

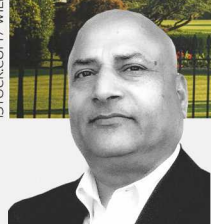


Three FIDI Presidents – John L Newbold (1969), Chuck Lawrence (2004) and, now, Freddy Paxton – have hailed from Washington DC, the beating heart of American politics and diplomacy, and a city on the move. But what do the residents think of FIDI Affiliates and FAIM? **MORGANA SOMERS** spoke to four DC experts to get an overview of our sector in America’s capital city

Views from the capital



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SUBAS POKHAREL, MANAGER, GLOBAL RELOCATIONS, AT MARRIOTT RELOCATION SERVICES, MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL

FIDI Focus (FF): Tell us a bit about yourself and your work, how you ended up in the DC area, and how long you have been in the industry

Subas Pokharel (SP): I have a diverse career background, starting as an elementary school teacher in Nepal during the late 1970s, and including spells as a French-speaking tour guide, a member of the consular/visa staff, a local liaison officer at the French embassy in Nepal, and a journalist. I also worked for the United Nations to manage local elections in Cambodia, and South Africa’s first democratic elections after the ending of apartheid. It was when Nelson Mandela was elected president, and I had the honour to be assigned to his home province of Transkei.

I then moved from Nepal to the USA, and stayed with friends and family in DC for a few months. I began my US career at an immigration company in DC – a natural progression from my experience with foreign nationals in Nepal. My family and I settled in Rockville, Maryland, and I decided to get my real-estate licence and work as a part-time agent. It became a full-time job for a few years, until the market became unstable – and, with two children at home, I really needed a steady income.

Marriott was looking for someone with a real-estate licence and an international background for its relocation department, which was a perfect fit for me – that was 14 years ago! I did not know much about Marriott, or about the relocation industry,

but I am still enjoying the job and the challenges it brings.

FF: How did you first learn about FIDI?

SP: Freddy Paxton introduced FIDI to Marriott – specifically to my boss, May Caffi, and me.

FF: Why do you think working with FIDI Affiliates is important, and how does the connection affect your corporation?

SP: At the time we were introduced to FIDI, Marriott was a very US-centric company; the international relocations were done through three US-based forwarders.

Marriott implemented a standard global policy whereby the international moves were still managed through US forwarders. This created some challenges with the local properties, as they wanted to work with local companies directly because of cheaper pricing. Freddy educated us about the value of the FIDI alliance and the standard of quality, which resulted in Marriott working with FIDI Affiliates around the globe.

Once we realised the value and the standard that FIDI sets, we now only work with FIDI-affiliated removal companies across the world.

FF: How many FIDI Conferences have you attended?

SP: Five or six. My first was in Budapest, and I was able to maximise my stay at this year’s conference because Marriott’s Middle East and Africa regional office is in Dubai.

FF: What was your experience of Conference, and how does attending add value?

SP: All conferences add value. I have the opportunity to learn about the industry and the current hot topics. Listening to industry leaders and experts helps us to position ourselves better in the global mobility space. Meeting service providers from around the world face to face adds great value for us.

FF: How familiar are you with the requirements of FAIM and why it adds value?

SP: I know it is tough – and tough to remain FAIM certified! That is all the info needed, as Marriott uses only FAIM-certified firms.

FF: The past three American FIDI Presidents have all been from DC. Coincidence – or something more?

SP: It may be a coincidence – or it could be business-driven from being in the capital, and relocations associated with the US government.

FF: What are the challenges of working in the DC area?

SP: The cost of living, rising real-estate values and traffic congestion come to mind. Our HQ is here, so the high migration because of government and the available jobs in DC, keep us busy.

FF: Do you expect the international moving sector to change substantially in the coming years? If so, how are you preparing, and does FIDI membership help?

SP: Mobility will keep changing because of millennials and their travelling light/minimalistic approach. The young generation is highly mobile, and shipment size will reduce further – which will result in more moves, but smaller shipments. Technology and mobile-work capabilities could also mean relocations are not needed as much.

With Marriott’s growth overseas, we anticipate more moves in the future. Our recent merger with Starwood Hotels means our volume will also increase significantly.

As a relocation specialist, we are not a FIDI member, but do support its mission. Keeping the standard of FIDI will help maintain reliable partners and credibility – the value will always remain!

