

New relocation travel process improves global mobility for pharma company

BCD Travel solves confused booking process with hub system for relocation travel

Challenge

Employees traveling for international assignments were confused because there was no clear global directive for managing relocations. The global mobility process was convoluted because relocation travel was booked in the U.S. or Switzerland, while assignments and housing were handled in the host regions.

Approach

To simplify the process, BCD and the client agreed to set up a hub system to book relocation travel for employees. BCD created four regional hubs in EMEA, APAC, China and the U.S. Relocation travel is now booked in the host region where also the supporting relocation agency is based.

Results

The reorganized and redefined process for global mobility led to more positive traveler experiences, faster email response times, smoother transitions, reduced administrative burden and improved overall efficiency. Cost savings, compliance and duty of care are much improved.

Customer at a glance

- Industry:** Pharmaceuticals
- Headquarters:** Switzerland
- Presence:** 150+ countries
- Number of employees:** 100,000+
- Annual revenue:** US\$70 billion



BCD Travel has been managing business travel and global mobility travel for a leading global pharmaceutical company in 60+ countries for over 10 years. Travel bookings related to global mobility were managed by BCD in Switzerland and the U.S.

Global mobility travel is complex; it refers to the movement of employees across international borders for various reasons such as work assignment and repatriation, education, tourism, or migration. BCD has expertise in supporting the associated cost optimizations, logistics, arrangements and risk considerations for the following global mobility travel types:

- Pre assignment trip to new location
- Final assignment trip to new location
- Family joining after assignment start
- Compassionate leaves
- Dependent leaves
- Home leaves
- Family leaving before assignment end
- Repatriation trip after assignment end
- Foreign local hires
- Domestic moves
- Extended business trips
- Commuter travel

Challenge

Employees traveling for international assignments were confused because there was no clear global directive for managing movements. The global mobility process was convoluted because relocation travel was managed by BCD in the U.S. or Switzerland, while other relocation aspects (such as housing, moving services, or passport and visa requirements) were handled in the host regions by the client's local human resource departments or third-party suppliers. The time difference between the regions didn't make it any easier.

BCD often received relocation travel requests with incomplete information, such as missing names or relationship of family members, eligible travel class type, or pet details like name, breed and size. This necessitated numerous follow-up emails to capture the necessary details for completing the booking.

“Baggage and pets can sometimes be a fun challenge when booking relocation travel. One time, we had to book a trip for an assignee with a dog and lots of suitcases. As she didn't want her dog to fly in cargo, she trained her dog to become a certified service animal, so the dog could fly together with her in the cabin.”



Manjana Vollmer
Operations Supervisor at BCD Travel



Approach

The client established a project to streamline internal processes, partner with one global relocation company and use BCD's expertise to broadcast and implement the changes globally.

To simplify the complexity and improve the traveler experience, BCD and the client jointly agreed to alter the process and devise a hub system to book relocation travel for employees, their family and pets in the region of relocation destination.

Using the vast experience of the Basel and U.S. teams, BCD set up four regional dedicated agent hubs: a Basel site for relocation travel to Europe; one in Singapore for relocation travel to APAC (except China); one in Shanghai for relocation travel to China and Hong Kong; and a virtual hub in the U.S. for relocation travel to North and Latin America. Relocation travel is now booked in the host region where also the supporting relocation agency is located, so there's no time difference and email response times are faster.

BCD also reorganized the entire booking process. Whereas transient travel is booked based on the employee's location where the traveler profile is hosted, relocation travel is managed as a guest booking in the region of the employee's destination. The traveler profile will not be moved to the relocation country until travel is completed and the employee starts working at the new destination.

BCD introduced an international assignment booking form for all relocation travel requests. This ensures the required information is accurate and eliminates the unnecessary follow-ups for missing details. The relocation agency sends BCD the international assignment booking form with employee information (including accompanying family and pets) and eligibility, based on the client's travel policy for global mobility. If the booking form is complete, BCD provides an offer with travel options to the agency and employee. Once relocation details are approved, BCD makes the final booking.



Results

BCD and the relocation company are working hand in hand with short and effective communication. The reorganized and redefined process for global mobility has led to faster email response times, more positive traveler experiences, smoother transitions, reduced administrative burden, and greater overall efficiency. Cost savings, compliance and duty of care are much improved.

“Moving to a different country can be stressful and take a serious toll on people. We truly appreciate working with a partner like BCD who simplifies the complexity of relocation travel and provides our employees with a seamless traveler experience.”

Global Travel Manager at pharmaceutical company