



Mobility Matters

From Compliance to Catalyst: Mobility's Strategic Shift in Latin America

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The paradigm for cross-border mobility in Latin America is undergoing a fundamental transformation. The function is shifting from a focus on operational execution to a mandate to deliver measurable business and talent outcomes. Insights from the 2025 KPMG Global Mobility Benchmarking Survey indicate that while organizations still demand flawless compliance, they increasingly expect mobility to be a visible driver of strategic growth.

For many organizations, this shift is creating a productive tension. While mobility leaders are optimistic about the future, their function is often still perceived and described internally as operational, reactive, and compliance driven. The survey data underscores a significant gap between aspiration and execution, a gap that Latin America's regulatory complexity and cost pressures can make feel even wider.

The question for mobility leaders is no longer, "Should mobility be strategic?" It is, "How do we make mobility measurably strategic without losing governance, equity, and control?" The answer is emerging around six imperatives that are reshaping global mobility in Latin America (LATAM): setting a clear vision, demonstrating impact, empowering the team, activating artificial intelligence (AI), redefining policy, and elevating the employee experience.

A few key findings from our survey frame the challenge:

- One-third (33 percent) of mobility leaders are focused on articulating a clear strategy for their organization in 2026.¹
- Only 20 percent believe that strategy has been widely communicated and understood by stakeholders.²
- Demonstrating return on investment (ROI) is the #1 challenge for mobility leaders.³
- Two-thirds (68 percent) of mobility teams are not involved in employee skills development, and 60 percent are not involved in succession planning.⁴



Setting the vision: From operational function to strategic enabler

Mobility in LATAM currently exists in a transitional operating state. The articulated vision is clear: mobility should support business growth, strategic talent deployment, and the fulfillment of critical skill needs—not simply process moves. Yet in practice, mobility is often viewed as an operational area that reacts to assignments rather than shaping decisions upstream.

This gap is not caused by a lack of intent. It arises because the infrastructure required to run “strategic mobility” is fundamentally different from what is needed for “transactional mobility.” A future-focused vision for mobility in LATAM requires:

- Clearer decision rules for which moves are business critical
- Consistent governance to reduce exceptions and ensure equity
- Data visibility to connect costs, risk, and outcomes.

LATAM’s environment amplifies this challenge by introducing inherent friction: frequent legislative changes, complex tax and immigration considerations, and cost pressures that can drive exceptions. When exceptions become the norm, teams spend their time negotiating the “one-off,” and the program begins to feel less like a system and more like a sequence of special approvals.

A more effective approach is to reframe the question. Instead of asking mobility teams to simply “be more strategic,” organizations should ask, “Which mobility decisions should be treated as strategic decisions?” This framing helps clarify where vision, governance, measurement, and stakeholder alignment are most critically needed, and positions mobility as a visible contributor to the organization’s long-term direction in LATAM.



Showing the impact: Making ROI visible in the LATAM context

While ROI is often treated as a finance challenge, our analysis positions it as a design and governance challenge. ROI becomes difficult, if not impossible, to demonstrate when the mobility function is not structurally connected to talent processes and business outcomes.

A particularly important finding is the disconnect between stated goals and structural reality. The survey highlights that most mobility teams are not involved in skills development and succession planning—the very areas that would naturally strengthen the story of mobility as a talent accelerator.

At the same time, a crucial shift in leadership mindset is underway. Strategic leaders are increasingly focused on value rather than cost, evidenced by the sharp decline in leaders who rank cost as a top challenge.

In practice, this means mobility leaders in LATAM are being asked to show more than just expense management. They must connect mobility decisions to outcomes such as leadership readiness, deployment of critical skills, and support for market expansion, all while maintaining absolute compliance integrity amid regional complexity.

This is where measurement becomes central. “Measurable mobility” changes how the business perceives the function. When mobility can clearly show the value an assignment enabled—opening a new market, accelerating a transformation project, or filling a critical skills gap—it becomes easier to position the function as a catalyst for business outcomes rather than a cost center. For LATAM organizations, building this impact narrative is essential to securing investment and influence.



No strategy can succeed without the right capabilities. In Latin America, mobility teams are being asked to act as strategic advisors while still delivering flawless execution across complex tax, immigration, and labor environments. That dual expectation demands new skills, clearer roles, and stronger partnerships.

