



Getting to 'yes': Creating a compelling business case for distributed work technology

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Introduction

HR and global mobility professionals know that they can't scale their global talent mobility, business travel and remote work programs without technology. However, they often face challenges in getting internal buy-in to implement technology solutions. With work location flexibility currently at an all-time high, relying on purely manual processes to manage various types of employee movement is becoming an increasingly unsustainable approach for companies.

For professionals who are used to managing distributed work compliance day-to-day, the need for technology to streamline operations, ensure compliance, and enhance the employee experience is usually clear. The challenge for these frontline professionals is not in recognizing the value of these solutions but in building a compelling business case that wins over organizational decision-makers.

This ebook is designed to help you construct a solid business case for investing in technology to support your global talent mobility, business travel, and remote work programs. The strategies outlined here will guide you through identifying organizational needs, calculating potential returns, and presenting a value proposition to key stakeholders to get you to the 'yes' you need to effectively scale your programs.

This ebook is divided into three main sections:

Part 1

Scoping the need for investment in technology

Part 2

Building your business case

Part 3

Presenting the business case to stakeholders

Part 1

Scoping the need for investment in technology



How do you know when it's time to invest in technology?

Realizing that your current processes are no longer sufficient to support the scale or complexity of your distributed work program is a common catalyst for businesses to start exploring digitization. As organizations grow and their workforces become more geographically dispersed, manual solutions such as spreadsheets and email or legacy software systems can struggle to keep pace with a company's needs, leading to errors and inconsistencies.

Deciding on the right time to use technology to automate key processes will depend on the specific needs of your business. You may want to consider upgrading to an integrated technology solution if any of the following apply to your organization:

- You or your team spend more time on manual, repetitive, day-to-day tasks than on working with assignees or business travelers, strategic planning or dealing with unexpected problems.
- Your distributed work programs are growing, with more employees on assignments, traveling or working remotely and this increase is becoming more difficult to manage with manual processes.
- You notice your current processes are resulting in missed deadlines, errors in documentation, difficulties in tracking employee locations and statuses or missed steps.
- There are changes in the regulatory environment, such as tax, immigration or legal changes, that make compliance more challenging and/or the risk of non-compliance more costly.
- You've had 'near misses' when it comes to work location risk and compliance.
- You or your team have received growing or ongoing complaints from employees about the handling of their assignments or business travel.
- Morale is low in your team because of the amount of time spent on data entry and manual processes.
- Your company has had to introduce new policies to deal with the additional compliance complexity across all forms of employee mobility.



Laying the groundwork to support a ‘yes’

Prior to approaching a senior leader with a request to purchase technology, it's essential to prepare the groundwork. Before you can communicate the need for technology to a colleague, it is important that you fully identify your organization's specific needs and how technology addresses your requirements.

This involves gathering feedback from employees, mapping current processes and pinpointing inefficiencies and pain points. By taking these steps, you will be better equipped to choose a technology solution that aligns with your organization's goals, integrates seamlessly with existing systems, enhances overall efficiency, and stands the best chance of being fully adopted by the team.

Getting holistic input on the current state of your program from relevant stakeholders

Talk to your team and get their feedback on what is and isn't working well. Frontline employees are often the first to notice inefficiencies or gaps in the system. Find out what their current pain points are and gather their input on how processes could be improved. It's important that employees feel their opinions are valued and that their insights are shaping the solution. Once you've gathered this feedback, analyze the data for common themes. These insights will help you align the technology solution with the needs of your employees, ensuring a smoother implementation process and greater buy-in across the organization.

Mapping current processes

List what the current processes are for dealing with global talent mobility, business travel and remote and hybrid work management. Gather as much information as possible about how these processes are currently being managed within your organization and who in each team is responsible for each task.

Some of the processes that you might include in your list(s) are outlined in the figure below.

Global talent mobility

- Cost estimates
- Assignment management
- Exception management
- Employee engagement
- Reporting

Business travel and work location compliance

- Pre-travel risk assessments
- Tracking employee locations
- Managing travel risk and compliance
- Payroll withholding
- Reporting

Remote and hybrid work

- Remote work risk assessments
- Managing remote work requests
- Ensuring compliance with company policies and wider regulations
- Documenting decisions
- Reporting

Once you have established what the current processes are, and who is responsible for each one, you will want to get more specific about exactly the steps taken in each process. For example, if creating cost estimates is one process in your list, your process map might look something like the example below. Repeat for each of the processes that you identified in the previous step.