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FEATURE

IGNACIO ALCALDE, THE WORLD BANK PROJECT MANAGER MAIL & SHIPPING SERVICE

FIDI Focus (FF): Tell us a bit about yourself, your work, how you ended up in the DC area, and how long you have been in the industry

Ignacio Alcalde (IA): I have lived in the USA since 1977. Before joining The World Bank, I worked for 16 years as a consular officer at the Spanish embassy. I started at the bank in 2001, and began managing the shipping programme in 2002. This was how I was introduced to the industry, and I have been learning something new every day since.

We relocate staff to more than 160 World Bank offices worldwide. We can move them anywhere in the world if they are entitled to relocation benefits on entering or leaving employment with the bank.

FF: How did you first learn about FIDI?

IA: I was introduced to FIDI by Secor Group, which was the transportation provider under contract with The World Bank in 2001.

FF: Why do you think working with FIDI Affiliates is important, and how does the connection affect your corporation?

IA: We move our staff to challenging destinations and they are expected to hit the ground running. Having a FIDI-affiliated company coordinate their moves gives us the confidence that our shipments

will be managed in a professional manner, and makes the transition easier for our staff and their families.

FF: How many FIDI Conferences have you attended?

IA: My first was in Rome and I have been to most of them since.

FF: What was your experience of Conference, and how does attending add value?

IA: Attending enables me to understand the industry better – to see where it is going, as well as the challenges.

The conferences give me the opportunity to meet companies involved in our shipments and to discuss any issues they have had.

FF: How familiar are you with the requirements of FAIM and why it adds value?

IA: Very familiar. I have just finalised – and got approval for – The World Bank procurement strategy for our next request for proposal (RFP). Throughout this process, I researched the requirements to become a FIDI member and concluded that these would be the best-prepared firms to handle our moves.

We will select FIDI companies to manage our moves and will require that they select FIDI-affiliated members

of good standing to supply origin/destination services.

FF: The past three American FIDI Presidents have all been from DC. Coincidence – or something more?

IA: Just a coincidence I think – I don't read too much into it.

FF: What are the challenges of working in the DC area?

IA: Not many compared with some destinations to which we ship! The challenge may be that there are too many companies to choose from.

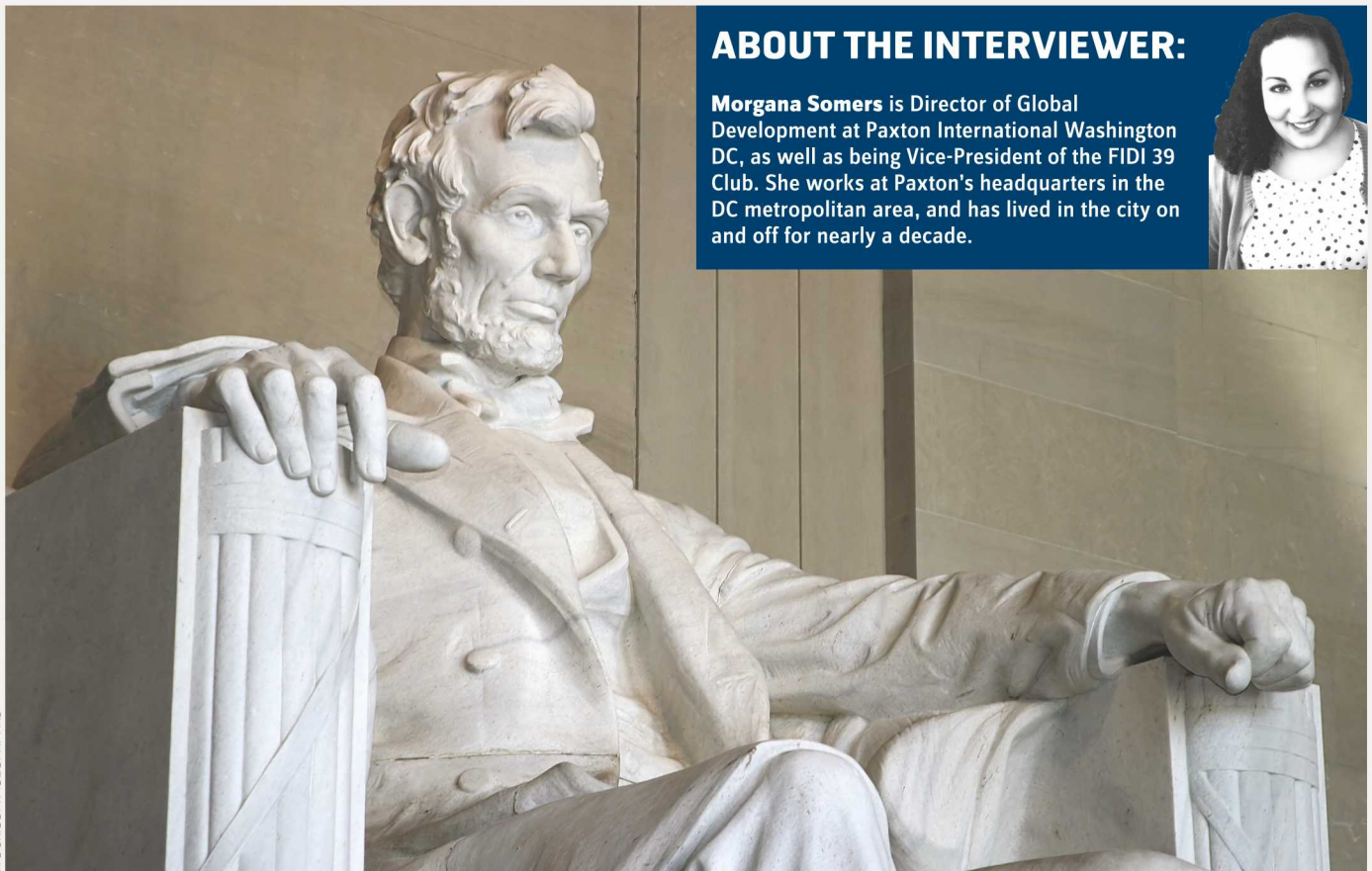
FF: Do you expect the international moving sector to change substantially in the coming years? If so, how are you preparing – and does FIDI membership help?

