

Can't Get a  
**SEAT**  
at the Table?

# TRY BUILDING YOUR OWN!

**Forming a global  
mobility talent  
management forum**

**By Michele Brescia, CRP,  
With Holly Clontz, SCRIP, GMS-T**

**M**ahogany. Oak. Pine. Glass-top. Metal. A simple search through Amazon, Pinterest, or Facebook Marketplace will yield many options for tables to purchase. Similarly, chairs are abundant, with choices ranging from single wooden chairs to elegant sets of fabric-cushioned dining room chairs. Handmade, factory-made, brand new, for resale, or antique ... the choices are endless.

In the world of relocation and talent management, however, not quite as many options are available. The coveted "seat at the table" often requires qualifications, stature, earned reputation, and strategic planning. You may have tried all the options to get that seat within your organization—providing data, strategically meeting with key stakeholders, providing consultative advice around program management—but you still can't get even the worst seat in the house.



**Creating your own table requires strong leadership, and you must be ready not only to lead, but to lead so others will follow.**

So, now what? Why not take a lead from some of the best entrepreneurs in the world, those Etsy sellers and small business owners, and build your *own* table? Holly Clontz, SCRP, GMS-T, global mobility HR solutions leader from Ingersoll Rand, who did just that, shares her experiences. “For years, the Global Mobility Services team at Ingersoll Rand tried everything to be included in the organization’s strategic sessions on talent management. We knew we were master builders, but no one was buying what we were constructing, even if we offered it for free. So, we realized we had to create our own table, our own talent management forum, and make it so innovative that everyone would fight to sit with *us*. We would become the popular crowd in the cafeteria. It was a challenge—but totally worth it.”

Clontz believes that what a lot of global mobility managers—and their organizations—may not yet realize is the way in which they can influence, both positively and negatively, the goals of the organization. She explains, “Are you trying to grow your business and need key talent to do so? Your global mobility team can help you attract them, retain them, and help them become productive faster. We have data on the financial impact a relocation has beyond just the costs to relocate someone—the number of hours it takes, the number of days spent on a task, all of which is time away from work, lost productivity, and the bottom line. But first, your mobility team must be aligned to the organizational goals and build a program that supports your company culture. I can’t stress enough how importantly culture impacts the way in which you manage mobility.”

#### **LEAD SO OTHERS FOLLOW**

Now that you’ve built your own table, your own talent management forum, you need to give it a fresh look. In other words, you need to establish your objectives and what innovations will help you accomplish them. What will the format be? How often will you meet? What is the intention of each meeting? Creating your own table requires strong leadership, and you must be ready not only to lead, but to lead so others will follow.

Clontz says, “It was important to me that my company was able to utilize the value that my global mobility team was adding, so I built the table and started a ‘supper club.’ We began by centralizing the team and then simply changing our name, from Global Mobility Services to ‘Global Talent Mobility Solutions.’ It’s a simple enough change, but one that

had a profound impact, by highlighting the fact that we were there to help the organization solve relocation and talent management challenges. We then decided to put ourselves out there. We started calling leaders and asking what problems they needed to solve. It didn’t matter if it was relocation-related; if it was a people issue, we wanted to help.

“Initially, the invitation to take a seat at our table was largely ignored. Then gradually, we built a reputation as the organization’s problem solvers and began to generate results. Our department and its employees were being asked to become project leaders for business units across the organization, including at the senior leadership level. One by one, our colleagues came, and now I’d say there isn’t enough room around our table for everyone.

“As part of our new approach, we hired Cartus to help us get real ‘voice of the customer’ (VOC) feedback, which gathered input from relocating employees, their spouses, Human Resources, business leaders, and our suppliers. We then implemented *real* changes, based on the intelligence we received from the VOC.

“Finally, we started celebrating our successes and the projects that we were involved in—successes that normally remained hidden beyond us. We weren’t used to singing our own praises, but the world needed to know about our achievements and the successful talent management forum that we had created. There really is something to ‘if you build it, they will come.’”

#### **YOUR TABLE IS BUILT. NOW WHAT?**

Your table is built, your foundation is ready, and you’ve added some chairs—now you need to determine who to invite to sit at the table with you. Who are the key stakeholders who will help you achieve your goals? What level of employee would be the best fit for your new table?

Clontz shares how she determined who to invite to her “supper club.” “Where you are in your journey will determine both who needs to be involved and how often you need to meet. In times of great change, weekly meetings may be important to the decision-makers. I invited some people in the organization who had nothing to do with relocation at all, like our fleet manager, whose team delivers a niche service, as well as someone from the communications team. Then [I added] the usual suspects, including Compensation & Benefits, Human Resources leads, suppliers, Finance, etc.



## TIPS FOR CREATING A SUCCESSFUL ‘TABLE’ FOR YOUR TALENT MANAGEMENT FORUM

- **Do your homework.** Bring data to reference, success stories, updates to tax laws, etc. You may never refer to them, but have them on hand.
- **Prove your value.** Understand your organizational goals, so that you can be prepared to talk about how you can influence the success of the company.
- **Listen.** Simple enough advice, but often forgotten.
- **Encourage dialogue.** Make discussions a psychologically safe environment in which people are willing to share.
- **Be prepared to break the silence.** Ask open-ended questions.
- **Don’t fear feedback.** Both positive and negative are critical to progression.
- **Don’t get defensive.**
- **Own your seat at the table.** Lean in, stay engaged, and avoid distractions.
- **Seek to understand** every point that participants make.
- **Prepare relevant questions** in advance that will generate dialogue.

“Once you begin making traction and operating like a well-oiled machine, you will likely need fewer meetings; monthly or quarterly may even be enough. A lot of this will be determined based on your company culture and how quickly you are looking to impact change.”

### ENSURE YOUR TABLE STAYS FRESH AND RELEVANT

You’ve built your table, you’ve determined the format of your meetings, you’ve invited your guests, and now it’s time to ensure continued improvement and innovation. Adding that regular polish to your table so that it stays in smooth working order, and bringing value to those who sit around it, is imperative to establishing long-term success. Clontz recommends that you “never get complacent. The world around us is changing at the speed of light. A regular review of your data and a listening ear will alert you to the shifting needs of your organization. Stay alert. You may need to refresh your policy. For example, do you repeatedly get the same exception request that is approved every time? Here is a great opportunity to change your policy in a way that will positively impact your employees and free up some of your time—time you can use in more valuable ways. You may need to rethink how you manage your suppliers, too. Empower them, so that they become strategic partners—a true extension of your team. Treat them with respect; they are the front line and can make or break an employee’s onboarding experience.”

Table getting a little worn? People aren’t attending? Topics are getting stagnant? Then consider inviting new guests. A fresh perspective can be invaluable. Clontz suggests, “This cannot be a conversation on just the

data. Use this opportunity to talk about the changing landscape of immigration. Is this an opportunity to help your company decide where may be the easiest country in which to open a new plant, for example? Are they considering an emerging market because talent is affordable, but need to send some expats over? Often, leaders don’t understand how long it can take to obtain work permits or that local and foreign hire ratios exist in certain countries. A global mobility team’s expertise is wide and often underutilized, and the wealth of knowledge across our supplier base and network is undiscovered. Educate and engage your business on the true importance of successful talent management by keeping your recommendations fresh and relevant.”

A seat at the table, whether it be yours or theirs, is a gift—an opportunity to influence and impact the success of your company, the success of your colleagues, and your own personal success and satisfaction. With an abundant opportunity to create your own table, what will you serve? *M*

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