

TRAILING SPOUSES

The forgotten stars behind the executive world!

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When Jacqueline Jodouin found out last January that her husband, a sales manager, was going to be promoted to vice president, her enthusiasm was stifled by the news that this move up the corporate ladder would entail relocating the family across the country. As a registered nurse she had spent the last 10 years moving up the seniority list of the county hospital, only to have to face the prospect of starting at the bottom once again!

As the executive structure starts to demand more mobility and the economy becomes more global, this scenario will definitely begin to be played out in increasing frequency. To take the plunge and move to the new locale means leaving friends, family, and sometimes a lucrative career path, but it doesn't have to be a negative. Within the technological advancements of the present day, many trailing spouses are finding a niche for themselves with portable careers.

What exactly are portable careers? Well, there is no great secret in these; they are simply defined as a particularized career path that is managed by the individual rather than a corporation. Yes, we are therefore saying that anything with a bit of reframing can be a portable career. This opens up a whole new world of opportunities to everyone who has ever experienced relocation.

Let's take Jacqueline's situation as an example: As a nurse she identified her abilities within the context of her position at the county hospital. Realizing that she could not hang her hat on landing the perfect position within a new institution (and hope to retain seniority), she began to think of her skill set as her own personal brand. A brand, she discovered, that could help market her herself as a desirable commodity. She made the bold step of repackaging herself as a corporate trainer within the medical field and now enjoys contracts (making much more than a staff nurse would) with the various hospitals of her new city.

Jacqueline's situation is a great example of someone who possessed experience and was able to clearly identify a goal. The lifestyle of a trailing spouse can at times cause careers to be put into neutral or even take a back seat to family life, this doesn't necessarily have to be so.

The advent of the Internet has provided many portable careers with a new virtual path, a path that provides greater potential opportunities, while allowing for greater exposure to a global clientele. Telework, as it is known, encompasses everything from administrative positions, to virtual teaching, to telecommuting managers within fortune 500 companies. Technology has provided the ability to work from home and is becoming increasingly attractive to the corporate world; trailing spouses are reaping the benefits from this expansion.

As the business world begins to demand the relocation of more and more executives, the sub-community of trailing spouses will grow exponentially. So what can you do to get ahead of the curve and safeguard your career path? Below we have listed just a few steps that will increase your potential and allow your career star to shine brightly

1. *Identify your own skill set and personal goals.* This can easily be done through formal assessments, many of which can be accessed through the Internet.
2. *Create fervor about your abilities and begin marketing your unique personal brand.* You will require superior marketing documents (résumé, cover letter, bio/profile). Take time to get these right the first time, and don't be afraid to get some professional help.
3. *Identify a Spousal Network.* You will require this to be able to market your new brand effectively.
4. *Get to know your new city...* the web is a superior first step.

Nicole Miller is President of Mil-Roy Consultants, a career transition firm that dedicates it's practice to helping trailing spouses reach for the stars. You can contact her via email at resumes@milroyconsultants.com or toll-free at (877) 764-5769.