

A Guide to Rotational Assignments





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We are not about just scheduling moves and coordinating transactions. We are in the future business. We are about moving people and companies to their future. We are about supporting the ability to live, work and thrive anywhere, across a lifetime.”

Barry Morris, President & CEO
CapRelo

About Us

CapRelo is a full-service global relocation management company that manages over 10,000 worldwide relocations and assignments annually for all sizes of companies – small to major multinationals alike. With 24 years of mobility expertise, we have established an extensive global footprint with presence in the Americas, EMEA and APAC. Your purpose drives our focus and allows us to be uniquely positioned to help you both acquire and retain the best talent. Our vision is lived by our staff, our daily interactions with clients and industry colleagues and our commitment to the communities we serve. We are proud to support the relocation needs for living, working, thriving anywhere across a lifetime.

About Us

150+

Global clients

8k+

Relocations/year

96%

Transferee satisfaction

Rotational Assignments

A company is only as good as its employees. Hiring quality workers can increase a company's ability to reach operational objectives and poise it to thrive in the digital economy. One way that companies can raise human capital is through rotational programs.

A rotational assignment is a consecutive series of professional assignments designed with specific employee or business outcomes in mind. A series usually involves three to five assignments and consists of short-term placements of between three and six months each.

Companies use rotational assignments for two main purposes: talent development and project work.

Using Rotational Assignments for Talent Development

To boost their human capital, employers are investing in rotational assignments to develop and add new talent. This type of rotational assignment is typically used for four targeted purposes:

Leadership development



Rotational assignments allow future leaders to acquire cross-functional knowledge of mission-critical functions and develop agility by varying roles, departments, scope, units, sectors, objectives and job locations.

Knowledge transfer



Hands-on learning is critical to knowledge retention. Employees sent on rotational assignments can acquire local business knowledge or knowledge of the specific location's processes if it differs from the point of origin.

Recruitment



Companies also use rotational assignments to attract new talent. People are now even more willing to relocate for work than before the pandemic. Giving new hires the opportunity to work at multiple organizations within a short period of time allows them to explore various job functions and locations and can help them determine what career path they want to pursue at a company.

Retention



Rotational assignments can be used to encourage employee engagement and loyalty by providing opportunities to learn new skills, work with knowledgeable colleagues and contribute to interesting projects. Workers are also motivated by the potential to experience a different culture and location.

Meet Critical Business Objectives with Rotational Assignments

Companies also use rotational assignments to manage projects or fill skills gaps on projects, whether those are internal or for clients. These are projects that, without the right leadership or skills, would fall short of their objectives – for example, internal manufacturing process improvements that require Lean Six Sigma experience or product design for clients that require niche engineering skills. Companies can sometimes be hard-pressed to find qualified STEM talent—so when the necessary skills and experience aren't available onsite, companies can use alternative solutions. Sending employees on rotational assignments can perform the double function of providing the needed abilities at a fraction of the cost of hiring external talent while simultaneously challenging and developing employees.

Developing the Right Policy

Creating rotational assignment policies requires a different mindset than when establishing traditional corporate relocation policies. Rotational assignments are typically short-term, so fewer employees are permitted to bring their families with them. That also means there are usually fewer complications—such as home or car sales—to manage at the home location, and fewer things—like schools or employment for a spouse/partner—to arrange at the host destination.

Nevertheless, developing effective policies is essential to ensuring accurate administration and cost management, as well as maximizing ROI. In addition, clearly defined, transparent policies increase the efficiency with which rotational assignments can be implemented and reduce the chances of miscommunication with employees.



So, what should employers take into account when developing rotational assignment relocation policies?

1. Number of assignees

The more employees a company sends on rotational assignments, the more critical it is to have a policy in place. If assignments target different levels of employees and have varying objectives, multiple policies should be developed accordingly.

2. Domestic, international or both

Coordinating the moving parts of rotational assignments, including household goods moving, temporary living arrangements and travel, requires precise timing and can become burdensome. It becomes far more complex for international moves when you consider the tax and immigration implications of global assignments. When developing policies for international assignments, immigration and tax laws, language barriers and cultural factors must be addressed.