Step-by-step process for creating a cost estimate using manual processes and third-party providers:

Request Cost Estimate

- Send emails & make telephone calls



Gather Data

- Download from HCM
- Manual data transfer/input



Create Cost Estimate

- Complete custom spreadsheet or template
- Add external provider figures as necessary e.g. cost of living projections, tax figures, hardship premiums



Review and Revise

- Via email
- Manual edits and revisions



Approve and Finalize

- Via email
- Manual uploads to employee file



Track Against Actual Costs

- Manually maintain spreadsheets

Tracking the amount of time taken up by various tasks

Once you have a clear process map and understand who is responsible for each stage of the process, the next step is to determine how much time is spent on each process. You can manually record this in a spreadsheet or you may want to consider simple software tools that allow you to track hours spent on different tasks. It's best to track the time taken for each process on a daily basis over a period of three to six months. This will allow you to extrapolate the total time spent annually on the various tasks through a simple calculation.

Identifying the biggest inefficiencies and pain points

Through getting feedback from employees, mapping out current processes and tracking the amount of time it takes to do tasks, inefficiencies and any duplicated efforts will soon become apparent. For instance, you may notice your team repeatedly inputs the same employee data or wastes time creating documents from scratch. Time might also be lost correcting simple errors that arise from unnecessary manual inputs.

Some questions to ask at this stage are:

- Which processes are taking the most time?
- Which processes are most prone to errors?
- Which processes do employees find the most difficult and cumbersome?
- Which processes are repetitive?

Once you have answers to those questions, you will be able to identify the processes that your organization will benefit most from automating.



Setting clear, measurable objectives for your technology implementation project

Once you have identified the processes that make the most sense to automate, you will need to set clear and measurable objectives for your technology implementation project.

The objectives that you choose should focus on solving specific business needs, improving efficiency, and supporting long-term organizational goals. Some examples of objectives for a technology implementation project may include improving operational efficiency, enhancing the employee experience or tightening up data security. Once you have chosen your key objectives, the next step is choosing the right metrics to track.

Choosing key metrics for your technology implementation project

The metrics that you choose to use at this stage will depend on many factors including the industry that you operate in, your organization's overall strategic goals and the focus of your technology implementation. Some examples of key metrics you may want to track before, during and after your technology implementation project are outlined below.

People metrics

- Satisfaction scores of assignees, business travelers and remote workers
- Productivity levels of the HR, global mobility and travel teams and/or the assignees themselves
- Time spent on repetitive manual tasks related to various forms of distributed work
- Time taken to onboard employees in a new location
- Retention rates of assignees, business travelers and remote workers

Process metrics

- Time taken to complete key processes related to employee movement or location
- Volume of work processed within a given time frame
- Number of errors in key processes, for example, cost estimates
- Adherence to tax, immigration and legal regulations and internal work location policies
- Speed of response to distributed work requests

Technology metrics

- Availability and reliability of technology systems
- Scalability of technology systems
- Ease of integration with existing systems e.g. your HRIS
- Adherence to compliance standards and regulations
- Total cost of ownership (TCO)
- Operational costs

Part 2

Building your business case



Justifying the cost of introducing technology

When asking for a financial investment in technology to support global talent mobility and distributed work programs, senior stakeholders will want details on the potential long-term value and return on investment (ROI) they can expect. While the initial expenditure for a technology solution might seem high, its implementation will usually be cost-positive or cost-neutral over time when you consider the reduction in manual work, errors and inefficiencies, all of which ultimately lead to savings that outweigh the upfront costs.

The tricky part is being able to adequately demonstrate all of that to senior leaders in a concrete way. That's why all of the work that you did in the initial phase, including recording time spent on different manual tasks is so important. We'll now look at how to approach communicating the return on investment for a new technology.

How to approach questions about return on investment (ROI)

Calculating the return on investment (ROI) for a new technology solution in HR and global mobility is notoriously difficult but it's usually one of the first things that senior decision-makers will ask about when approached about investing in a new solution. Even if it's not fully possible to scope all the potential intangible gains a company might experience after implementing technology, there are various things you can do to start to quantify the likely return on investment for adopting a new technology solution. This requires comparing the financial gains or benefits associated with the investment in technology with the cost of implementation.

Both the costs and benefits include many direct and indirect factors that are difficult to isolate and measure accurately. For instance, indirect costs like training time and productivity disruption, and indirect benefits like long-term employee satisfaction or improved compliance, are inherently more challenging to quantify and forecast.

