



Ask the expert



Rob Hill, vice president sales UK, enterprise, [NGA Human Resources](#), looks at start with a site visit when embarking on a global payroll journey

The old adage of ‘you don’t know what you don’t know’ stands true when it comes to exploring the options available for global payroll. The concepts, operating models, technology solutions and vendor ‘blue sky marketing promises’ can often be both contradictory and confusing.

In some sort of order of preference, you can read great publications like this one, review some terrific analyst materials, read the expert's blog posts, engage an (independent) sourcing advisor and even endure what might be considered 'painful' vendor presentations.

In my opinion, the best way to truly understand the real operating concept, business benefit and risks of global payroll is to invest the time to actually visit a global delivery centre (GDC).

Ideally, you should do this before writing your RFP, or even gathering your requirements. A GDC is a shared services centre established by a global payroll - and ideally HR - outsourcing vendor to whom some of your work would potentially be reassigned.

These centres are often located in lower-cost countries that can provide a labour arbitrage benefit, stable workforce, language skills and technical know-how. They are often located in countries including India, the Philippines, Poland, Spain and Argentina.

The best starting point to prepare for your site visit is to look at the latest analyst research material and ask the two highest ranked providers (the company in the top-right corner of the quadrant rating, for example) for such a pre-engagement visit. If you provide a breakdown of your country's scope and headcount details, the vendors can quickly identify which of their centres would provide a majority of your work. Pick a centre that will ultimately cover 20 per cent plus of your potential scope.

It is then wise to bring together a group of key internal stakeholders, influencers and objectors - maybe six to eight people who can invest the time to participate in the journey. Ideally, you should spend a day and a half in a centre and ask for the full operational experience, not just the sales pitch.

Remember that the people you want to spend time with include the service readiness (implementation),

operational readiness and continuous improvement teams, along with the people who are actually delivering the telephone support and processing payroll for clients today.

It is critical that the site visit includes sufficient time for a long floor-walk - at least a few hours - so you can really understand how global payroll and HR administration outsourcing services are delivered for organisations like your own. Critically limit the sales pitch.

By completing a pre-RFP site tour of a significant payroll outsourcing global delivery centre, you will understand much better how these facilities actually operate and how a global payroll outsourcing solution may benefit your business. The realisation of what is genuinely important in a selection process, the components available to fine-tune the proposed solution to your business needs and the cultural alignment with potential long-term business partners, all become much clearer.

The final result is a much faster, better-informed selection process that will greatly lower the risk of making a poor long-term decision.

Rob Hill has 16 years of experience in global HR and payroll transformation, consulting, system design and technology selection. He specialises in global workforce administration, talent management and payroll solutions supported by payroll and HR outsourcing services and shared services. He has spent the past 12 years working with NGA Human Resources across the world and recently moved to the UK. He writes about global HR and payroll issues and can be found on at www.linkedin.com/robahill or on Twitter at @robHill18.