IA: I don't know if the industry will change, but I do not expect The World Bank to change its programme.

I hear a lot of things about millennials going more for the money and shipping less – but they will still get married, have kids, and have a house. They will be like us and require moving services. Millennials are a temporary thing.

For us, FIDI is a reference and I do not see that changing. 

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ABOUT THE INTERVIEWER:

Morgana Somers is Director of Global Development at Paxton International Washington DC, as well as being Vice-President of the FIDI 39 Club. She works at Paxton's headquarters in the DC metropolitan area, and has lived in the city on and off for nearly a decade.





FEATURE



PEGGY SMITH, SCR.P, SGMS-T
WORLDWIDE ERC PRESIDENT AND CEO

FIDI Focus (FF): Tell us a bit about yourself and your work, how you ended up in the DC area, and how long you have been in the industry

Peggy Smith (PS): I like to joke that I ended up in the industry because I missed the meeting where they were handing out tasks. But like so many people who did not choose this profession, it's impossible to leave, because we have such a passion for the work we do, and the people we meet.

I used to manage Microsoft's mobility programme, and was a member of Worldwide ERC. I had some promotion opportunities in my career at Microsoft, but they would have involved me leaving the industry, and I just could not bring myself to do that. When Worldwide ERC approached me about the CEO position, it was an incredible opportunity to grow my career skills and stay in the sector. It was an honour to become President and CEO seven years ago. I love what I am doing!

FF: How did you first learn about FIDI?

PS: FIDI and Peggy Smith have a long history. When I was managing the Microsoft programme, we began international work, and it was like trying to read spaghetti noodles: it lacked structure and consistency, and I needed a guide to understand it.

I was fortunate that an industry leader – Bill Graebel – took me under his wing and mentored me through it. He talked to me about FIDI and FAIM, and educated me on what the FAIM certification meant to Microsoft's programme.

Over time, I've had a real courtship with

'Including FIDI thought leaders on our podium can educate corporate Affiliates at Worldwide ERC about important industry topics'

FIDI, and developed a genuine fondness for the removals industry. It would break my heart if I did not have that relationship with FIDI, as I love the legacy. So many Affiliates are people first and business later.

FF: Why do you think working with FIDI Affiliates is important, and how does the connection affect your corporation?

PS: Several Affiliates start and stay in removals, but many have a broader understanding of other areas, such as destination services, mobility, and immigration. There's a great symbiotic opportunity here: Worldwide ERC can help FIDI Affiliates grow and understand their diversity, which serves to elevate the entire industry.

Including FIDI thought leaders on our podium can educate corporate affiliates at Worldwide ERC about important industry topics that are not part of 'mainstream mobility' issues.

I also enjoy working with Freddy Paxton and Jesse Van Sas to spread the importance of the FAIM certification.

FF: How many FIDI Conferences have you attended?

