



Posted on Mon, Sep. 25, 2006

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Transfers can boost career but need to be weighed carefully

Experts advise that even if a transfer makes economic and career sense, consider whether it will make social sense as well.

BY LISA SINGHANIA
Associated Press

Your job is going well enough, when suddenly the boss calls you into the office. It seems you've impressed the brass upstairs and now they want to promote you to a position in a galaxy, er, city far, far away.

Perhaps you work for a company where the only way to move up in the ranks is by applying to transfer to another office. Or maybe you'd like to return to your hometown, and this is your best chance.

Transfers can make or break your career. The key, experts say, is assessing your personal and professional priorities. Even if your move makes economic and career sense, consider whether it will make social sense as well.

'You have to sit down and say, `Here's the personal, the career, my family and my lifestyle,' " says Penney Morey, a Boca Raton-based consultant for Cbiz, a business services company.

Turn down a transfer too hastily, though, and a boss could think you're not committed or management material. So it's important to make a list of pros and cons, and consider the big picture.

SHOW ME THE MONEY

Money isn't everything, but you won't want to take a transfer that will pay you less or compromise your current lifestyle.

If you're moving from Nebraska to New York, you'll likely need a raise. But cost-of-living differences between other cities, such as Grand Rapids, Mich., and Sarasota are trickier to calculate. An online cost-of-living calculator, which compares the cost of everything from housing to toothpaste, can help. Try Bankrate.com's version: www.bankrate.com/brm/movecalc.asp.

You'll also want to consider the moving package and what expenses are covered. Are cars included? Do you have to pack yourself? Is there a temporary housing benefit, or a paid trip beforehand to scout out lodging? Perhaps the company will help you sell your current home and assist with closing costs when you buy a new one.

When Lynne Slovick's Michigan-based employer transferred her to California six years ago, the then 25-year-old negotiated nearly \$15,000 in additional salary and other perks.

"I also asked and got quarterly trips to Michigan. I wanted to stay in touch with corporate headquarters and my friends and family were still in Michigan," recalls Slovick, now a business development manager, who recently returned to Michigan with the same company.

WORK THIS WAY

A transfer doesn't necessarily mean a promotion. It could be an opportunity to try something new. Or, if your company is moving, then you may be lucky to even have the option to transfer -- forget about a fancy new title.

"Usually at the junior level, the biggest opportunity for transfers is going to be lateral or a similar position in a different department. So you're not necessarily getting a promotion, but you're going to get to expand your skill set. That's a good idea if you're interested in stretching your wings," says Alexandra Levit, the 30-year-old author of *They Don't Teach Corporate in College*.

Levit also says it's essential to do your homework so you know what kind of environment you're transferring into. The good news: Since you already work for the company, you should have the contacts to get the inside scoop.

THE REST OF YOUR LIFE

If you're lucky enough to have a better half, make sure he or she is on board for the transfer and that you both understand its ramifications. You might feel like an old married couple, but if you're not married, some employers may restrict benefits, such as reimbursements for meals and lodging.

If you are going abroad and need a special permit to work, consider whether your spouse/significant other will need one too and whether your employer will help out.

You'll also want to consider your social life, and whether your new location will be a help or hindrance. Friendships are important to keeping your sanity in any job.

Caveats aside, a transfer can be a great way to get ahead. Slovic says her move taught her how to network and develop new business. Her reward: quick advancement up the corporate ladder, a bigger paycheck and respect.

"It gave me the opportunity for advancement in my career that I could not have gotten had I stayed where I was," she says. ``When you're relocated, you're forced to grow."