

## **Careers to Go**

### **Looking for a portable career?**

Bobby Meyer offers inspiration and information.

Watching newcomers in different capital cities worldwide, the ones who settle in quickest and experience the least transitional difficulties are those who pick up their working life quickly. On arrival they unpack their portable career and start up without problem within their own expatriate community. Keeping accounts, teaching computers, hairdressing or counselling are all skills that make ideal starting points for careers on the move.

### **Creating a portable career**

A portable career has to be easy to transport. Remember that education and experience weigh nothing but may need to be adapted to fit into a new location. Before taking the first step towards a new career take a moment to look inside yourself and make a note of all the skills and experience you have acquired both in and outside work. Then take a moment to look outside yourself and at the new community. See if you can think of any gaps in the market. If you listen to the kind of things people seem to be grumbling about, the chances are you can change their problems into your opportunity.

If your present career does not at first sight appear portable, there is a lot that can be done to make job-hunting or inventing a new career easier - before even leaving on assignment. Use your local library or the Web to research your destination country and establish links with local colleagues or find contacts with whom you have something in common.

### **What to do?**

Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) is an excellent qualification. Wherever you go in the world, people need to speak English well. The pay can be excellent and the financial independence is good for self-esteem.

'I soon discovered that being able to teach English has many advantages. It is easy to offer your teaching services through the British Council, by advertising in the papers or by word of mouth and it wasn't very long before I had found a new circle of Russian friends as well,' recalls Martha Collins who is based in Moscow.

It may be easier to update your IT skills or get additional training in your current country, so take the time to assess your current needs before you move on. Read everything you can on careers to give you ideas and inspiration. Books called Transform Yourself, A Career in Your Suitcase and The Money or Your Life are all to be recommended.

Working with a professional careers counsellor is an excellent investment. You will be more confident about the skills you are good at and be clear about those aspects that need work and any training you need, as a result.

In particular, watch out for the personal and business coach. Annabel Sutton started training as a coach with CoachU via teleconferencing almost a year ago and says: 'For someone like me, who likes to travel and live in three different locations on a regular basis it is the perfect career.' Annabel's coaching sessions can be either face-to-face or by phone at pre-arranged times and with long-distance calls costing so little, her clients may well be thousands of miles away.

Juliet Motley-Wilcock also works as a corporate coach. A few years ago she had no idea what career she wanted to pursue and appointed herself a coach. 'After a few sessions it became quite clear that I too should become a coach, and here I am. I was earning money in less than a few months and now have a well-paid career that fits round the children,' she says.

### **Setting goals**

It is a good idea to prepare a written plan of what you will do, either to find employment work or to create work of your own. Make a commitment to yourself, make a start and tell someone else about your plan, so that they can keep you motivated. Having a master plan coupled with intensive networking is invaluable.

By telling other people about your objectives it can be amazing how many will offer their help. Don't try to achieve too much too soon - rather like exercising, it is better to aim to do a little every day. And when you have created your to do list, make sure that you cross off every achievement and enjoy watching those crosses grow.

### **Networking**

If you are a writer, find a local writers' circle and if there isn't one, start it yourself. If you are a training manager, find a locally based association of similar professionals. That basic feeling of belonging is important to everyone. Networking, talking to colleagues and friends, reading newspapers and professional magazines and researching the Web are all effective ways of keeping up to date and informed. Email is the ultimate tool that can be used to open doors and provide opportunities for the globally mobile.

### **Teleworking**

New careers are evolving all the time. Sabine left Germany in 1997 to live with her partner in London and has been able to continue working with her German partners via the internet.

'I am building new websites for the university where I did my degree,' she says. 'We don't meet up often, only when I go home on leave. It is so easy when all of our communication is by email.'

### **Start now**

Take your first step now towards the portable career that works for you. Buy a book, make a phone call or go to a meeting but make a start.