

# INNOVATION IN GLOBAL IMMIGRATION LAW: WHERE EXPERTISE, TECHNOLOGY AND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE MEET



January 2018

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It's a complex time in the history of global immigration law. A convergence of trends is placing unprecedented pressures on global organizations. As international business opportunities have increased, enterprises have begun relying more heavily on their global mobility programs to connect the right talent with the right opportunities to achieve strategic growth. As a result, global mobility leaders, those responsible for the global deployment of their organizations' talent, expect their partners to provide a whole new level of guidance to help them navigate the current environment. This raises the bar for today's immigration professional. The ability to think differently across all aspects of service has become paramount to success.

The paper will look at the emerging dynamics affecting global immigration. It will explore how this changing landscape introduces new innovation opportunities and requirements for global mobility leaders and immigration professionals, and the work they do together. It will also examine technology's role in advancing global immigration today and enriching where it heads tomorrow, and highlight BAL's approach to this industry in transformation.

# A SHIFTING LANDSCAPE FOR GLOBAL IMMIGRATION

Immigration is drastically different today than it was even five years ago. It's radically changing across all parts of the world, and governments are challenged to adapt more quickly than ever. Today, there are three key influences reshaping global immigration and global mobility.



## Changing Insight Requirements

The new industry dynamics emerging in global immigration are also changing the nature of what businesses look for in a partner. Historically, a blend of immigration boutique and multi-disciplinary law firms have sufficiently served the needs of this market. But the changing immigration environment, including the arrival of new players and competitive pressures, is spurring organizations to search out a new level of focused, specialized expertise. Today's global mobility leader needs access to the latest immigration data and sophisticated tools to accelerate smart policy decisions, streamline internal and external processes, reduce costs and improve the overall employee experience. Immigration advisors must provide a new level of strategy and insight to help global mobility leaders keep their organizations ahead.



## Evolving Government Policies and Priorities

Changes in global immigration perspectives and policies surface almost daily – along with an uncertainty about their effects. Brexit has the potential to reshape immigration and freedom of movement across the United Kingdom and its European neighbors. In the U.S., the Trump administration issued nine significant actions in its first 100 days alone, that changed the way the U.S. approaches immigration.<sup>1</sup> The policy changes within global immigration – both written and unwritten, has required a shift in mindset for today's employers, and a careful look at their global mobility priorities. In fact, compliance risk management currently occupies the number one spot on the list of assignment management challenges for today's global enterprises. Companies are under increased scrutiny to comply with federal guidelines and face even greater challenges in moving critical talent around the world to achieve their business goals.



## Greater Technology, Greater Risk

Technology is advancing at rapid speed. From creating more efficiencies in our daily work to enhancing design workflows and facilitating virtual collaboration, technology is embedded across all parts of modern day business. With greater access and global data share, however, comes greater potential for data theft. In fact, more than 5 million breaches occur every day.<sup>2</sup> It's no surprise the global cyber security market is projected to reach \$232 billion by 2022.<sup>3</sup> Without the right data protection strategy, organizations risk losing control over sensitive employee information, top-secret corporate strategy and competitive industry intelligence. For a company in the midst of a multi-million-dollar business deal or with a breakthrough technology in development, corporate data theft can put their future in peril. And security certifications aren't enough. There's the back-end security, but then there's the practical application of people handling the data and what they do with it. Anyone who handles critical information must be aware of and follow safe practices.



# GLOBAL MOBILITY LEADERS: NAVIGATORS OF UNCERTAINTY

As business challenges and opportunities expand across industries and geographies, today's global mobility leaders must be well-positioned to navigate the many uncertainties and changes facing today's market.

Global mobility leaders must be informed. Before any decisions can be made, they need accurate data on the latest in immigration policy affecting each country where their company conducts business. But it's not just about the data. It's about knowing what to do with it and how to act upon it in a way that's compliant and optimal for their business strategy. Ensuring global compliance is no easy task, but the price of noncompliance is high. Legal ramifications of violations can be damaging to a business and its reputation. This level of adaptive advice requires experienced advisors who live and breathe immigration and deeply understand the environment and its intricacies.