Empowering the mobility team in LATAM involves:

- Developing strategic and analytical capabilities alongside technical and compliance expertise
- Embedding mobility more deeply within talent management, workforce planning, and succession processes
- Establishing formal key performance indicators (KPIs) that reflect both operational performance and strategic contribution
- Building stronger collaboration with external providers, particularly where local regulations and market practices are evolving quickly.

When teams are equipped in this way, mobility can move from “processing assignments” to “shaping decisions” in areas such as which roles should be mobile, how cross-border moves support leadership pipelines, and where mobility can enable regional or sector growth (for example, mining in Chile, technology in Mexico, or energy in Brazil). Over time, empowered teams become trusted partners to the business—able to challenge assumptions, propose alternatives, and codesign solutions that balance cost, risk, and opportunity.





Activating AI: Turning fragmented data into actionable insight

Many mobility teams are pursuing analytics, dashboards, and AI, yet our analysis consistently returns to a fundamental blocker: fragmented, unreliable data. Mobility data often exists across disparate HR, payroll, tax, and immigration providers, as well as manual trackers. When data is disconnected, even basic reporting becomes time-consuming, and confidence in the numbers declines.

Organizations struggle to answer core operational and strategic questions when data is not integrated, such as:

- Which assignment types deliver the highest value?
- Where are costs increasing, and what are the primary drivers?
- Are we deploying the right talent to the right locations?
- How do mobility decisions support succession, retention, and skill gaps?

In the LATAM context, where regulations are dynamic and reporting requirements can be demanding, AI and automation can be powerful enablers—but only if the underlying data is coherent and trustworthy.

In mobility, “digital transformation” is less about adopting new tools and more about building the data architecture and governance that make those tools meaningful.

Three enablers are critical:

- An integrated data architecture that connects HR, tax, immigration, and payroll inputs across LATAM markets.
- Clear strategic use case prioritizing the questions the business most needs answered.
- Alignment with business and talent priorities so that AI and analytics are focused on decisions that matter.

This progression is nonnegotiable: mobility cannot credibly move from “cost reporting” to “value storytelling” without first securing a coherent and trusted view of its own cost, risk, and outcomes. For LATAM, activating AI around high-quality data can unlock smarter, faster, and more compliant global operations—turning information into insight and insight into action.



Redefining policy: Dynamic suites for LATAM realities

Mobility policy is the point where strategy meets reality. The survey indicates that many organizations have recently reviewed their policies, with more prioritizing updates going forward. The clear trend is a shift away from one-size-fits-all policies toward dynamic policy suites: distinct frameworks for different move types, including long-term assignments, short-term projects, local-plus arrangements, and defined rules for remote or extended business travel.

This approach represents a governance improvement, not just a policy expansion. When each move type has a clear purpose, eligibility criteria, and decision rules, organizations can reduce ad-hoc negotiations, improve budgeting predictability, and strengthen internal equity.

In Latin America, policy redefinition also means acknowledging the region's specific complexity without fragmenting the global model. A key strategy emerging in the region is the "tropicalization" of global policy—thoughtfully adapting global frameworks to local tax, social security, and labor realities, rather than creating entirely separate LATAM frameworks. This maintains consistency while addressing local nuance.

For example:

- In Brazil, policy design must navigate high payroll costs and complex social security rules while still offering competitive packages for inbound and outbound talent.
- In Mexico, policy differentiation helps organizations move beyond simple payroll adjustments to structured, career-oriented mobility experiences.
- In Argentina, policies that tie assignments to leadership development objectives can help demonstrate the strategic value of mobility, even in volatile economic conditions.

By redefining policies in this way, LATAM organizations can enable possibility—offering flexible, competitive options that support evolving business needs and talent expectations while retaining control and compliance.



Elevating the experience: Making mobility a measurable talent advantage

The mobility experience presents one of the clearest pathways to demonstrating value, yet its measurement remains inconsistent. Our survey reveals a significant gap between intent and execution in how organizations track employee satisfaction.

The most actionable insight for program design is that the highest-impact experience drivers are not necessarily financial. Mobile employees consistently value:

- Clear communication and transparency
- Processes that are easy to navigate
- Clarity on what to expect at each stage of the journey.

This framing is critical because it suggests experience improvements do not always require increased benefits. In many cases, the experience improves dramatically when programs provide clarity, reduce uncertainty, and seamlessly coordinate support across all providers and stakeholders.