3. Budget

There are several options to consider for managing assignment budgets.

- Provide a lump sum to assignees to manage their own logistics. However, this may compromise employees' ability to hit the ground running if they're trying to find a place to live and learn their way around their new surroundings. It is also a tax-inefficient approach, so it is not often used for these types of assignments.
- Provide accommodation and transport, along with a per diem or a reimbursable sum for other expenses.

4. Objectives

Consider the assignments' objectives when creating policies. For example, if the objective is to improve an employee's agility and decision-making skills, you may provide fewer resources at a destination than for an assignment where the objective is to lead a project for a client. It is also essential that the objective be made clear to the assignees.




5. Opt-out provisions

If the employee opts out of an assignment, there must be clear processes in place. This can streamline the process and greatly reduce the risk of errors. Given the significant cost of assignments, repayment arrangements should be made very clear.

Selecting the Right Candidates

The success of a rotational assignment doesn't just hinge on good policy; it's also imperative to choose the right candidates. While candidates can be executives, high-potential employees, new hires or recent college graduates, they must possess the right qualities and be in the right situation to thrive on rotational assignments. In addition, they should be realistic about their assignments and be prepared for a learning curve, as well as a certain amount of social isolation (at least in the beginning of the assignment).

In general, candidates should be curious, energetic problem solvers with good communication skills. In terms of being in a suitable situation, candidates should feel confident in their ability to be away from their loved ones for an extended period of time. Employers should be sensitive to challenges employees may be experiencing in their personal lives. Personal problems can adversely impact an employee's performance in a normal work situation. If that employee is thousands of miles away from home and hasn't seen his or her family for weeks, then the situation is more likely to be even more wearing—and the assignment is more likely to fail.



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How Mentors Can Mitigate Challenges for Employees and Employers

Rotational assignments come with their own unique set of challenges. Employees can encounter problems with assimilation in the new culture. Doing business in a different language, learning new customs and even acclimating to different weather can all take their toll. Employees may also feel cut off from their support system and familiar surroundings at home. At the same time, it can be challenging to integrate into a new corporate environment.

Employers are challenged to ensure employees have all the information and support they need not only to function well in the job, but also to adjust to the new surroundings. If an assignment fails, there's an enhanced risk of the employee ultimately leaving the company—so it's in both parties' best interest to ensure the assignment is a success.

Program mentors at the destination can play an important role in mitigating the challenges for both employer and employee. They can help employees work through any assimilation issues they encounter during their assignments. They're also key to establishing strong relationships between assignees and onsite employees. They can also help improve retention by working with employees to determine their next steps after returning home.

The Long-Term Benefits of Rotational Assignments

Rotational assignments are growing in popularity because they offer a number of distinct long-term benefits. These include:



Helping companies recruit and retain talent



Allowing employers to nurture new leaders



Enhancing a company's employer brand



Boosting a company's competitive positioning

Final Thoughts

Companies need to maximize potential and mitigate any risk of failure to make the most of the benefits of rotational assignments, whether the purpose of the assignments is talent development or project work. Developing an effective rotational assignment policy that addresses assignment objectives, budgetary frameworks and employee needs during the assignments and establishing program mentors at the destination are keys to success.

Working with a corporate relocation partner with experience managing domestic and international relocations can greatly improve the odds of delivering an outstanding experience while also unburdening HR staff. The right partnership can be the key ingredient that allows both companies and their employees to thrive.



Global Headquarters

108 Carpenter Drive
Sterling, Virginia 20164
United States of America
+1.888.622.8278

CapRelo Canada

2233 Argentia Road, Suite 302 & 302A
Mississauga, Ontario
+1.416.918.4134

CapRelo EMEA Office

26-28 Hammersmith Grove, Suite 806
London, W6 7BA
United Kingdom
+44 (0)17.2244.6224

CapRelo APAC Office

41F World Financial Center No. 2 Dagubei Rd
Heping District, Tianjin 300041, China
+86.225.830.7816