**LEGAL RAMIFICATIONS OF VIOLATIONS CAN BE DAMAGING TO A BUSINESS AND ITS REPUTATION. THIS LEVEL OF ADAPTIVE ADVICE REQUIRES EXPERIENCED ADVISORS WHO LIVE AND BREATHE IMMIGRATION AND DEEPLY UNDERSTAND THE ENVIRONMENT AND ITS INTRICACIES.**



Global mobility leaders must also be more strategic than ever before in their approach. U.S. policies are forcing businesses to adapt to tighter restrictions and new regulations more quickly. Excelling in these conditions requires careful planning and the ability to anticipate potential threats and unfolding possibilities. In this turbulent climate, strategies and next steps must be nimble and adaptable, ready to accommodate any unexpected turns.

To protect critical company information and personal employee data, global mobility leaders also need the strongest and most advanced information security measures. As digital business takes hold across geographies, so does the risk of data compromise. There are more systems and more entities talking to each other – exchanging more data than ever. Privacy shields are critical within the organization, as well as across each entity that handles its data. As the speed of business accelerates in an uncertain global market, global mobility leaders need to adapt to help their organizations keep pace. They must translate information quickly, make decisions swiftly, and be ready to change course just as fast. They need access to unified technologies that are capable of integrating critical information, promoting collaboration and driving business advantage – all while maintaining a personal touch that reflects the innately human impact of immigration.

**THEY NEED ACCESS TO UNIFIED TECHNOLOGIES THAT ARE CAPABLE OF INTEGRATING CRITICAL INFORMATION, PROMOTING COLLABORATION AND DRIVING BUSINESS ADVANTAGE – ALL WHILE MAINTAINING A PERSONAL TOUCH THAT REFLECTS THE INNATELY HUMAN IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION.**



## NEW WAYS OF THINKING AND INNOVATING REQUIRED

To support the needs of today's businesses, immigration firms must step outside the parameters of the traditional law firm model and think differently. To help today's enterprises compete on the global business stage, new approaches to driving client results must infiltrate all aspects of the business – from internal culture to back-end IT to front-end client service. Central to this transformation is the reality that firms can no longer be satisfied with being effective technology followers. They must match and ultimately outpace the level of innovation that lives within the organizations they serve.

At BAL, we have the privilege of serving many of the world's great technology innovators. These companies have redefined their industries and set new standards for how digital technologies can enrich the customer experience. In all we do across each area of our business, we strive to uphold the same standard. We are part legal practitioner, part technologist and always human. This unique blend, ingrained within our culture, has enabled us to apply an innovation lens across each aspect of global immigration law to increase our client impact.

To be our best for our clients, we consider ourselves part legal practitioners, part technologists and always human. This powerful blend of legal, innovation and people-led DNA, underpinned by technology and ingrained deep within our culture, has enabled us to successfully apply an innovation lens to each aspect of global immigration law to increase our client impact.

**WE ARE PART LEGAL PRACTITIONER, PART TECHNOLOGIST AND ALWAYS HUMAN.**

# NEW WAYS OF THINKING AND INNOVATING REQUIRED (CONT.)

Here's how we do it:



## Innovation for Global Collaboration

Immigration, by nature, transcends borders. Therefore, clients need someone who can fluidly support them around the globe without barriers, lines or limitations. At BAL, we support a “one firm approach,” – that is, our clients get the same experience from us no matter where they are or from which of our 18 offices they are served. We collaborate as one BAL, so our clients always get the best of us.

