



# GLOBAL BENEFITS VISION

Knowledge & Wisdom for Global Employee Benefits Professionals

06 Global Expert Views  
With Damien O'Farrell

*Pasquale Gorrasi*

10 Six lifestyle "medicines" for  
A better, longer life

*Yoram Vodovotz, Michael Parkinson*

16 Got Zoom fatigue?

*Julie Boland*





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### PASQUALE GORRASI

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#### GENERALI EMPLOYEE BENEFITS (GEB)

Director International Lines



After graduating in Economics at Venice University in Italy, he started his career in the finance industry.

He joined Assicurazioni Generali in 1990 as Junior Underwriter in the Surety Bond Department where he spent about 9 years, achieving the position of Senior Underwriter.

Pasquale left the Surety Bond Department to join the International Non-Life Corporate department where he held the responsibility for a number of international clients until 2002 when he moved to Generali Worldwide with the position of Business Development Manager for Employee Benefit for Expatriates where he contributed to build the Group's capabilities for Expatriates Benefits.

In 2005 he moved to Generali Employee Benefits in Brussels to head the Mobile Benefits Unit. This last assignment evolved into the current position of Head of International Lines at Generali Employee Benefits where he is responsible for Employee Benefits for Expatriates including Healthcare, Life and International Pension, Pan European Benefits, both Life and Pension, and development of Asset Pooling book of business.

### DAMIEN O'FARRELL

#### DAMIEN O'FARRELL MOBILITY SERVICES

Managing Director

Damien O'Farrell is a Global Mobility Specialist and Expat Coach with thirty plus years' experience in Italy. Through his global mobility programs, he assists corporates and individuals relocating to Italy. In addition to this, he also provides cutting-edge spousal support, expat coaching, and entrepreneur mentoring with a focus on building and growing a successful business in Italy.





# *DAMIEN O'FARRELL*



**PASQUALE GORRASI, Head of International Lines at Generali Employee Benefits (GEB) Network, interviews DAMIEN O'FARRELL, Managing Director of Damien O'Farrell Mobility Services, on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on global mobility and the future for the sector.**





Damien O'Farrell



Pasquale Gorrasi

**D**amien is the owner manager of a boutique Destination Service Provider specialising in bespoke relocation and immigration services, as well as coaching programmes aimed at expatriates who want to elevate their lives both personally and professionally. Damien has lived in Italy since 1988 and, during this time, he has overseen more than 10,000 relocations into and from Italy.

*What would you say is the main focus of international mobility at the moment?*

The pandemic has taught us that we really need to be more flexible than ever.

During the pandemic, some people decided to leave their assignment and go back to where they came from, either permanently or temporarily. Some decided to stay. So, HR had to look at things in a different way and embrace the change.

I think that global mobility is all about change. And, right now, it's going through a disruption that possibly other sectors went through earlier. We're beginning to understand that it's time to rethink certain things. For example, I think if we're still using welcome bags with a lot of paper we need to rethink that, because we're dealing with younger people who are very conscious about sustainability.

I'm dealing with clients who don't really know what email is. They communicate through chat apps instead.

Embracing change in global mobility is really a positive.

*The pandemic is still preventing almost any kind of mobility. Once the restrictions are properly lifted, should employers still use mobility to attract and retain skills and experience in your opinion?*

Global mobility is something I've believed in for many years. It really does attract and keep talent. But I think this flexibility we've just talked about is going to play a big part in how global mobility attracts talent in future, because a lot of people have started to reflect on their lives and work life balance.

And I think that where assignments are concerned, some people are realising they can do a shorter assignment, or they can bring the family partially – by that I mean that either the family comes for only part of the assignment or only part of the family comes.

So, as far as retention is concerned, employers have certain strategies and global mobility policies should form a part of that, in a way that reflects changing needs.

You're not going to be able to please everybody. But you need to listen to individual needs and, based on the feedback you get, you can modify your programmes or design something completely new.

***What's your view on trying to return to pre Covid-19 working patterns and assignee numbers?***

I think can go back to whatever level we want as long as we understand we might have to be doing it differently. And that's good. It means we're changing, we're growing and that can only be a positive experience for everyone involved.

So, I agree we can go to pre-level patterns and numbers, but we need to be doing it differently.

***Do you think Covid-19 forced companies and individuals out of their comfort zones?***

I think it's made them realise that there will always be an emergency and they need to be better prepared.

For example, now we've gone from talking about the pandemic to talking about climate change. So, we could have a situation where in a city there's torrential rain for many days and, again, you'd need to have some kind of emergency plan in place to protect and safeguard your assignees.

The pandemic did shake people up. It made them realise they're not prepared. And it made some of the assignees realise that maybe their level of comfort with emergencies is not as high as they thought it was so they might need to work on that. Either that, or it might be better to stay closer to home.

***So, how do you see the future of global mobility?***

I think there's a bright future for global mobility. A lot of people still want to grow their career by accepting an assignment either in another part of their country or overseas.

Also, as I've mentioned, if we take learnings from the pandemic and introduce flexibility and really listen to feedback – and that includes tapping into local knowledge so that assignees have a much better experience – then I think we will see growth in global mobility.

***The pandemic has significantly increased the pace of digital transformation. Do you think this will lead to more tailor-made employee benefits that are more effective for the employees, while achieving possible savings for the employer?***

I think digitalisation – automating certain parts of global mobility – is extremely beneficial because it can save time, it can save energy, it can save money.

At the end of the day though, we are dealing with human beings. Some people need more support than others. And when someone is having a problem, nothing solves that like face-to-face. So, we need to make sure that the face-to-face time with the assignee is the best that we can possibly provide.

Personally, I think we can need to have a combination of both.

***So, what changes should we expect in the way we are serving clients? How do they want to be served based on your experience?***

Going forward, we need to really listen and discover what the high value problem is for the client, then work together to solve it.

That way, we enter into a strong working relationship because the client really sees your value and you really feel that you're bringing something to them that they didn't have before. ∞

