5 TIPS TO AVOID NIGHTMARES WHEN MOVING TO THAT DREAM JOB

STRESSED-OUT TRANSFEREES? TRY GIVING THIS ADVICE TO HELP KEEP THEM SANE

BY MARGOT WETZEL, GMS-T

Great news! After seemingly endless interviews, thank-you letters, and phone calls, you've landed your dream job.

It's even in an exciting new location. The move will be a piece of cake! You've moved before: when you left for college, shared a place with roommates, maybe even when you upgraded and bought your first house or condo. Most people think moving for a new job is no different, and then they find themselves angry and upset and frustrated and weeping at their desk over losing their Lego collection. Starting a new job is stressful enough. Moving your family at the same time makes it even harder. So let's look at a few things to help keep your sanity—and your Legos.

SIMPLE BUT SCARY

Over the last 15 years, I've handled literally hundreds of company-arranged relocations. I've seen more than a few strange and complicated relocation scenarios. People have had to move everything from brand-new Ferraris to live tigers. Across the mobility industry, about 60 percent of relocations are families, 40 percent include children, 20 percent own their houses, and it goes on from there. The variety of scenarios is endless. I've found the secret to a smooth relocation is simple: The better prepared you all are, the better it will go.

When most people think about how they'd move for a new opportunity, they think along these lines:

I'll move first, then my better half and the kids will come along soon after. First I'll

stay in a temporary apartment while we sell the house, and then we'll move into the new place here … and life will be good—all while I'm putting in 60-hour weeks ramping up on the new job. No sweat!

Then you talk it over with your mate, and they ask a few simple but scary questions:

What if the house doesn't sell in time? It's November, so what happens with the kids' school? Can we afford to buy a big enough house there? Last year we bought that awesome wakeboarding boat, but the maps say the new job is a hundred miles from any lake or river, or even a small creek. Between us, we have three cars and a house full of furniture: How are we going to move all of that? What are we going to do about the kids' dog, Elliot—he's 9 years old! Will he have to travel in a plane, or do we need to drive him all that way?

And you thought getting the job offer was the hard part!

IF YOU BELIEVE—EVEN A TINY BIT—THAT AN EXPENSE MIGHT BE REIMBURSABLE: KEEP. THE. RECEIPT. YES, THE PAPER ONE.

Thankfully, many companies offer generous and genuinely helpful relocation benefits. We're not talking the not-so-helpful $10,000 lump-sum allowance that comes with a pat on the back and an almost cruel "good luck on your move."

Instead, we're talking about *real* relocation benefits, the ones that come with a professional relocation coordinator assigned to your case. They will work with you to figure out all the details and manage the process, start to finish. They'll arrange for professional movers, find temporary housing, book your airline tickets, transport your cars, and assist with the selling of your home.

Every company has different policies and practices. Some outsource the relocation management to an external vendor, while others have an internal relocation department. No matter how or by whom it's handled, keep the following in mind:

TIP NO. 1—RELOCATING IS A TEAM PROJECT

It sounds basic, but many lose sight of this important fact: You're moving your *whole* family. So, involve them already! Work closely with your relocation provider, keep everyone informed, and let everyone have input as appropriate. Don't keep the details to yourself, but don't go overboard either. Don't expect your spouse and kids to do everything. Moving is an important, disruptive, and sometimes scary event for any family, so everyone should pull together.

TIP NO. 2—DO NOT BOOK A MOVING COMPANY YOURSELF

Do yourself a *huge* favor: Let the relocation coordinator book a professional mover for you. Booking your own mover means your relocation coordinator isn't involved, and they can't back you up when something goes wrong. In addition to corporate moving rates, the company has much more leverage over scheduling your move, and in making things right if your Lego collection shows up a few pieces short. Another thing people forget: The moving company will pack your stuff. Not you. If you pack everything into boxes before they arrive, they'll pack your boxes inside their boxes, and the insurance will cover only your cardboard boxes, not that prized collection. Let the professionals do their jobs (we'll come back to that a little later).

TIP NO. 3—KEEP YOUR RECEIPTS

I've known people who actually do keep all their receipts. And yes, I mean even for a $1.35 bottle of water they bought at the zoo in 2005. They even file them. Yet when relocating, somehow their mighty powers of retention fall apart. Maybe it's the stress and chaos of moving. Maybe they're in that 43rd box, which was supposed to go to the den but went out with the trash instead. It's a mystery that has eluded scientists for generations. My advice to you, dear transferee, is that if you believe—even a tiny bit—that an expense might be reimbursable: Keep. The. Receipt. Yes, the paper one. Under many

company policies, if there's no receipt, there's no reimbursement. And, in almost all cases there is no *per diem* allowance while relocating. From your receipt for lunch at McDonald's while waiting for your plane, to pet-boarding costs while the movers are in the house, keep them all.

TIP NO. 4—DON'T EXPECT TEMPORARY HOUSING TO BE A PENTHOUSE AT THE RITZ (BUT SMILE INSIDE IF IT IS!)

This is why it's called temporary—because you won't stay there long. Yes, it probably won't face east or have an ocean view. It might not have shiny new appliances or hardwood floors. But you can expect a bed, a TV, and Internet access, and you'll be able to wake up and go to work every day. It's not intended to be a luxurious all-expenses-paid private villa. Think of it more as a crash pad for the first few weeks, so you can concentrate on ramping up in your new position.

TIP NO. 5—LET THE RELOCATION COMPANY DO ITS JOB

Let's be honest: Your company hired you not only because they genuinely like you, but mostly because they think you'll make them tons of money. To make that happen with less stress on you and your family—yes, even Elliot—they're giving you access to a trained relocation professional who can help with the million details. So you can focus on the work. And you should. Let the professional handle the details, listen to their advice, show up when you're supposed to. Take notes if you have to, and work *with* them, not against them. They do this because they love helping people make great starts in new places. Let them help you and your family have a great move.

ONE FINAL THOUGHT

If you've made it this far in life, you've probably figured out that things don't always go as planned. There might be a huge snowstorm the day you need to fly out, or maybe you rented a full-size van and they only have two-seater Smart cars when you arrive with your three kids, numerous suitcases, and good old Elliot. Have patience, keep calm, embrace the uncertainty, and think of it as an opportunity to practice agility and creativity. Everything will work out in the end—if you keep a smile on your face … and save the receipts. *M*

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