

a *career*
in your *suitcase*



THIRD EDITION

JO PARFITT

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Who Should Read This Book?

'Work is love made visible.'

Khalil Gibran

Do you want to find work that is based on what you most love to do, that fits your dreams, your lifestyle and your needs and that works wherever you find yourself living?

A *Career in Your Suitcase*, means simply, work that moves when you do. Whether you are moving to another continent or simply another city you may have to uproot your current career to create a new one. If you have had a career break, a country break or simply need a new start, this book is for you.

This book is for anyone who lives or hopes to live in another place and has to start again. If you want to find fulfilling, enjoyable work that is a perfect fit for who you are, where you live and what you want from your life, then this is for you.

You may be about to emigrate, to retire, to return to work, to move elsewhere temporarily or permanently. You may be what is termed an 'accompanying partner' of an expatriate employee and about to move once or many times. You may be about to move alone, as part of a couple, or with a family and want to work in a new location. You may want to run a business from your kitchen table or home office, find part-time, full-time, freelance or contract work. You may want to develop a one-off successful company or you may simply want to find something to do that can be sustained and grown as you move from place to place.

This book has much to offer the global nomad who needs a career with global networks and about which they can stay motivated despite frequent upheaval. Yet it also speaks directly to anyone, anywhere, who has ever wanted to discover, once and for all, what they really really want to do for a living and how to turn that dream into reality.

Praise for *A Career in Your Suitcase*

'A Career In Your Suitcase' is the perfect primer to inform and inspire spouses moving internationally. Jo Parfitt writes from the experience of someone who successfully created a number of concurrent and consecutive portable careers.'

Beverly D Roman, Publisher, BR Anchor Publishing

'Research has shown why it's so important to maintain a professional identity when moving around the world. Jo Parfitt has literally written The Book on how to maintain this identity... full of practical advice and sage guidance, written from the heart by someone who's been there.'

Anne P Copeland PhD, Executive Director, The Interchange Institute,
www.interchangeinstitute.com

'With A Career In Your Suitcase, Jo Parfitt is giving much-needed attention to a subject of increasing importance: meaningful occupations for expatriate spouses.'

Patricia Linderman, Co-author of *The Expert Expatriate: Your Guide to Successful Relocation Abroad*

'In today's global economy, an international career can be built anywhere where electricity and a telephone line are available. In A Career In Your Suitcase readers will find the practical advice and encouragement to help make it happen.'

Lya Sorano, CEO, The Oliver/Sorano Group, Inc. www.lyasorano.com

'An awesome networker and intrepid traveller, there is nothing that Jo doesn't know about creating, sustaining and growing a portable career whilst moving round the world. Yes, there really is a career in your suitcase and Jo ensures that you unpack it safely.'

Gill Cowell, Publisher, The Weekly Telegraph

'Jo is the perfect example of how a 'trailing spouse' can make the most of her time abroad. She is a brilliant networker and a great believer in giving out advice and help to anyone she meets who need it. In her book she tells readers how they can use their talents and experience to develop profitable and portable careers. She has certainly practised what she preaches and readers will find her common sense approach to developing a career inspiring and thought provoking.'

Laurence Rogers, The Brandmakers Company, www.thebrandmakers.co.uk

'Jo's passion and real life knowledge of this subject always mean that her talks are well worth listening to. You even come away learning something if your career is thoroughly stuck in one country, without a suitcase in sight.'

Christine Searancke, Director, Be Clear Ltd. www.beclear.co.uk

'I greatly admire your entrepreneurship. A true role model!'

Shari Leslie Segall, Director, Foreign Affairs Ltd. France

'Heard the talk, read the book and seen the website. As an ex-espatriate myself, it's all good, helpful, and supportive stuff! Now running my own business, it's still good to top-up information and make new friends. Thanks Jo.'

Susie Clark, Director, Small World Relocation, www.smallworldrelocation.co.uk

'I attended one of the first Career In Your Suitcase workshops at the Global Living Conference in 1998 and it showed me that I could write a book and get it published, even if I was a Trailing Male and no one else thought I could do it.'

Huw Francis, Writer, international business consultant and male expat spouse, www.huwfrancis.com

'Thanks for the wise words - just what the doctor ordered.'

Vera Nicholas-Gervais, www.soulgouls.com, Canada

'Women are encouraged to think outside of the box. Jo Parfitt inspires us to redefine what we need to take out of the box and put into our suitcases. After listening to her portable ideas, travelling light takes on a dare-to-dream 'blue sky' perspective. In essence, all you need to carry are the tools you have accumulated within, thereafter it's all about the re-packaging!'

