it may only be "exciting" to a very specific audience, Ineo is always focused on enhancing security and compliance.

HD: Empowerment. Providing the employee with the tools to fully initiate, approve, and manage their own relocation process. Today's transferees are comfortable with the use of technology and accustomed to immediate action and reaction. We are building technology that is flexible enough to administer the many details of a mobility program but smart enough

to guide employee and employer self-management. We see this as contributing to the next evolution in the role of the RSP [relocation service provider].

MB: There are a few modules that are being added to the Relofrog interface in the coming quarters. First, we will be adding a Home Maintenance Module for homeowners. In an effort to keep the relocation user engaged once the actual move process is completed, we will provide a variety of tasks in the same format they have come to enjoy during their move, only geared to the weekly, monthly, and quarterly tasks associated with keeping the new home up-to-date. Then, there are our Destination, Networking and Intern Concierge modules.

SJ: What does the future of relocation management systems look like?

BH: For us, the future of relocation management systems is a platform connecting global mobility operations and data to other areas of company administration (recruiting, talent management, learning, benefits, tax, finance, and core HR systems of record). Global mobility, by definition, interfaces with all these different areas already. In the future, companies will be able to link systems, streamline data flows, and benefit from cross-functional insights on talent and finance. The first step to this is a single mobility view for global mobility—bringing together all program, finance, destination, and vendor data—which we offer at MOVE Guides in our Talent Mobility Cloud and Single Mobility View. The outcome of this is that, in the future, companies will be able to rapidly attract and deploy talent globally where it is needed and deliver a great employee experience while doing so.

JA: Over the next two to five years, we will see more and more in the way of software mobility (apps), more interactive communication, more automation, and an even greater focus on security and compliance.

HD: The world of technology is an interconnected web, and the mobility business will be no exception. Our interfaces will evolve to the point of user transparency. Employees will log in to their mobility experience through Facebook, LinkedIn, and other

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social media sites. Their information will be fully integrated with HR, hiring managers, and payroll as well as with RSPs and local service providers. Data availability will be immediate throughout the mobility cycle, and performance will be easily measured anywhere in the process. The mobility experience will evolve from high-touch and expensive to self-managed and digital. Obviously, this scenario is only viable given adherence to the rigid security protocols mentioned above.

MB: All in all, the future is bright. The problem lies in getting the third-party providers (RMCs) and human resource departments on the same page. Talent acquisition has become big business. Although there will always be the segment of movement that will utilize the "full-service" process, more and more companies are turning to flex/lump-sum programs for their new hires. HR departments are requiring a more educated and internet-literate employee, and with that comes a level of expectation for seamless mobility options that companies can offer their new hires without breaking the bank.

SJ: Technology and the internet have become ubiquitous in our daily lives, and the mobility industry is no exception. As relocation professionals, our charge is to craft and deliver the most accessible and relevant online experience possible for transferees, HR professionals, and our own associates. In doing so, we must remember that the benchmark for the online mobility experience will not be found within our industry, but within the much larger world of online commerce and social media. *M*

Steven John, SCRP, GMS-T, is president and CEO of HomeServices Relocation. He can be reached at +1 866 678 7356 or stevenjohn@homeservices.com.