**WE COLLABORATE AS ONE BAL, SO OUR CLIENTS ALWAYS GET THE BEST OF US.**

To drive this vision forward, we've focused on innovating our firm's knowledge management (KM) system. Unlike many firms, we have a centralized KM system that manages all legal content that the legal teams rely on to support their clients' immigration programs and case processing. Our one BAL culture fosters knowledge sharing and an agile approach to content creation and maintenance.

To take this timely dialogue with our clients to the next level, we built Cobalt, an advanced digital immigration services platform. Cobalt combines our immigration expertise and innovation prowess to provide BAL clients with a single global destination for strategic, end-to-end case management. Cobalt seamlessly and securely integrates into the daily work flow of today's global mobility professional, making it easy for our clients to communicate with our legal teams anytime, anywhere. Its in-app messaging feature streamlines communication, while also providing a high level of security to protect all personally identifiable information. Cobalt is built on a modern cloud infrastructure using an agile development approach to power continuous improvement. Through Cobalt and our integrated KM system, we are harmonizing our knowledge, insights and best practices on a global scale, ensuring a seamless, real-time transfer of the most critical information to our clients worldwide.

**THROUGH COBALT AND OUR INTEGRATED KM SYSTEM, WE ARE HARMONIZING OUR KNOWLEDGE, INSIGHTS AND BEST PRACTICES ON A GLOBAL SCALE, ENSURING A SEAMLESS, REAL-TIME TRANSFER OF THE MOST CRITICAL INFORMATION TO OUR CLIENTS WORLDWIDE.**

# NEW WAYS OF THINKING AND INNOVATING REQUIRED (CONT.)



## Innovation for Information Security and Privacy

Data security is top of mind for today's business leaders. Businesses must ensure the data that lives under its roof is protected – as well as any data that is shared with partners. According to the Q1 2017 Law Firm Cyber Security Scorecard, every law firm assessed was targeted by attackers for confidential client data in 2016-2017, and 40% did not know they were breached. What's more, 60% of firms do not have a specifically appointed security and compliance manager, and have no plans to appoint one.<sup>4</sup>

**SIMPLY PUT, IN THIS DAY AND AGE, FIRMS WITHOUT THE RIGHT INFORMATION SECURITY MEASURES IN PLACE CANNOT COMPETE.**

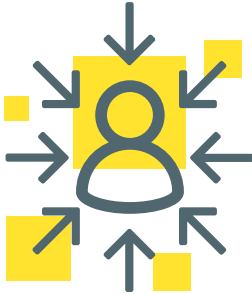
At BAL, we take the responsibility to protect our clients' data very seriously. We have focused on expanding our information security and privacy measures to better reflect the sophisticated cyber threats facing today's marketplace and have infused this priority into every aspect of our business, starting with our people. Our firm is certified by the International Standardization Organization (ISO) and each member of our team is trained and fluent in how to identify potential data risks – both virtual (e.g., phishing) and physical (e.g., office tailgating). Extending this strength, we created our own dedicated information security and privacy department. This group focuses solely on the management and preservation of our clients' data and information, and is critical in making sure we are protecting client assets in accordance with best practices.

Cobalt adds another layer of data protection for clients. It is backed by ISO/IEC 27001 certification, assuring our clients that there are protocols in place to help prevent data compromise – and measures to swiftly handle a breach if it happens.

Together, these safeguards give our clients peace of mind. They know that for every interaction we have with their data, we have measures in place to protect it.



# NEW WAYS OF THINKING AND INNOVATING REQUIRED (CONT.)



## Innovation for a Richer Customer Experience

Across industries, technology innovation is fueling better customer experiences. Amazon introduced “one click,” FedEx brought us same-day delivery and Uber changed the way we get from here to there. To advance global immigration, all firms must look for inspiration outside our industry – at the Googles, the Facebooks and the Intuits of the world.

To spur greater innovation, BAL regularly drives firm-wide brainstorms designed to improve client experience. We examine the approaches taken by cross-industry peers and challenge ourselves to apply that same level of thinking across our own customer service. Our management retreats include time spent sharing outside-in ideas, new ways of working and different avenues of thinking.