Connie Moser, RMS Relocation Management Services b.v.
Editor, Resource and Development, Amsterdam

'A smart move! The book and complementary website addresses everything and more for spouses on the move. Both informative, practical, personable and supportive, it is a must have tool.'

Hilly van Swol, President of CONSULTus Expatriate Briefings and Intercultural Seminars and author of *When Abroad - Do as the Local Children Do*

'Having watched Jo in action during one of her Career In Your Suitcase workshops, I wistfully wondered why I couldn't have met her twenty years ago when I first went abroad. Developing my professional life would have gone a lot more smoothly.'

Robin Pascoe, Expatriate Press

'If anyone can write about a career in your suitcase, Jo Parfitt can. Her experience, knowledge and network of global contacts are clearly demonstrated in her A Career in Your Suitcase series... true enlightenment for any mobile individual who aims for eternal blue skies.'

Assunta Mondello, Expatriate Adviser, The American Hour

'While both husband and wife have adjustments to make in an international posting, the accompanying spouse (generally the wife) must build a 'life-between-flights' so to speak. Those women who have had meaningful careers will gain practical knowledge and skills from Jo Parfitt who has lived the life. Her valuable insights provide excellent coping suggestions.'

Carlanne Herzog, MA, Cross-Cultural Coordinator/Trainer Prudential Global Workforce Development Intercultural Services

'A Career In Your Suitcase is all about knowing what to pack for that new challenge ... Jo Parfitt has become the 'expert' when it comes to knowing what to keep and what to leave behind. Insightful, valuable and a much needed tool for anyone relocating. Well done, Jo! I wouldn't go anywhere without checking with you first!'

Donna Messer, ConnectUs International Inc, www.connectUsCanada.com

'I wish A Career In Your Suitcase had been published when I was struggling with the 'ideal portable career' while following my husband around the world.'

Gail MacIndoe, Founder and Managing Director, Expatagency & MacIndoe International

'Through her Career In Your Suitcase program, Jo Parfitt helps people everywhere think outside the traditional boxes. She not only teaches but models how each of us can make all the pieces of our lives work together to form something new and satisfying in the middle of a changing world. I recommend this book highly to all who want to learn how to begin seeing the possibilities of new beginnings they may not have recognised before.'

Ruth E Van Reken, Co-author: Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds, Co-founder: Families in Global Transition

'Jo Parfitt has put together an invaluable guide for the 'career minded' expatriate spouse. Her books and seminars will give the participants a unique insight on how to enhance their international experience.'

Kathy Bergmann, International Relocation Consultant, Santa Fe Relocation Services, Japan

'Inspiring, practical, and full of activities to clarify, and advice to guide! How wonderful to now have the third edition of A Career In Your Suitcase, an invaluable resource for any non-salaried expatriate spouse seeking to focus her/his own professional direction.'

Barbara F Schaetti PhD, Principal Consultant, Transition Dynamics

'A Career In Your Suitcase should be packed before all other travel essentials! This unique resource provides practical advice for expanding and enhancing your professional credentials while out of country. Jo Parfitt knows how to blend opportunity and creativity into revenue-generating fun for you!'

Mary Anne Thompson, Founder, www.goinglobal.com

'Jo's workshops and book provided me with the tools, realisation and independence to operate outside "the conventional box".'

Marian Weston, Swift Transitions, author of At Home Alone, www.swiftransitions.co.uk

'Jo Parfitt's work has always centred around her concern for expat spouse career issues. She is a thoughtful, well-informed advocate.'

Charlene Marmer Solomon, Executive Vice President, RW-3 LLC, www.relowizard.com

'At last someone has written a book that addresses the problem in a practical way.'

Shell London LINC magazine

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Introduction

Since I first conceived this book, back in 1996, in Stavanger, Norway, I have watched the idea of a career in your suitcase evolve, pick up speed and grow into what I consider to be the number one solution to the dual career problem. It has been well over ten years now and many people, from all over the world have inspired me and added to my vision. However, one person in particular has to be held responsible for this book. Back in 1996, Kit Prendergast asked me to tell the members of the professional women's group she chaired about the career I had sustained while I had lived abroad in three different countries. She then encouraged me to develop my knowledge into the first ever Career in Your Suitcase workshop. Kit made me believe I had something to say. She gave value to my experiences.

