





# The Next Generation of Mobility Leaders

Traits that make our industry  
a compelling choice for  
younger professionals

By Morgan E. Wiedmann



**M**obility—it's not something you can study in school or receive your bachelor's degree in, so how are our younger generations discovering this industry?

I "fell into" mobility more than a year ago when I began my career with Weichert Workforce Mobility in their marketing department. Curious to know more about others' stories, I decided to find out from those working in the heart of the industry—the counselors and HR practitioners—what led them to their careers in mobility. I focused on millennials, as I am one myself. With those born in the 1980s and '90s moving up their career ladders and reaching midlevel and higher positions in the field, I wanted to learn more about what drives the next generation of industry influencers.

So, where did we all come from? What backgrounds led us here? What search words on LinkedIn and Indeed caused us to gravitate toward mobility? And how are our skills changing this industry?

I interviewed colleagues and those working for companies with relocation programs, ranging from 23 to 35 years old, to see what the lives of millennials working in mobility are like.

## Becoming Mobile

There is no shortage of statistics about our generation and how we like to work, and I can relate to those findings about 90% of the time. Not surprisingly, I found others who feel the same way, especially as those data points and traits align with talent mobility.

Some are joining the industry right out of college; others are coming to mobility with backgrounds in teaching, interests in real estate, or personal experiences with moving.

Rachel Green, 23, human resources associate for Moderna, is new to the mobility industry; she started out as an intern in HR and was hired full time in May 2018 to administer the company's growing mobility program.

Green found this to be a great opportunity not only to enhance her career but also to manage an expanding relocation department in which she can fully devote time and thought to policy design and administration.

On any given day, she's answering questions, working with mobile talent, revisiting policies to ensure that they are up to date with current best practices and

business needs, and incorporating insight into where employees are relocating to and from.

"I am excited to be a part of this industry eight months in," Green says. "I have a lot to learn, but I am eager to see where this goes—especially with my age group leading the industry as we get older—and seeing how it will change."

As our generation gains experience and progresses into managerial positions, some of us are relocating to enhance our careers.

For example, Jaime Calero, 29, recently relocated from Weichert Workforce Mobility's LATAM office to the company's New Jersey headquarters. He joined Weichert straight from college almost eight years ago with a background in international studies, world politics, and diplomacy. He worked his way to becoming one of Weichert's senior international workforce mobility counselors. He enjoyed working with LATAM countries, practicing his Spanish skills, and understanding their culture and relocation process.

A "Millennials at Work" report by PwC notes that 71% of the members of this generation expect and want an overseas assignment during their career. Many of us have reached a point in our professional lives where we are ready to take on new challenges and grow our expertise and skills. Becoming mobile gives us the opportunity to do so in the same company, but in a different field or even a different location.

Calero talked daily to transferees who were relocating to different cities and countries to gain expertise, and now he is doing the same as an international move management coordinator with Weichert's household goods team. "I am very excited to move. I like the fact that I can work anywhere in the industry, and there will always be a mobility position available," Calero says.

## No Idea the Industry Existed

Eve Espindola, 35, global mobility specialist with ASICS America Corporation, has moved several times, starting in Brazil and transferring to many states throughout the U.S. (She was on a short-term assignment from California to Boston when she commented for this article.) Three years ago, as she was finishing her MBA at California State University, Long Beach, Espindola saw ASICS' booth at a graduate job fair and discovered the mobility industry.

"Like everybody else, I had no idea that this industry existed," Espindola says. "I was fascinated



*“I like the fact that I can work anywhere in the industry, and there will always be a mobility position available.”*

*— Jaime Galero, 29*

by it, because even though I had never heard of it before, I was born and raised in Brazil, went through the immigration process myself, and moved a ton around the U.S. So I was used to every aspect and area of mobility, and I understood exactly what it meant. I just had no idea that I could actually work in a field dedicated to it and understand what people go through when they are on assignment.” Now she is moving people around the world.