In Latin America, where local bureaucracy, regulatory requirements, and cultural differences can add to the stress of a move, elevating the experience is particularly important. Practical steps include:

- Providing a single portal or clear point of contact for mobile employees and their families
- Using feedback loops to understand pain points and act on them quickly
- Coordinating across HR, tax, immigration, and vendors to present a unified, predictable journey.

This, in turn, strengthens the employee value proposition, giving talent the confidence that a move is a structured career opportunity, not an improvised risk. Over time, a consistently positive mobility experience becomes a distinguishing feature for LATAM organizations seeking to attract and retain scarce skills.



Market realities across the region

The regional narrative manifests in distinct ways across key markets:



Brazil

The key challenges are influencing business leader perception of mobility's strategic role, managing high assignment costs driven by local legislation, and overcoming disorganized data that slows technology adoption. The opportunity lies in proactive planning that aligns business needs, talent, and mobility, anchored in a clear vision and supported by better data and AI-enabled insight.



Mexico

The market reflects two coexisting realities. Some organizations still manage cross-border moves mainly through straightforward shifts from home to host country payroll, while more mature organizations use differentiated policy frameworks and are increasingly focused on protecting the employee experience through clarity and structure. As teams build capability and strengthen their role in talent decisions, mobility is starting to be seen as a driver of leadership and skills development.



Chile

Here, mobility is being used as a strategic driver of growth, supporting project execution in mining and energy, enabling the expansion of digital hubs in financial services, and addressing critical talent demands in the technology sector. Organizations are moving beyond one-size-fits-all approaches by using differentiated policies for diverse move types, adapting global frameworks to local realities, and empowering in country teams with data and clear governance so they can deploy skills precisely where and when the business needs them most, while maintaining a consistent, positive employee experience.



Argentina

While mobility has traditionally addressed immediate business needs, leading organizations are beginning to forge a link with leadership development. The primary opportunity lies in closing the measurement gap—without data on experience and outcomes, the leadership impact of mobility is difficult to prove. Strengthening data foundations and defining clear success metrics for assignments are key steps.





To translate these imperatives into action, mobility leaders in Latin America can focus on a set of foundational moves:

- **Set the vision:** Define and communicate a clear strategic intent for mobility, specifying which decisions are truly strategic and how mobility supports business and talent priorities in the region.
- **Show the impact:** Design governance and measurement so that ROI and talent outcomes (skills, succession, leadership readiness) are visible and credible.
- **Empower your team:** Invest in the skills, KPIs, and partnerships that allow mobility to operate as a strategic advisor, not just an execution engine.
- **Activate AI:** Treat data architecture as a value enabler, not an information technology task. Integrate data, prioritize use cases, and apply AI where it can most directly improve decisions and compliance.
- **Redefine policy:** Use dynamic policy suites—carefully “tropicalized” for LATAM—to enable flexibility with control, reduce exceptions, and maintain equity.
- **Elevate experience:** Make the mobility experience measurable and actionable. It is a critical lever for retention, reputation, and program credibility.





The most important shift our analysis reveals is not the emergence of new mobility models, but the emergence of a new expectation: that mobility can be understood, governed, and measured as a contributor to business and talent outcomes. The complexity of Latin America makes this challenging, but it also makes the payoff more meaningful.

By anchoring their programs in a clear vision, demonstrating impact, empowering teams, activating AI, redefining policies, and elevating the employee experience, LATAM mobility leaders can complete the transformation from compliance function to strategic catalyst. With clearer policy structures, stronger data foundations, and a deliberate focus on experience and governance, mobility can move from being perceived primarily as a cost to being recognized as an undeniable strategic enabler for the region.



Related resource:

For deeper insight into navigating cross-border mobility in Latin America: trends and strategies, explore the 2025 KPMG Global Mobility Benchmarking Report, which examines how organizations are redesigning mobility programs to strengthen governance, manage risk, and align with broader business and talent priorities. To learn more about the KPMG Global Mobility Services practice, visit read.kpmg.us/GlobalMobilityServices.

Footnotes:

- ¹ See the “2025 KPMG Global Mobility Benchmarking Report,” page 7.
² See the “2025 KPMG Global Mobility Benchmarking Report,” page 8.
^{3,4} See the “2025 KPMG Global Mobility Benchmarking Report,” page 10.

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