While you may never get to a perfect ROI calculation, you can demonstrate that you have done your homework and carefully considered and compared the financial gains or benefits associated with the investment in technology with the cost of implementation to the best of your ability. Key elements to consider when assessing ROI are outlined in the table below.

Direct and indirect costs related to the adoption of technology

1. Initial implementation fees and ongoing subscription costs
2. Any custom configurations, integrations or migrations necessary.
3. Employee training
4. Maintenance and support
5. Downtime
6. Initial productivity loss while employees get used to the new system
7. Opportunity costs (of not investing in other areas)

Direct and indirect savings and improvements related to the adoption of technology

1. *Significant and ongoing cost savings* associated with:
 - a. Fewer penalties and fines due to inaccuracies arising because of human error
 - b. Reduced time spent on repetitive tasks through via automation
 - c. Decreased spend on new hires due to improved retention of high performers
 - d. Reduced spend on outsourcing tasks to third-party providers.
 - e. Less time spent waiting for key data points from consultants or vendors.
2. Productivity gains: Faster workflows or improved efficiency, leading to more output with the same resources.

Other considerations when calculating return on investment

Time frame

You may also want to calculate the point in time at which the benefits will equal the costs, indicating when the technology starts paying for itself.

Intangible benefits

There are, of course, other benefits to adopting technology that may not be as easily quantifiable but nevertheless lead to long-term gains for the organization. For example, ensuring employees and their families have smooth and positive experiences on assignments has knock-on effects on brand reputation, and talent acquisition and retention.



Part 3

Presenting the business case to stakeholders



Tailoring your message for your audience(s)

When building a business case for internal stakeholders, it's important to tailor your proposal to address relevant areas of focus for any functional leaders who are part of the decision-making team for buying or implementing global mobility and distributed work technology. This might include:

Finance department

- **Payroll:** How the solution will enhance payroll processes for distributed workers.
- **Risk management:** Financial risks involved, such as fines or penalties associated with non-compliance with legal, tax and immigration regulations associated with distributed work.
- **Cost:** Total cost of investment, including initial and ongoing expenses.
- **Return on investment (ROI):** How quickly the investment will pay off and generate profits or savings.
- **Budget alignment:** Whether the project fits within the current financial plan and forecast.

Procurement department

- **Cost efficiency:** Ensuring that the investment provides good value for money and fits within strategic procurement goals.
- **Vendor evaluation:** Whether the technology or solution comes from reputable, reliable vendors.
- **Contract terms:** Negotiation of favorable contract terms, including warranties, service levels, and pricing structures.
- **Supply chain impact:** How the solution might improve supply chain management or procurement processes.

Information Technology department

- **Technical feasibility:** Whether the solution integrates well with existing systems and infrastructure.
- **Scalability:** Ability of the technology to scale as the company grows.
- **Data security and compliance:** With so much sensitive information collected by teams managing distributed work about assignees and their families, business travelers and remote and hybrid workers, IT teams will want to know that the solution protects their data and complies with relevant regulations (e.g. GDPR).
- **Support and maintenance:** Ongoing technical support, updates, and system maintenance requirements.

Human Resources department

- **Employee experience:** How the solution will impact employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention of assignees, business travelers and remote workers themselves as well as those involved in the management of these distributed work programs.
- **Training requirements:** The level of training needed for employees to adopt the new technology or process.
- **Change management:** How to manage the impact of the changes technology will bring on employees.
- **Workforce productivity:** How the solution will enhance or hinder overall workforce efficiency.
- **Integration with existing technologies:** How well the new system integrates with the HRIS.

Legal and/or risk and compliance departments

- **Risk mitigation:** Whether the proposed solution minimizes potential risks, such as those related to tax or immigration.
- **Regulatory compliance:** How well the solution helps the company to adhere to regulations related to distributed work on a local and global level.
- **Contractual obligations:** Any potential issues with contracts or agreements, including vendor partnerships or service-level agreements (SLAs).
- **Data privacy:** Ensuring that data handling and storage comply with relevant data privacy laws.

Executive leadership (C-suite)

- **Strategic alignment:** How the proposal aligns with the company's overall business strategy and long-term goals for work location flexibility.
- **Growth potential:** Opportunities for expanding market share, revenue streams, or entering new markets.
- **Risk and reward:** Balancing potential risks with the anticipated benefits and competitive advantages.
- **Integration with existing technologies:** How well the new system integrates with the HRIS.