The input and support of this book's contributors and all the people who have shared their secrets with me over the years have enriched this publication. Rather than take the wisdom and experiences of others and put them into my own writing style, I have instead chosen to publish their work in their own voices. With two men on the team as well as American, British and Canadian contributors, the range of styles is evident.

I would like to thank The Expatriate Archive Centre in The Hague, for allowing me to use material from the transcripts of two digital recordings. Thanks too to The Permits Foundation for their input regarding work permits and to The Trailing Spouse, ORC Worldwide and GMAC for their surveys. The Expatriate Archive Centre, The Trailing Spouse, Career-in-your-suitcase.com and CareerByChoice.com provided many pertinent quotations but the majority came from the mentors and bloggers at ExpatWomen.com and my gratitude goes to Andrea Martins who sourced them for me. Thanks too to Going Global, NetExpat, HR-Sense and Be Clear for their contributions regarding CVs, interviews and presentation skills, respectively. Most of all, I would like to thank Galen Tinder, REA Manager, for his tremendous contribution and advice on every chapter of the second edition of this book and his continued dedication to this, the third, updated, edition. As an American with over 25 years experience in human services, who currently works as a senior manager and career consultant for this book's sponsor, Ricklin-Echikson Associates (REA), Galen's input has been invaluable.

Inevitably, I give huge thanks to my husband, Ian, for making my career in my suitcase possible in the first place. I have immense gratitude to my children, Sam and Josh, for respecting the fact that I often work from home and for always being supportive. But it is my parents, Peter and Jenny Gosling, who have believed in me and shown their pride in even my smallest achievement, since the day I was born. And that has made all the difference.

Jo Parfitt
March 2008

From The Sponsor

In our fast paced and increasingly global economy we take for granted that employees and their partners will relocate across state, provincial, national and continental borders at the behest of their employers and for the enhancement of their careers. While we assume that moving is a fixed and growing feature of contemporary life, it can often be a wrenching experience for the partner and other members of the family. The family pain and disruption of relocation is a primary reason why employees turn down opportunities for new assignments or abandon these assignments before their completion.

REA is a global company that specialises in partner assistance services and is committed to helping employees, partners and families make healthy and productive transitions. We choose our international consultants for their professional expertise in career counselling and their experience handling the unique challenges of relocation. All have lived and worked in foreign countries and are well-versed in the career and life transition challenges.

For the relocating partner, an important ingredient in a positive relocation is finding opportunities to pursue employment and vocational growth. This is true especially of expatriate partners. These men and women often find it particularly difficult to find conventional employment at a time in their lives when they particularly need to maintain their own professional and social identity.

When Jo Parfitt offered REA and me the opportunity to collaborate on the third edition of this book, we were honored and excited by the prospect of bringing our experience and expertise to bear on the employment and vocational challenges facing expatriate partners.

In the last several years we have learned more about the repatriation experience and better appreciated that repatriation can be as jarring and confusing as expatriation. Repatriates are rarely able to return to the job or company they left and may not, for that matter, want to do so. They may be interested in building on their international experience but have as little idea of how to do that as they did about what to do at the beginning of their partner's assignment. There are parts of this book that should be helpful to partners returning to a home that seems foreign to them.

We hope through co-authoring and co-sponsoring the third edition of *A Career In Your Suitcase* that we have made a modest but tangible contribution to the well-being and positive experience of globally mobile families. We also hope that in this way we are contributing to the health and viability of our emerging global society.

Galen Tinder

Senior Consultant and Manager
Ricklin-Echikson Associates Inc. www.r-e-a.com

Foreword

International mobility is an important driver and result of the global economy. According to the United Nations, there are almost 200 million international migrants in the world, equivalent to the population of Brazil. This number has more than doubled in the last 25 years. Currently, one in 35 people, or three per cent of the world population, is an international migrant and around half of them are women. I often wonder how they and their families adapt.

A small proportion of international migrants are intra-company transferees, highly skilled men and women who are posted by international employers for three or four years at a time. Dozens of studies over 20 years have shown that it is the policies and practices that apply to the family as a whole that make or break an international assignment. In particular, concerns about dual careers and whether the partner will be able to get a job in the new location, are the major reasons why staff turn down an international assignment.

During my 30 years in international human resources management, I have seen that the partners of international employees face a bewildering array of challenges when they start to think about how they will manage their own career for a life on the move. The best international employers recognise this and offer a range of support. Permits Foundation, of which I am a director, is an employer initiative that advocates a relaxation of work permit regulations for partners of expatriate employees worldwide. But that is only one part of the solution. Career in a Suitcase sets out to show partners what they can do to help themselves.