“Even if we are at our desks, we are all over the world—we aren’t really ever dealing with one single issue,” she says. “I like that, and that I get to interact with people from all over the world for so many different reasons.”

The biggest commonality among the people I interviewed for this article is that most of us were not aware of the mobility industry before we entered it. Of course, we had heard stories from family and friends of people moving to accept new positions, but most of us did not realize it formed the basis of an entire industry.

“Like most people, I just kind of fell into this when I had first applied for the job,” says Adam Bowlby, 29, team leader, supply chain integration, in Weichert’s New Jersey headquarters. “I didn’t even really know the industry existed. I have a background from a university in history and geography, so the global aspect piqued my interest.”

### Part of a Big Transformation

Millennials tend to have an “always something new” mentality and outlook. Most of us don’t want jobs with routine daily tasks that don’t involve change or challenges. And that is one thing Bowlby enjoys about our industry.

“It’s something different every day,” Bowlby says. “In my role I manage suppliers who deliver services ranging from your traditional destination services to language training, and each has unique challenges that come with it. There can be issues, as with anything, and I enjoy the challenge and feeling at the end of the day that I did work on this for a long time and then saw the impact not only on our team but on each transferee.”

The global aspect also sparked the interest of Karina Alvarez, 31, international workforce mobility counselor in Weichert’s Miami LATAM office. Two years ago, Alvarez joined Weichert with a background in real estate and experience as a flight attendant. Although these backgrounds are very different, she experienced going from one place to the next and talked to real estate brokers in the mobility industry, which sparked her interest in learning more.

Like many of this article’s subjects, Alvarez enjoys the daily human interaction of mobility: “We are part of such a big transformation,” she says. “You don’t move to a new country and change



your life every day, so for us, orchestrating such an important change is very rewarding.”

We are part of a generation that constantly checks how many likes our Instagram post got or how many retweets we had. We enjoy being recognized, which may be another reason why many of us are drawn to this profession: In the life of a workforce mobility counselor, we do not go unnoticed.

Max Goldman, 23, a Weichert renter workforce mobility counselor, finds his career gratifying when at the end of the day he knows his transferees are happy. “Not only did I make their company happy by following policy and saving them as much money as possible, but I also moved a family, and there’s that personal connection that you develop with the transferees,” says Goldman.

Goldman joined Weichert a year ago with a degree in urban planning, previous work experience at an architectural firm, and an interest in real estate. Self-research—something millennials are good at—led him to the mobility industry. “When I learned about relocation, it combined all of my abstract interests into one fun expression,” he says.

Goldman and I are the only millennials in our office, but we embrace that and bring a fresh perspective. “It’s really an exciting time to be in the relocation industry,” he says. “There have been a lot of changes recently, and it will be interesting to watch what the future holds. I am very optimistic.”

The observation that my generation has a passion for traveling and exploring new cultures rings true. In the mobility field, we experience this daily, interacting with people from Los Angeles to Hong Kong and everywhere in between.

This is one of the aspects of our industry that Hayden Burns, 34, manager, global mobility, for Frank’s International, enjoys most.

“I enjoy learning how countries and locations are so different in every region in our business,” says Burns. “It’s definitely not a one-size-fits-all approach.”

## Each Day Is Different

Do typical days exist for young professionals in this industry?

Many participants in this article responded that it’s impossible to simply keep working through a list of daily tasks. We are moving at a fast pace, adapting to constant changes around our industry, such as U.S. tax reform and the ever-changing details of

Brexit. Each day is different, and the work we do is important and rewarding. After all, we are working with people and their families on one of the biggest journeys in their lives.

Burns, who joined global mobility 14 months ago, shares that “compliance is the main focus of and reason for my job.” She helps get people into and out of their work country in compliance with immigration, tax, household goods shipping, and compensation rules and regulations for expats.

