

## **Employment Search Services for Relocated Trailing Spouses/Partners**

### **Overview**

The current state of the economy and high unemployment rates are having direct impact on employees' decisions to accept or decline transfers, as well as candidates' acceptance of job offers requiring relocation. For employees and candidates with spouses/partners, the decision is much more complex than the single employee. If the spouse/partner must leave a career or gainful employment and the family requires dual income, the chances that the relocation will be declined are high unless the partner has hope of employment within a reasonable time frame.

More companies are giving greater consideration as to how they may positively and cost-effectively influence relocation decisions and outcomes. Offering career and job search assistance to relocated spouses/partners has been identified as a relatively cost-effective relocation benefit. The question is: Since a vast majority of individuals, and companies, are not prepared to assess careers and conduct employment searches, how can/should these services be provided?

### **Employee Relocations**

Companies decide to relocate employees for good reasons. Corporate offices may be moving to another geography, the employee could make a major contribution to the company in another market or another division of the company, or possibly the transfer could be a necessary step in his/her career-path. Whatever the circumstances, the company's decision is made with great deliberation by management with consideration given to the risks and financial impact of the decision.

This is particularly true if a company, division, or office relocates. The success of the relocation is important to the vitality of that company. Corporate strategic and financial considerations are important and maintaining key managers and employees is critical to operational and cultural continuity. While the company can only make an offer to relocate, ultimately, the employee must evaluate the offer and decide if it is in his/her (and family's) the best interest to accept.

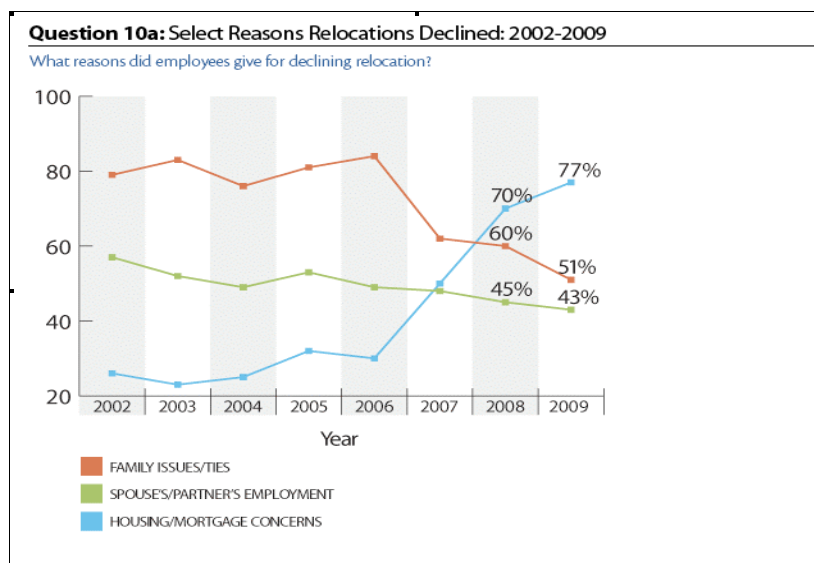
## Contributing Factors to Employees Evaluating Relocation

An individual's considerations to relocation include:

- Career objectives
- Financial
- Cost of Living
- Housing
- Schools
- Family
- Social

Among the top reasons why employees decline relocation are:

- Housing/Mortgage Concerns
- Family Issues/Ties
- Spouse's/Partner's Employment



\* 2009 Atlas World survey results

Spousal employment #2 reason to decline transfer: HR Magazine, 1993.

Spousal employment #1 reason to decline transfer: The Conference Board, 1996.

## **Housing/Mortgage Concerns**

- The quicker a spouse becomes employed, the better able the family is to qualify for a mortgage that fits their needs. Even the demonstration of an orchestrated search, particularly if an offer is pending, can influence some lenders to give them additional consideration.
- If the employee lives in a depressed housing market and the company does not have an effective house purchase policy, a second income could be necessary to make the current mortgage payments until the house is sold.
- If the spouse/partner is actively involved in a job search that is producing results, the couple's housing/mortgage concerns could be diminished or, given the current state of the cost of homes and company incentives, turned into an incentive to move.