When Jo asked me to write the foreword, I was delighted to accept. I met Jo in 1998 at the Paris Women on the Move Conference not long after she had published the first edition of Career in a Suitcase. At that time, I was managing Shell's Spouse Employment Centre and Jo's book, with its practical examples of a portable career, immediately became part of my library. What struck me then and what continues to impress me is Jo's authenticity and passion for sharing the ups and downs of a mobile lifestyle. Jo really walks the talk of her own stated mission 'sharing what I know to help others to grow'. Her ability to pull together her own personal experience with case studies, a wealth of resources and advice from other experts in her extensive network, has resulted in a thoroughly insightful, recognisable, believable and useful handbook.

Jo's concept of the portable career is a brilliant solution to the dual career challenge because it opens your mind to a wider range of choices and gives you the 'I can do this too' feeling.

If a portable career is a career in a suitcase, this book must surely be in the essential hand luggage of every traveler on this voyage of discovery and inspiration.

Kathleen van der Wilk-Carlton
Director Permits Foundation

1 *a career in
your suitcase*

'Work is love made visible.'

Khalil Gibran

Introduction - Setting The Scene

Until 1987 I had enjoyed a successful career as a partner in a computer training business. I made my living from teaching and writing and had already published more than ten computer handbooks. But then I got married and my husband was posted to Dubai. Telling me that I would regret it for the rest of my life if I refused to join him, my new husband persuaded me to become what is sometimes rather unflatteringly called a 'trailing spouse'. In this politically correct world the term has become the more anodyne 'accompanying partner'. Yet, it is perhaps the men in our number who have created the most compelling term - that of STUDS, which stands for Spouse Trailing Under Duress Successfully. I'll stick with calling myself an 'accompanying partner'.

In the 20 years that have followed, I have come to agree with my husband. I am glad I made the journey and yes, I would have regretted it for the rest of my life had I stayed behind. During these intervening years, I have developed what I call a *career in my suitcase*, a portable career that moves when I do. A career that is mobile, sustainable and keeps growing despite moving country every few years.

The first ten years were a struggle, in which I did my fair share of door-slamming and sulking. But it was around 1997 that I read Robin Pascoe's '*A Wife's Guide*' and realised, at last, that a) I was not alone and b) I was not mad. In fact I was part of something often called the *Dual Career Issue*. It was around this time that I published the first edition of *A Career in Your Suitcase*.

Ten years ago I began to study the phenomenon. I attended conferences, interviewed countless experts and talked with many women, and men, who shared my interest in portable careers. As a journalist, I was able to learn about this at the coalface and then share what I knew in the best way I knew - by writing about it.

Today, few international corporations remain ignorant of the dual career issue. It is on the agenda of almost every multinational corporation. Sadly though, many organisations find it a bit of a hot potato and offer the same kind of support they always have - with work permits, language and training. But it is impossible to create a one size fits all solution to this dilemma. Few mobile spouses will be able to climb their chosen career ladder, stay in the same field, or even the same company. Few will find it easy to hop from permanent employment to permanent employment. For even if there were work available, other hurdles get in the way, such as a lack of work permits or fluency in a new language. Perhaps your qualifications will not be accepted in a new country? Or maybe your usual career just does not exist in your new location? And then, with the demands of conducting an international relocation and all the domestic duties that entails, not to mention the responsibility of looking after a mobile family, it can be hard to find suitable work that fits round everything else.

If you plan to make just a single move or move within the same country, then thankfully issues such as language barriers, work permits and unrecognised qualifications are unlikely to be a problem. But you may still find it difficult to obtain work similar to before the move. A fisherman would have to find a creative solution if he moved to an inner city. Someone with a shop selling tartan in Scotland may find it hard to establish the same business in the south of England. There are many barriers likely to hinder your progress. I believe that a portable career may be just the solution you have been looking for.

SO WHAT IS A DUAL CAREER ANYWAY?

Many of today's families comprise two working partners, both wanting to pursue a long-term career. They may both want to work because it is the natural next step after higher education, but maybe they simply need the money. With the average house price in the UK set at about ten times the average salary, this is no surprise. Of course, this is one of the reasons why so many choose to emigrate. To move to a better life with a lower cost of living. In 2006, one million British people emigrated permanently. Others move temporarily, on one or more assignments away from their home base. Many go overseas. In 2007, there were estimated to be 200,000 expats working legally in The Netherlands alone. At the same time there are 57,000 in Shanghai, while in the United Arab Emirates foreigners make up over 80 per cent of the entire workforce.