This commitment came to life in our design approach to Cobalt. Early on, we recognized that when it comes to information this important, 24/7 mobile access is simply a must-have in today’s busy world. This inspired us to design one of the industry’s first mobile immigration applications, which means our clients now have access to anytime, anywhere case management via Cobalt across all Android and iOS devices. With its simple, intuitive interface, Cobalt is meant to give its users the best experience possible.

**AS TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES, IT’S IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT AT THE HEART OF IMMIGRATION IS THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.**

Our work touches people and their families, many of whom are facing stressful situations. How we handle and talk through sensitive information is really important. We must not lose our ability to find different ways of actually connecting with people. Technology is there to enable efficiencies and automate repetitive tasks. But we see the highest and best purpose of technology as its ability to free up more time for people to focus on people. By automating administrative responsibilities, Cobalt is just one example of how we are enabling our people to focus on what matters most: delivering a personal, memorable experience to our clients.

**THE WAY WE APPROACH OUR BUSINESS, OUR CULTURE, OUR SERVICE – WE ARE NOT YOUR TYPICAL IMMIGRATION PROFESSIONALS.**



## THE LEAP AHEAD

Innovators are always thinking about what's next. To truly reshape the future of global immigration and help clients stay out front in a complex market, firms like ours must constantly disrupt themselves. The need is too great and the possibilities are too endless to be satisfied with where things stand.

Looking forward, we see the next horizon of opportunity. Data science, including data visualization and statistics, will emerge as a legal priority to enable the kind of complex scenario planning global mobility leaders increasingly need to make quick and accurate decisions. Similarly, predictive analytics will open the door to a whole new way of capturing data, synthesizing it and gathering actionable insights. Robotic process automation is also showing great promise in helping firms standardize legal processes to level-up their output and service.

As with any technological transformation, there can be impediments to rapid progress. There are real challenges – like limited resources, funding and conservative mindsets – that must be overcome. The practice of immigration is fundamentally changing. It is the responsibility of all industry stakeholders to adapt, evolve and keep pace. Mark Zuckerberg said it well: “The biggest risk is not taking any risk. In a world that is changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks.”<sup>5</sup> At BAL, we are committed to ushering in bold new ways of thinking and innovating in the areas that matter most to today's global organizations. We aren't secure in our position. We can't rest and we don't want to. We want to keep innovating – this is what we are here to do. We will continue to challenge ourselves to step outside our comfort zone to create better solutions and advance our digital capabilities to achieve our mission of redefining what a global immigration firm can do.

**WE AREN'T SECURE IN OUR POSITION. WE CAN'T REST AND WE DON'T WANT TO. WE WANT TO KEEP INNOVATING – THIS IS WHAT WE ARE HERE TO DO.**

# SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> Sela Cowger, Jessica Bolter and Sarah Pierce, Migration Policy Institute, “The First 100 Days: Summary of Major Immigration Action Taken by the Trump Administration,” April 2017.

<sup>2</sup> See Breach Level Index:  
<http://breachlevelindex.com/>

<sup>3</sup> See MarketsandMarkets press release, “Cybersecurity Market Worth \$231.94 Billion USD by 2022,” July 2017:  
<http://www.marketsandmarkets.com/Market-Reports/cyber-security-market-505.html>

<sup>4</sup> See LogicForce, Law Firm Cyber Security Scorecard – Q1 2017:  
[http://marketing.logicforce.com/acton/attachment/21751/f-0058/1/-/-/-/lf\\_cyber\\_security\\_scorecard\\_060317.pdf](http://marketing.logicforce.com/acton/attachment/21751/f-0058/1/-/-/-/lf_cyber_security_scorecard_060317.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> See Entrepreneur, “As Mark Zuckerberg Turns 30, His 10 Best Quotes as CEO,” May 14, 2014:  
<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/233890>

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