PS: Not enough! I went to three while at

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Microsoft, and three while at Worldwide ERC. My first was in Beijing (2008), then Delhi, Budapest, Geneva, Cape Town, Dubai... and I hope I am able to attend many, many more.

FF: What was your experience of Conference, and how does attending add value?

PS: It is as simple as a discovering a new content area – Safety of Lives at Sea (SOLAS) is a good example.

It is also a unique opportunity for me to be in the field with FIDI Affiliates. I cannot shape the future of Worldwide ERC from behind a desk.

The transfer of knowledge is invaluable. I do not attend the FIDI Conference to drive business or talk about rates, but to listen and learn. It's an education I can't duplicate second-hand.

Also, I love that FIDI goes into new geographies and expands the conferences beyond removals and mobility – it offers a cultural experience. I will never forget touring the parliament building in Budapest, or the remarkable buildings in Dubai. I am a more appreciative global citizen for these experiences, and FIDI provides those unique moments, no matter where we go.

FF: How familiar are you with the requirements of FAIM and why it adds value?

PS: While I cannot list the standards on the spot, I fully appreciate the calibre of the programme. I know the rigour that FIDI puts into it. From the corporate perspective, it is a quality programme that is held to a high degree of integrity. It comes down to: 'Can I trust you as a mover?' When a company has the FAIM certification, the answer is always 'Yes!'

FF: The past three American FIDI Presidents have all been from DC. Coincidence – or something more?

PS: I would say it is an unintended coincidence, because DC has a lot of mobility with US government activity. The amount of international exposure in the DC market translates into heavy moves for their companies, so it is no surprise. Sharing their experience and knowledge through FIDI presented a wonderful way to give back to their industry.

FF: What are the challenges of working in the DC area?

PS: The beauty of DC is that it is a thriving centre of activity, business,

and innovation. You are driving activity here, whereas – in other areas – it feels more like activity happens to you. But that intensity can also be tough, from a lifestyle perspective.

There is stiff competition for moving companies from other employers, because they rely on a workforce largely centred on the need for physical skills. The largest employer in DC is the government, so there's more opportunity for someone to opt for a job that doesn't require physical labour.

FF: Do you expect the international moving sector to change substantially in the coming years? If so, how are you preparing – and does FIDI membership help?

PS: Yes, it is absolutely going to change! Millennials and Gen Z do not want to stay in their home towns – they want to experience the world. But we recognise geopolitical events can affect this movement.

Worldwide ERC is strengthening its understanding, exposure and engagement on the world stage, and FIDI is an impressive example to us of a truly global organisation. Although its headquarters is in Brussels, it has always been mindful of building its worldwide presence and reach. **ff**



TERRY HEAD
IAM PRESIDENT

FIDI Focus (FF): Tell us a bit about yourself and your work, how you ended up in the DC area, and how long you have been in the industry

Terry Head (TH): I have been in the industry for almost 50 years. I was born in Old Town Alexandria, Virginia, which is two kilometres from the IAM office. When I was 10, my family moved to the Mount Vernon area and I eventually settled in Mellow Beach, Virginia, about 32km south of DC.

After high school, I was working in a factory making commercial photo equipment, but got laid off. Through a friend, I got a summer job with a small moving company, Regent Van and Storage, and – from day one – fell in love with moving. I was an athlete, so loved being outside and keeping in shape. I was also intrigued by the places the customers had lived in and travelled to, and the items they had collected from all over the world.

After that, I worked for a variety of moving companies, in a range of roles – from warehouseman, surveyor, salesman, and business developer to senior vice-president – and was serving on the board

of directors for the HHGFAA (now IAM) when the current president was let go. So, in January 1997, I joined the HHGFAA/IAM professional staff, serving as only its third president. I thought I'd stay there for two years and then go back into the moving business, but I fell in love with the association job and – 20 years later – I am still here.

FF: How did you first learn about FIDI?

TH: In the mid-70s, I was working for Victory Van Corporation, which had had its application to be a member of FIDI denied for several years. It wasn't until The World Bank requested that Victory become a FIDI agent that we finally got approved. Robert 'Bob' Tull – a former President of FIDI, who was then President of Security Storage of Washington, Victory's staunchest competitor – visited me here at the IAM office recently, and we joked about how Security successfully blocked our FIDI membership, but eventually had to recognise we were a 'FIDI-calibre' company.

FF: Why do you think working with FIDI Affiliates is important, and how does the connection affect your corporation?

TH: FIDI is what IAM refers to as a 'collaborating competitor'.