As we become more educated and open to women in skilled and managerial positions, it is likely that an educated, successful man will have an educated and career orientated wife and vice versa. Educated, career orientated people want to work, and must frequently do so in a dual career scenario. Yet it is rare for both partners to receive promotions or opportunities at the same time and in the same location.

According to the 2006 GMAC Global Relocation Trends Survey, which surveyed 180 international companies, 66 per cent of the assignments that had been refused, were rejected because of the spouse's career. ORC Worldwide's 2005 Dual Careers and International Assignments survey was completed by 145,000 people in 254 international organisations, representing almost 12 million people worldwide. It states that 74 per cent were concerned about the spouse's career with 72 per cent unhappy about the loss of income that would entail.

Yvonne McNulty conducted the 2005 Trailing Spouse Survey, found at www.thetrailingspouse.com, and interviewed 264 accompanying partners (91% female / 9% male). A massive 70 per cent believed that an assignment's success has much to do with the spouse's ability to transfer her or his career to the new location.

The apparent ideal of partners taking it in turns with their career is both unlikely and impractical. More often, the balance eventually shifts towards one person's career while the other partner reconciles himself or herself to

taking a back seat for a while. Losing the esteem that goes with a professional identity can produce dire and sometimes permanent consequences. So, despite an increasingly global and mobile society, the progress of the career of the accompanying partner still poses a problem.

The Trailing Spouse survey reveals that 79 per cent of respondents were working before the move with 84 per cent are educated to at least bachelor's degree level and yet just 36 per cent found work when they arrive. The 2006 Global Relocation Trends Survey showed that while 59 per cent of spouses were employed before assignment only 8 per cent found work. This is worse than ever.

'Historically, the average gap has been 33%, and the largest previously recorded gap was 39% in the 2005 survey. The data clearly shows that the percentage of partners and spouses employed before an assignment has been increasing since the beginning of this survey, and after the 2002 survey, it has hovered at 50%.'

GMAC Global Relocation Trends Survey 2006

THE IMPACT ON IDENTITY

'It is more stressful to not have work when you want it than to do something you dislike.'
Tom Jackson, author, *Guerilla Tactics in the Job Market*

An unhappy spouse will impact the move badly. The main reason for spousal unhappiness is the difficulty he or she has in maintaining a professional identity or career. Valerie Scane, an accompanying partner who has lived in the Far East, has researched this phenomenon and believes that this loss can make a female into a 'hollow woman'. Without the security of maybe the job title, the colleagues, the income, the routine and satisfaction that can be derived from a career, you can start to lose sight of who you are. This can be very frightening.

With a loss of identity comes a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem. Enforced idleness can be hard to deal with. Without something 'interesting' to think about, it can be easy to become stressed or depressed.

'Due to my inability to be employed for the first time in my working life I am dependent on another person. I feel trapped and observed all the time. This raises the stress level enormously.'

'My loss of job, loss of self-esteem, and an imbalance in the relationship is very stressful. Prior to this last relocation we were at the same level job wise.'

'By not being able to continue with my career I am made to feel like a second-class citizen... It is a lonely life, and we, the trailing spouse, are left to re-invent ourselves after every relocation. It's exhausting and unrewarding. I regret my life.'

'My self-esteem has taken a beating because I don't feel that I am contributing to our household finances.'

'I had no idea how much my sense of self-worth was tied to my career.'

'I felt that I had given my real "self", and had become less of a person.'

'Companies need to support the spouse in allowing them to further their career. I do not live for my husband, nor do I live for his work, and they just couldn't understand that my work/career was, and is, as important as his. He did not marry a housewife and I will never be one.'

'I was a barrister in Australia who thought it might be fun to take a year to live with my husband in far north Finland. It wasn't. I couldn't work. I was ignored and my whole identity disappeared. We now live apart for 5 days a week - he in far north Finland, me in Helsinki. I am working, but it is not the senior job I had in Australia and this has caused intense bitterness.'

Respondents, 2005 Trailing Spouse Survey

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO HELP?

There is no doubt that traditional, salaried careers are the hardest for the accompanying partner to obtain and retain. Increasingly, companies are realising that self-employment and a portable career offer a viable solution. In addition companies see the benefit of offering partners opportunities for further education and assisting them in finding attractive volunteer roles.

