

# Want an International Career? This Company Helps Their Employees Find Roles All Over the World

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When Peter O’Keefe realized that one of his professional goals was to work abroad, he didn’t scour the Internet for opportunities. He went to his boss.

At the time, O’Keefe was an associate director in the New York office of global media agency MediaCom. He knew he was ready for the next step: a director position. But he was also pretty sure he didn’t want to take that next step in New York.

“It felt like the timing was right,” says O’Keefe, of his decision to make the move. Less than three months after O’Keefe had initially brought up the possibility of searching for an opening outside the U.S., he was living in London as part of a global media and strategy

team for MediaCom. “It was an amazing experience, both professionally and personally,” he says of his five years there.

O’Keefe’s story isn’t unusual—it’s the goal of MediaCom’s Pathway program. “When an employee starts at MediaCom, we want them to have a career at MediaCom,” explains Debbie Kemp, the company’s Chief Talent Officer (U.S.). “And that includes focusing on opportunities that will allow our employees not only to have new experiences and develop new skills, but also share knowledge and transfer skills across markets.”

The secret of Pathway’s success lies in its transparency. “Within an employee’s first day on site, we’ll discuss global mobility. We want employees to know we’re really interested in their development,” says Kemp about the program, which covers both international and domestic opportunities within the company.

Kemp says that Pathway is a win-win not only for individual employees but also for the business: “Many of our accounts are global accounts, so global perspectives and an international team can be key in having a cutting-edge strategy.” Overall, there have been almost 100 global moves in 2019 alone.

### **Taking the Next Step—Across the Globe**

Once an employee is on the radar of the Pathway team, they’ll be alerted of open positions that they may be qualified to fill all around the world, both at MediaCom as well as at other companies within MediaCom’s parent company, GroupM. Locations can include U.S. cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles as well as international destinations like Singapore, Amsterdam, and Sydney.

“It accelerated rapidly once I got my foot in the door,” explains O’Keefe of his experience. “I started having conversations and being connected with the people and positions that were a potential fit.”

If there’s a position the employee could be a good fit for, they’ll be invited to interview for the role, alongside other internal and external candidates. And if the MediaCom candidate

gets the job, then MediaCom takes care of the transfer, including handling visas and any necessary cultural immersion classes.

## Building a Lasting Career

To be clear, the Pathway program is focused on finding the right jobs for the right people—not giving people a short-term adventure abroad. That means there isn't a set endpoint for anyone's international stint—you stay as long as the fit makes sense for your career and the company. "That could be several years down the road," Kemp says.

And when folks are ready to move on again, they can turn back to Pathway for new opportunities. After five years in London, O'Keefe says, "I had established this new global skillset in this role in London. I wanted to go for a role working on high-profile global accounts, but also live somewhere that excited me."

He was set up with multiple interviews worldwide, but as it happens, he ended up finding the best fit as an International Account Director back in New York City. "I was ready to come back and be closer to family," he says, though he still has strong ties to London: "I'm back in London a couple times a year either for work or pleasure. I consider it to be my second home."

And O'Keefe feels his international experience has been key to his success. Not only did working abroad make him a better communicator and more effective leader, he says, "It was always my ambition to have a global career, and since I've returned to New York, I've only worked with global and international teams."

## Creating a Global Mindset

Kemp adds that the scaffolding MediaCom has put in place for the program, including cultural training, can help make a global team as strong as possible.

"It's a bit larger than just taking on a role in a different country," she says. "We want to give

every employee the tools that they need so that they can acculturate to a country and to their new team.”

And that international network allows them to fill positions with the best talent. “Right now, we have a global role based in New York, and we have talked with employees in Europe and Southeast Asia,” Kemp says. “We need that global experience, so why wouldn’t we consider all possible fits?”

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