

How global companies are rethinking workplace change

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If you're responsible for workplace change in a global organisation, you already know the challenge: how do you deliver consistent, high-quality projects across different countries, cultures, and compliance frameworks, without reinventing the wheel every time?

Rachel Houghton, managing director, [Business Moves Group](#), explains.

Whether it's consolidating offices in Spain, opening a new hub in the Netherlands, or redesigning workspaces in the UK to reflect new hybrid models, the need is the same. Smooth transitions. Engaged employees. Cost-effective outcomes. And yet, too often, companies find themselves managing a patchwork of local suppliers, each with their own processes, standards and ways of working.

It's time for a smarter, more joined-up approach.

The high cost of fragmented delivery

Office relocations and workplace changes aren't just operational tasks. They're events that touch every part of a business — from HR and IT to employee wellbeing and brand perception. And when projects are mismanaged or inconsistent, the knock-on effects are felt far beyond the move itself. In fact, 67% of employees say they find office moves stressful, and 30% report that the process distracts from their work, even when they support the rationale behind the change

That kind of disruption has real consequences, from drops in productivity to disengagement at exactly the wrong moment.

On the delivery side, fragmentation creates inefficiencies. Procurement teams waste time sourcing new partners for each region, project leads struggle with varying quality levels, and real estate managers spend more time firefighting than driving value.

A better model: global consistency, local expertise

To cut through this friction, many multinational firms are turning to a more strategic model: building long-term relationships with established networks of in-country partners who deliver to a common standard.

Rather than appointing a new supplier in each country, companies are working with a central team that coordinates delivery across borders, while still tapping into local knowledge and resources. These networks offer a blend of consistency and flexibility: a shared approach to planning, reporting and performance, underpinned by local partners who understand the specific risks and regulations in their market. One example of such a network is the Office Moving Alliance (OMA), an organisation of handpicked vetted partners who are passionate about delivering sustainable, tailor-made moving solutions across the world. As the UK partner for the OMA, Business Moves Group acts as the gateway for organisations looking to deliver workplace change projects across multiple countries with consistent quality, local expertise, and centralised coordination.

This doesn't mean abandoning local control. Quite the opposite. It's about supporting local delivery teams with a framework that removes duplication, standardises reporting, and makes it easier to hit ESG targets and governance requirements.

What's on the real estate agenda now?

Increasingly, workplace change is about more than just shifting desks. Real estate teams are being pulled into broader business conversations about carbon tracking, space optimisation, change fatigue, and the employee experience.

This is particularly true when delivering multiple projects across a portfolio. There's growing pressure to show:

- Sustainability metrics: e.g. how much furniture was reused, resold, or donated rather than sent to landfill.
- Financial efficiency: especially in tight cycles, where value must be demonstrated against every line of spend.
- Consistency of experience: so that an employee walking into an updated office in Amsterdam gets the same welcome and support as one in Edinburgh.

It's no longer enough to simply "get the move done." The real value lies in how change is communicated, measured and sustained.

What are the challenges?

Despite best intentions, global companies still encounter barriers that delay or dilute workplace projects. Some of the most common include:

- Cultural mismatches: Central teams may expect one way of working, while local stakeholders operate

differently.

- Regulatory surprises: Varying compliance standards — from waste disposal to data handling — create risks if misunderstood.
- Procurement delays: Sourcing and onboarding new suppliers for each country adds time and complexity.
- Reporting gaps: Without integrated dashboards, tracking KPIs across regions becomes manual and error prone.

We've seen projects falter when there's a disconnect between the brief and what's deliverable on the ground, which can lead to problems that range from over-ordering furniture, to a lack of employee comms causing chaos on the opening day of a new office.

What's working: strategies from the field

For those looking to improve the way they manage international workplace change, here are a few tactics that have proven effective across industries:

1. Standardise the framework, localise the delivery Develop a common playbook covering everything from sustainability targets to comms tone. Then allow flexibility for local teams to tailor based on language, labour laws and logistics.
2. Use phased approaches to reduce disruption Especially in live environments, staggered moves with clear sequencing help manage risk and allow teams to adapt in real time. We've seen this approach cut downtime by 40% on complex projects.
3. Prioritise internal communications Don't underestimate the value of early engagement. Move champions, Q&A hubs, and clear timelines help reduce resistance and change fatigue — which is cited as a top barrier to transformation by global HR leaders.
4. Track the right data Use digital platforms to measure cost, carbon, and asset movements. Being able to show you've diverted 100% of furniture from landfill or reduced move costs by 74% (as we did for a major insurance firm) strengthens your business case and supports ESG reporting.
5. Choose partners who understand both strategy and site The best delivery teams aren't just logistics providers — they're advisors who can flag challenges early, suggest process improvements, and help you bring your long-term vision to life.

Consistent doesn't mean generic

Every organisation is different. Every project is different. But the expectation for a joined-up, accountable, data-driven approach is now near universal.

Global workplace change is always going to be complex. But it doesn't need to be chaotic. With the right model that balances local expertise with global coordination, organisations can deliver smarter, more sustainable transitions. And real estate leaders can spend less time fixing problems, and more time shaping the future of work.