'Of all the issues explored in this study, the dual-career challenge still remains the number one concern for the trailing spouse. There is a critical need for sponsoring organisations to plan and prepare spouses for the intrinsic impact of losing their career or stepping out of the workforce for an extended period of time whilst on assignment. And whilst spousal support programs were viewed as an essential requirement in the expatriate policy by the majority of respondents, too few trailing spouses were actually receiving this level of support from the organisation.'

2005 Trailing Spouse Survey

Despite all the best intentions on the part of both would-be employees and their employers, there are often obstacles to working in foreign lands.

These barriers are:

- Lack of work permit
- Lack of fluency in the host language
- Incompatibility of certification
- Lack of suitable employment
- Cultural differences
- Country nationals having priority
- Mobile spouse's inevitable lack of longer term commitment
- Mobile spouse's lack of transferable skills

The Trailing Spouse survey found that 53 per cent cited work permit restrictions as the major barrier, with language barriers coming in at 11 per cent, qualifications not being recognised at 9 per cent and limited opportunities at 8 per cent, thus, they are, in order.

Reasons for not working abroad according to accompanying partners

1. Work permit restrictions
2. Language barriers
3. Qualifications not recognised
4. Limited opportunities

It appears that the priorities shown by the affected accompanying partners do not quite mirror those demonstrated by the companies offering assistance, though they are certainly on track.

'Most Asian countries we were posted to do not allow wives or dependents of an expat worker to work because they would like positions to be filled by local people, unless one has a very specialised kind of profession that locals cannot do.'

Business administrator, 2005 Trailing Spouse Survey

'I have had two jobs since arriving one not in my field and one part-time as a writer. Locals in both jobs have replaced me because that is the law. I am now working to establish a consulting business where my clients are off Bermuda so I don't need to get involved with work permits. I should have done this long ago.'

Corporate Communications, 2005 Trailing Spouse Survey

'I have had job offers, but the visa issue is the reason it doesn't work out. Very frustrating! Employers are put off by the extra paperwork and the fee even though I've been offering to pay that.'

Journalist, 2005 Trailing Spouse Survey

'I am a psychologist registered in NZ and just moved from Sweden where language AND qualifications were not recognised - a very sharp learning curve for me and a major personal struggle especially as a financially dependent newly-wed too with an MA suddenly reduced to washing undies! Set up LifeLine in Shanghai (anonymous telephone help line) mainly for expats there - lots of stories of loss of identity and the strain that puts on relationships.'

Victoria, New Zealander in India, www.expatswomen.com

'To arrive in the States without being sponsored by an employer is a nightmare. The qualifications you get in the UK go for nothing here. I was made to feel inadequate and as if I was discriminated against [...] It was really frustrating and I literally had to beg someone to give me a chance.'

Lizzy, British in America, www.expatswomen.com

'If you come placed with a Company from your home country, I have found, especially for women, there to be a 'halo effect'. Companies here think (often correctly): "hey, if they're willing to send her here, she must be a high performance individual." And you get a lot more respect [...] My most important advice for anyone contemplating a move to a foreign country, always try to get placed from your home country. It will save a lot of time and aggravation in attempting to find jobs in your new country. My experience in the Mediterranean is that most high profile executives end up teaching English for a long, long while, or end up in jobs well below their expertise (and very far below their old pay levels). This is not the case in the UK - Ireland - Scandinavian countries.'

**Lisa, British in Italy, <http://burntbythetuscansun.blogspot.com>
and www.expatswomen.com**

ASSISTANCE OFFERED TO ACCOMPANYING PARTNERS BY THE COMPANY

The Global Relocation Trends Survey shows that 58 per cent of companies offer cross-cultural training to the whole family. The ORC Dual Career Survey shows that this was offered by 64 per cent of companies. Interestingly, ORC shows that the support services generally offered to the spouse is delivered with the following priority:

1. Language training
2. Cultural orientation
3. Work permit assistance
4. Education and training
5. Job search assistance
6. Career counseling
7. CV preparation

'If we accept that organisations cannot and should not simply throw more money at the problem, as such tangibles generally do not provide long-term motivation and are no real compensation for career and income loss, then more needs to be done at the intangible level. Those with careers want to remain in careers for their own intrinsic motivation and satisfaction. And taking into account issues in the housing market, particularly in Europe, two incomes have become a basic fact of life. Initiatives that support career enhancement and the opportunity to pursue job and career opportunities provide the way forward if couples are to accept and remain in an international posting. Recognising this, the survey sees a substantial rise in initiatives taken by employers to offer work permit assistance to spouses/partners and to become involved in lobbying via the Permits Foundation - with some notable success to date.'