## **The Trailing Spouse**

***Trailing spouse** (TRAY.ling spows) n. In a relationship, the person who gives up their job in order to follow the other person to a new location where that person has found employment.*

The Trailing Spouse experience can be critical to the success of the relocated employee. If the move is not satisfactory to the spouse, relationship issues could develop. Of primary concern to the company is the failure of the relocation by the employee leaving the position to return "home", or the possibility of performance issues.

## **Trailing Spouse Syndrome**

Experts frequently refer to "Trailing Spouse Syndrome" as a state of stress and discontent that can occur when the trailing spouse feels unfulfilled and lacking in direction.

While "Trailing Spouse Syndrome" was initially coined to describe and group many of the sources of relationship stress on ex-patriot transferees, most of the elements of the term are applicable to spouses and partners of domestic, relocated employees. If one partner experiences significantly less professional success than the other, especially if that partner has made significant sacrifices for the sake of the other's career, resentment can build.

Some trailing individuals may feel excited at the prospect of beginning anew in a different location, but many find that the reality is somewhat different, and they can begin to feel bored and withdrawn. It is essential to become socially integrated in the new location. Employment can be an important factor in this process.

## New Hires

Benefits provided by employers are having a greater impact on candidates' decisions to accept job offers. If these benefits do not address the candidate's concerns regarding the financial risks of acceptance, the offer will probably be declined. This is particularly true in the cases of candidates living in another geography who are concerned about qualifying for a home mortgage.

## Cost-effective Services

The direct cost of an employee relocation is estimated between \$16,000 and \$45,000. Including the indirect costs and considering the position of the employee, a domestic move may total much more. International relocation could total twice the cost of a domestic relocation. Given the company's investment in the relocation and the potential impact spousal employment can have on its success, employment search services for the spouse/partner could be seen as relatively minor, yet impactful, benefit cost.

## Facts & Industry Statistics

U.S. domestic transfers: Relocation statistics

Worldwide ERC members represent the large majority of organizations that manage significant relocation programs. 2009 U.S. domestic relocation statistics:

- \$25 Billion: amount spent annually in U.S. on corporate relocation
- \$15 Billion: amount spent annually in U.S. on corporate relocation by Worldwide ERC® member corporations
- \$16,110,641: average annual amount each company spends to transfer its employees.
- 287,000: annual number of U.S. domestic transfers from Worldwide ERC® member companies
- Of the 287,000, approximately 1/3 are new hires (94,710) and 2/3 are current employees (192,290).
- Of the 287,000, approximately 50% are homeowners and 50% are renters.

Costs of U.S. domestic transfers\*:

Current Employee Homeowner	\$90,017
New Hire Homeowner	\$66,610
Current Employee Renter	\$20,750
New Hire Renter	\$17,877

*Based on 2009 data*

### **Summary/Conclusion**

With the reliance of most US families on dual-incomes (approximately 57%), the career and income of the spouse/partner has been, and continues to be, of the highest importance. Offering employment search assistance to spouses/partners can be an affordable, cost-effective employee benefit that could contribute to positive personal and business outcomes for transferees, new hires and corporate relocations.

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## Employment Search Services

### Assessment – Job Search - Coaching

#### Areas Covered

- ❖ Career/Workplace Profile and Competencies Assessment
- ❖ Career Direction and Job Search Focus
- ❖ Resume/Cover Letter Preparation Assistance and Guidance
- ❖ Search and Networking Plans (Community and Professional)
- ❖ Training and Development Recommendations
- ❖ Reference Materials and Research
- ❖ Strength-Based Coaching
- ❖ Accountability and Follow-up

#### Bundled Services

##### Basic:

1. Initial career assessment and resume review
2. Profile
3. Tele-conference, feedback and coaching session (1)
4. Resume and Cover Letter feedback (1 each)
5. Follow-ups
6. P&A job search resource materials

##### Standard: (Basic plus)

1. Follow-up coaching session after 30 days (1)
2. Search structure
3. Telephone/email support (45 days)
4. Research support

##### Comprehensive: (Basic plus)

1. Follow-up coaching sessions (2)
2. Telephone/email support and coaching (90 days)

##### Optional Services:

1. Resume/Cover Letter creation or re-write
2. Networking and resume distribution
3. Face-to-face meetings
4. Extension of services
5. Relationship counseling