Elements of a compelling business case

When you are at the stage where you have identified the need for technology, set goals for the implementation project, decided how you will respond to questions about likely return on investment, and considered the needs and priorities of key internal stakeholders, you will want to hone your written business case proposal.

A written business case typically includes the elements outlined in the table below. By covering all these elements, your business case will provide a clear, detailed roadmap for technology implementation, ensuring that key internal stakeholders understand the costs and benefits of the proposed solution.

1. Executive summary

A concise overview of the entire business case, highlighting the main points: the problem, proposed solution, financial impact, and expected impact on your global talent mobility and distributed work programs and, ultimately, the knock-on impacts you see for overall talent acquisition and retention.

2. Problem statement

Clearly define the current issue or inefficiency the organization is facing. Make sure to articulate the pain points, providing evidence (data, employee feedback, etc.) to support the need for change. Ideally, the problem should be directly tied to the organization's overall strategic approach to global mobility, business travel and remote work.

3. Objectives

Outline the specific goals you aim to achieve with the proposed solution. These objectives should be measurable and align with broader strategic business goals, for example, objectives related to talent acquisition and retention, work location flexibility and growth in new markets.

4. Solutions considered

Refer to multiple solutions that could potentially address the problem. For each one, provide a brief description, along with the pros and cons. This section shows that while you've carefully evaluated various approaches, your main recommendation is stated in the section below.

5. Preferred solution

Explain why your preferred technology is the best choice. This should be backed by solid reasoning, such as that the features and functionality allow for the automation of the global mobility and distributed work processes identified earlier as being the most in need of optimization.

6. Implementation plan

Detail the steps required to implement the solution, including a timeline, milestones, and resources needed. Consider including a change management strategy, as well as who will be responsible for each stage of the process to ensure a smooth rollout. This might include members of the business travel, global mobility, HR, IT and procurement teams.

7. Financial analysis

Provide a cost-benefit analysis. This should include your estimate of the total cost of adoption, likely financial benefits, the possible return on investment (ROI) and the timeframe within which you expect the project to become cost-neutral. Be as specific as possible in quantifying the financial impact, as this is often the most critical part for many internal stakeholders.

8. Risk assessment

Identify potential risks associated with implementing the solution, including financial, operational, and technical risks. Explain how these risks can be mitigated or managed. Include in this section the risks of not implementing a technology solution such as the greater likelihood of falling foul of immigration and tax regulations. A thorough risk assessment shows that you've considered the uncertainties and have a plan in place to handle them.

9. Assumptions and dependencies

Outline any assumptions you've made during your analysis and list any dependencies that could impact the success of the project. For example, an assumption might be that existing HR and global mobility team resources will remain available over the course of the implementation project. This section helps set realistic expectations for stakeholders.

10. Conclusion and recommendations

Summarize your case and restate the rationale for your preferred solution. Include a call to action which is usually a request to approve the plan and clarify the expected outcomes. Your conclusion should reinforce the benefits and make a clear recommendation for moving forward.

Common objections and how to overcome them

Senior leaders receive numerous budget requests for a variety of projects and have to weigh up many competing priorities. Getting to your 'yes' will mean overcoming various objections along the way. Below are some of the most common objections you may encounter, along with suggestions on how to respond.

OBJECTION

'Why can't we just continue to do this with spreadsheets and email?'

ANSWER

We've been tracking processes relating to our program and we've now grown beyond the size or level of complexity where this can be managed manually without causing undesirable knock-on effects. Here are some of the issues we are either encountering now or risk encountering as we grow further:

A lack of real-time collaboration

Spreadsheets and email are not optimized for real-time collaboration. Multiple team members working on the same spreadsheet can lead to version control issues, confusion, and potential data loss.

Missed messages

Managing communication across multiple email threads can lead to confusion, errors and missed deadlines.

Poor task and workflow management

Spreadsheets and email offer no robust task management or workflow capabilities. It's easy to lose track of individual tasks, dependencies, and progress.

Limited reporting and analytics

Spreadsheets can track basic data, but they are not designed to provide the in-depth insights and analytics required for distributed work compliance management.

Security risks

Sensitive information shared via email or stored in shared spreadsheets is more vulnerable to unauthorized access, data breaches, or accidental sharing.

OBJECTION

‘We don’t have the budget.’

ANSWER

While calculating the exact return on investment for technology to support distributed work is challenging, we have documented and compared the direct and indirect costs and risks associated with implementing this technology solution, as well as the direct and indirect benefits and savings the solution will generate over time. We have put a figure against each of these where possible. When we factor in our current expenses on third-party services, we estimate a cost reduction of approximately X% and anticipate reaching a break-even point within Y months. We can phase the implementation of this solution over Z months, which will spread the cost over time. Beyond the initial savings, this investment positions us to streamline operations, reduce future expenditures, and increase long-term productivity.