ORC Worldwide, Dual Careers and International Assignments Survey 2005

Let's take a look at the spouse's top four reasons for failing to find suitable work overseas first and consider how the lead employee's company may be tackling them.

Work Permits

With work permits being the major issue, let's look at this first.

Many countries provide work visas for the relocated international assignee - but not for the spouse. In fact, spouses are often unaware of the work visa regulations that will prevent them obtaining regular work. Fortunately, this is improving.

One of the key findings of the ORC 2005 survey was that the number of organisations turning their attention to work-permit assistance and lobbying for improvements for relocating working spouses/partners has doubled.

In many countries of the world, the partners of expatriates on assignment are simply not granted a work visa, or labour card. While diplomatic families are sometimes permitted to work through bilateral arrangements, thousands of others are denied the chance to work in their host country or at least face a long complicated process to get a work permit.

In June 2001 The Permits Foundation was launched. This is a body dedicated to promoting access to employment worldwide for the spouses of expatriate executives. Jan Schaapsmeeders, was its founding chairman and CEO of Shell People Services at the time. Gill Gordon, HR director of Schlumberger Limited, currently chairs the foundation.

'It is essential that these men and women feel they can take expatriate posts which offer fair employment prospects to their spouses too. Otherwise, The Permits Foundation believes, fewer people may take up assignments abroad, which lessens the skills base and technology transfer available to both developing and developed countries. We hope the Foundation can help persuade governments worldwide that the spouse of an expatriate employee can also make a useful contribution to the local economy.'

Jan Schaapsmeeders, published in *Woman Abroad* magazine

Permits is a non-profit corporate initiative and the brainchild of Kathleen van der Wilk-Carlton, who has been invited to write the foreword for this book. In 1995, she was the founding manager of the Shell Spouse Employment Centre, now part of Global Outpost Services. Almost 50 international companies and organisations currently sponsor the Permits Foundation. A board of ten sponsors meets quarterly to review strategy and plans and is actively involved in supporting efforts in particular countries. It is no surprise that the foundation is growing rapidly; lack of work permits is the major barrier to partner employment as we have seen. Being a sponsor is a clear indication that an employer is keen to improve the situation for its employees.

Since its inception, Permits Foundation has developed a clear picture of international best practice and uses this to show countries the gap between where they are now and where they need to be to make their country more attractive to international staff, trade and investment. Specifically, Permits wants legally resident spouses and partners to have an open permission to work during an expatriate assignment. The group has already been successful in promoting change in a number of countries.

'The first milestone was the introduction of work authorisation for the spouses of intra-company transferees and treaty traders in the USA in January 2002. We had supported a US coalition of employers and proposed that the legislation was widened to cover all nationalities. Since then we successfully promoted change in The Netherlands, France and Hong Kong, which passed regulations allowing spouses of highly skilled staff to work freely. In the case of the Netherlands and France, this also applies to family members.'

Kathleen van der Wilk-Carlton, quoted on www.expatwomen.com

Currently 17 countries have favourable arrangements for granting work permission to the spouse, partner and sometimes even children of work permit holders. Within Europe, apart from the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Sweden and the UK allow family members of non-EU citizens to work, with some variations in the criteria and procedure. Outside Europe, the list includes Argentina, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore and USA.

The European Union, which as a basic principal allows free movement for work of its own citizens, has now grown to 27 member states and transition restrictions for citizens of the new member states are gradually being removed. By 2011, free movement for work purposes will be extended to European citizens and family members of all 'EU 25' member states and by 2014 it will also apply to citizens of Bulgaria and Romania.

Towards the end of 2007, The European Commission presented plans for a European "Blue Card" for highly skilled migrants from outside the EU. These proposals also contain provision for spouses to access the employment market.

Plans are now underway at Permits Foundation to develop local networks that will promote change in India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Russia and China. These countries were selected principally because they are such important destinations for companies right now.

Building on the experience of best practice countries that already allow spouses to work, Permits Foundation aims to show that allowing spouses to work is an integral part of a policy of managed migration that goes hand in hand with attracting trade and investment. This should be perceived as an advantage, rather than a disadvantage, to the host country. Highly skilled staff and their spouses have much to offer local economies.

The Permits website will keep you informed of all the latest developments country by country and is well worth a visit. The website of Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen and Loewy PC also provides information on global immigration.