We compete on a number of levels for our membership's dues, as well as its engagement and participation. Companies, large and small, only have so much time and money to invest in trade associations.

However, we also collaborate closely on issues and events that are important and good for the industry as a whole. It helps that, during my moving career, I was an active member in FIDI and other associations, such as NMSA (now AMSA), LACMA and OMNI. Those experiences – and the personal relationships I've made and maintained – have helped me understand the value of collaboration.

A lot of companies may start out as IAM members and move on to become FIDI members as their company grows. There are differences between the associations, but also many parallels. A couple of good examples are our young professional programmes and our protections for members from slow payers.

FF: How many FIDI Conferences have you attended?

TH: As a FIDI member, and as IAM President, it's probably around 20.

FF: What has been your experience of the FIDI Conference, and how does attending add value?

TH: Face-to-face contact with your industry colleagues is the real plus, especially in a global industry such as ours. When I started attending conferences, we were still using telex and fax machines to communicate, so that personal contact was even more important.

Over the years, I always enjoyed

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attending industry conferences and now I am working with the sons, daughters and grandchildren of the colleagues with whom I started my career. It's a little strange, but very rewarding to see young people grow and prosper in this industry. I have no children, so I view these individuals as my extended family.

FF: How familiar are you with the requirements of FAIM and why it adds value?

TH: Very! In 1995, myself, Al Mithal, Ray daSilva, Max Ajroldi, Antonio Gil, Ernst Jörg and several other young industry leaders attended the first FIDI Advanced Management Seminar in Belgium. The concept for FAIM was born from that experience and those individuals.

Our concept was to standardise quality moving services with something like an ISO standard. The vision was to have it

in place by the year 2000, so we called it FIDISO 2000. I was asked to present the concept at the next FIDI Conference, in Paris. The rest is history! What Jörg and others have since done with the concept is truly amazing.

FF: The past three American FIDI Presidents have all been from DC. Coincidence – or something more?

TH: When I got into the business, New York City was the leading area in the USA for moving activity. However, in the late Seventies and early Eighties, that shifted more to Washington DC, as the US government got larger and groups such as the Organisation of American States, The World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank took a more active role in spurring on globalisation and economic growth overseas.

DC-based movers have always been very engaged and active in the industry associations, whereas those in NYC and San Francisco, historically, have not.

If I had stayed in the moving side of the business, I would certainly have pursued a position on the FIDI Board. Who knows, maybe there would be four American FIDI Presidents from DC? But everything I have done in my life has prepared me for the IAM presidency. It's the job I was born to do – and not many people can honestly say that.

FF: What are the challenges of working in the DC area?

TH: As IAM's president, it is being based in the USA – not necessarily DC. Being here means we are often seen as US-centric, but we're not.

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'I am working with the sons, daughters and grandchildren of the colleagues with whom I started my career'

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FIDI AFFILIATES IN WASHINGTON DC

HILLDRUP INTERNATIONAL

INTERSTATE INTERNATIONAL

JK MOVING SERVICES

PAXTON INTERNATIONAL WASHINGTON DC

SUDDATH INTERNATIONAL



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IAM is a global organisation with almost 80% of its membership based outside American. I don't think FIDI is viewed as a European entity – or OMNI as British – because of where their headquarters are located, but IAM is often seen as US-centric.

All things considered, living and working in DC is a plus: our local news is global news and global news is our local news. Not much happens anywhere in the world without money, and the decisions on where and how to spend that money are often made right here, in Washington, DC.

FF: Do you expect the international moving sector to change substantially in the coming years? If so, how are you preparing – and does FIDI membership help?

TH: Yes, it will continue to evolve. My country and the world are in a period of transition, with a new President and administration in the USA, which will drive fresh policies on immigration, trade and transportation.

The potential renegotiation of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership –

along with corporate tax reform and a possible Border Adjustment Tax – will also have huge implications for where trade, banking and manufacturing is based. These changes, plus Brexit, will have an impact on merger and acquisition activities of several global entities, and change corporate international moving on a large scale.

The moving industry itself will continue to experience mergers and acquisitions, which may be the easiest solution for movers looking to expand, and for owners who are looking to retire and exit the industry.

Technology will continue to affect the sector. IAM – along with BAR, FIDI and other associations – led the way in standardising codes for electronic inventories; our computers can already talk to each other, regardless of the origin or destination language. Becoming an American National Standards Institute-certified developer was a real learning curve for us, but the end result was worth the effort and expense.

Associations will continue to ensure we have the right technology – used appropriately – to benefit the industry and the people we move. **FF**