Additionally, we've assessed the cost of not investing in this solution at this stage. Without it, we project that ongoing reliance on external services and outdated processes will lead to increased inefficiencies, higher operational costs, and the risk of falling foul of immigration, legal or tax risks related to distributed work. Given the measurable benefits and relatively short payback period, this investment not only fits within our broader strategic goals but also safeguards against future budget strains by proactively addressing escalating costs.

OBJECTION

‘Let’s just hire another person.’

ANSWER

Continuing to hire more and more people to tackle processes that are inherently inefficient is not a long-term or scalable solution. After factoring in recruitment, training, salary, and benefits, the cost of adding another team member is not only high but also grows year over year. In contrast, with a technology solution, we have a predictable, stable cost that quickly pays for itself as the efficiency gains compound.

Furthermore, technology provides a foundation for growth. As our distributed work programs expand, a tech solution can handle increased workloads without requiring additional hires, helping us control labor costs and maintain high productivity without sacrificing quality. By investing in and leveraging technology, we can pivot our people away from manual tasks and data entry, freeing them up for more strategic and high-level value-added activity and setting up our team for sustainable growth.

OBJECTION

‘Let’s outsource this.’

ANSWER

Outsourcing key processes related to global talent mobility, business travel and remote work could have a negative impact on our team. Outsourcing brings with it high costs, slower turnaround times, and limited flexibility. For example, if our team were to outsource cost estimates to a third-party provider, we would be paying anywhere from \$500 to \$1,500 per estimate. Any revisions would add even more cost and can lead to a delay of several days or even weeks. Over time, these fees would add up, and relying on an external provider for every update slows us down.

By using technology to automate these kinds of basic repetitive tasks, we can eliminate these incremental costs and reduce lag time. With the right tech in place, we can generate accurate, up-to-date estimates in minutes rather than days. This empowers our team to respond to changes quickly without worrying about extra charges every time we need an update. Not only do we get a faster, more streamlined workflow, but we can also make the most of our consultancy budget, reserving those resources for higher-level strategic work, like employee experience improvements, policy planning, or complex problem-solving, that truly benefits from a human touch.

Conclusion

Managing global talent mobility, business travel and remote work effectively requires more than just spreadsheets and emails - it demands innovative, scalable technology solutions.

Technology can be a powerful enabler in managing the complexities of distributed work, ensuring compliance, and enhancing the employee experience. However, building a business case to secure internal support for these solutions can be a challenge for HR and global mobility professionals.

From carefully identifying organizational needs, mapping current processes, and addressing pain points, this ebook has laid out a roadmap to help you gain stakeholder buy-in for the tools necessary to support your evolving workforce. Presenting a well-structured and persuasive argument to stakeholders, while anticipating common objections, will help secure your 'yes' and ensure that your initiative aligns with broader business goals. With these strategies, you are better equipped to navigate the internal landscape, communicate the tangible benefits of technology investment, and confidently advocate for the resources that will enable your programs to succeed and scale.

Advocating for technology isn't just about meeting current demands, it's about future-proofing your organization to stay competitive and adaptable in a world where the flexibility of work location is an expectation for many. By taking action now, you're positioning your organization to support a modern workforce, improve compliance, and drive operational efficiency, ultimately creating a more resilient and agile HR and global mobility function.

About Topia

Topia provides technology solutions to manage all forms of employee movement and work location flexibility effectively, at scale and with a firm focus on compliance.

Topia's platform is being used by some of the world's largest and most prestigious companies, including two of the world's biggest firms in the energy and food services sectors, one of the best-known international retail brands and industry leaders in the semiconductor, telecoms & engineering/design sectors.

Today's employees are working in a more diverse range of locations than ever before. Whether it's due to business trips, international and domestic assignments, permanent transfers or remote working practices, the workforce has never been more geographically dispersed. Managing a distributed workforce effectively is critical and companies have to be able to move people to where they're most needed quickly, cost-effectively and in compliance with all relevant regulations.

Topia is used to support businesses before, during and after their people move or travel to wherever they need to be and helps companies ensure the right people are in the right place at the right time.

For more information, visit www.topia.com, email us at info@topia.com or [follow us on LinkedIn](#).

Contact

www.topia.com

info@topia.com