When our family members or friends ask what our industry is, most of us will share a scenario involving moving a family from one country to another. We say this entails helping them sell their current house and buy a new one, managing their household goods shipment, ensuring compliance with all applicable regulations, helping them understand the tax implications of the move, and arranging for cultural training and school selection assistance. That’s when people tell us, “Oh, I know someone who moved that way.”

Weichert relocation coordinator Ashleigh Manna, 25, describes our industry with a “giant tree” metaphor: If someone is to relocate, there are many branches, and relocation counselors are the trunk of the tree. They are the main person who is connecting that transferee to various local resources. This is where Manna’s role comes in. She connects transferees to their agent, helps them find a new community that is a good fit for them, sets up their intro emails, receives leases and contracts, and updates systems to make sure their relocation comes to fruition. “My job is to help people daily,” says Manna.

Manna came to mobility in June 2018 after beginning a career in teaching and realizing it wasn’t for her. Her grandmother, who works in Weichert’s Referral Department, introduced her to the company.

“Mobility is a cool sector in which you get to communicate with completely new people every single day,” says Manna. “I think it is a really good fit for me, being able to connect and use my skills that I took from teaching and working in restaurants over the years, and putting everything together.”

## Digital Natives

Whether your role is in workforce mobility counseling, HR, supply chain, or any other position





within mobility, together we are all managing different areas of the relocation process, juggling large workloads, keeping up with the latest trends in the industry, and wearing many hats.

With artificial intelligence (AI) changing our world daily, our tech-savvy skills as digital natives can give us an advantage. We are comfortable trying and learning new tools quickly to help us better manage our responsibilities and find ways to automate some tasks to free time up to focus on others.

We learned the ins and outs of a variety of technologies in college, which helps us with keeping thorough records about our transferees' relocation journeys and tracking and reporting on relocation costs.

We live in a Google world, where we can instantly find answers to almost anything and reach out to people anywhere in the world. We are communicating with people in many time zones and communicating through apps such as WhatsApp and FaceTime. Manna recommends these communication apps to her internationally mobile employees and explains, "This technology helps them feel like they're actually here, even though they're not."

Having such skills enables Green to help transferees decrease the number of homes they have to visit during their homefinding trips by helping them explore more of them online.

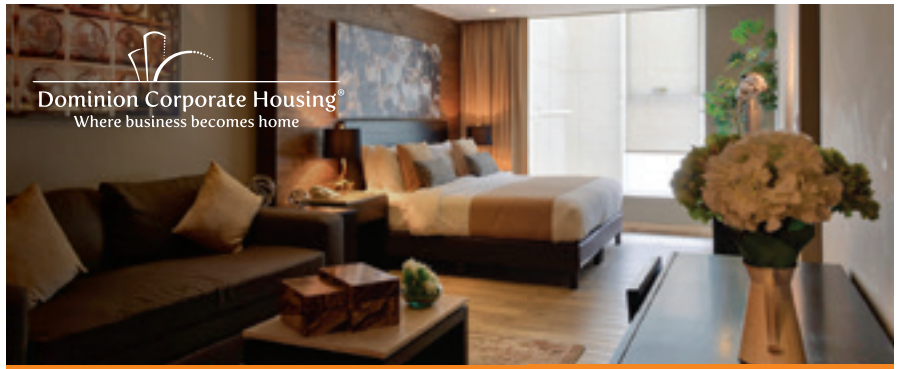
"I like being able to help people," she says. "These people are picking up their lives and moving, which is scary, emotional, and a big life change. I like being able to speak with them through that process, that decision-making, and be a guide along the way."

All the individuals featured in this article came from different backgrounds, and have different skills, experiences, and degrees. The one thing we all have in common is our love and passion for the mobility industry. As we continue to grow personally and

professionally, it is an exciting time to see how our own journeys unfold and how we are influencing and shaping the mobility industry. *M*

*Morgan E. Wiedmann is a content specialist with Weichert Workforce Mobility. She can be contacted at +1 781 982 5006 or mwiedmann@weichertwm.com.*

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