'It would be a great help if they could assist with legal and administrative work related to obtaining a work permit.'

Respondent, 2005 Trailing Spouse Survey

Language

Unfamiliarity with the local spoken language can restrict an expatriate's employment options. Everyone spoke English when I lived in Dubai and I never felt the need to learn Arabic. Later on, in Norway, the locals spoke English, and so for day-to-day life there was little need to learn Norwegian. However, many of those who worked in offices found that speaking Norwegian helped integrate them into the company and business culture. In addition, many professions required that expatriate employees be fluent in the native tongue. Learning a language to a level of proficiency can take years - often time that is quite simply not available to the expatriate spouse on a one to three year assignment.

Although lack of work permits is the main reason a career has to be cut short, it is language learning that most companies are happy to provide to spouses. The ORC survey found that it is offered by almost 80 per cent of companies, with work permit information and advice coming in at just over 60 per cent. The Global Relocation Trends survey found that 69 per cent offered language training and 36 per cent work permit help.

'Unfortunately, I needed total fluency in Norwegian in order to be able to work here in my usual profession. I also needed approval from the local education authority for which I would have had to submit all my college and other course work as well as the certificates so they could ascertain whether they were compatible. Although I could have provided the paperwork, I would never have been fluent in the language.'

Kit, American in Norway, www.career-in-your-suitcase.com

Education

Sometimes your qualifications stand for nothing in a new country. This means you may have to further your study to obtain new, acceptable, qualifications or shelve your career. Incompatible licensing and certification can be a huge problem in some professions, particularly healthcare. In some countries a homeopath will also have to possess nursing qualifications, for example.

Some skills just cannot be transferred and retraining will be the only option. A ski instructor would be hard pressed to find vocational satisfaction in Singapore, for example. And although I was able to make and sell date chutney and even a date cookery book in the Middle East, I found little demand for either in Norway where palm trees are rare.

'Any ideas I had about career I left behind the minute I left my main career in the UK but what it has opened up are opportunities, huge opportunities for personal growth and development. I am just finishing off a psychology degree at the moment. I may never be able to use it but it's been very interesting. It is useful to me. I've learned a lot. I has helped me with my family and understanding my kids and all sorts of things.'

Julia, British, The Expatriate Archive, OAC5/3/3

Companies recognise that the provision of careers and study advice and even the finance for study are of great benefit. The ORC survey found that just over 47 per cent of companies offered education or training, just over 32 per cent offered career counseling. The Global Relocation Trends Survey found that 30 per cent offered advice on education and training with 15 per cent offering to reimburse costs.

'[I wish companies would] give me intensive language training and an amount of money to buy information and specialised help during the relocation.'
Respondent, 2005 Trailing Spouse Survey

Finding Opportunities

Lack of opportunities is cited as another factor that prevents spouses from finding work. But many spouses simply do not know where to look. This is where a careers advisor or a local advisor can be invaluable. The Global Relocation Trends survey found that 19 per cent of companies help with networking, 17 per cent help with job search and fees, while the ORC survey found that just over 32 per cent offered career counselling and almost 37 per cent job search assistance.

'[I wish companies would] provide assistance on contacts. All I want is fair opportunities, not mere cash.'

'Educated, professional spouses need to be seen more as an asset, to be marketed to their local economy. I would prefer that my wife's employer spent more effort investigating what I do and using their local connections to make an appropriate match.'

'[I wish companies would] offer career guidance/counseling for spouses unable to work due to legal restrictions of host country.'

'[I wish companies would offer] assistance in finding a suitable job through local and inter-company networking and/or through outplacement companies (headhunters). I would also appreciate administrative and financial aid to continue my education.'

'[I wish companies would] pay for a partner career course and counselor/coach on the spot to help get a picture of the market. Give me intensive language training and an amount of money to buy information and specialised help during the relocation.'
Respondents, 2005 Trailing Spouse Survey

The dual career challenge is one that will not go away in a hurry. Fortunately corporations are finding creative ways to help ease the problem. Some maintain the belief that it is their role to provide a number of services and options that will empower people and give them the tools to help themselves. But for now, let me continue with my story and how A Career in Your Suitcase was born.

My Story

Let's go back now to my arrival in Dubai back in 1987. I was a new wife unaccustomed to idleness. We were living in a fully serviced apartment and it was not many weeks before I tired of sunbathing and small talk around the pool. I found it hard to do what I considered to be 'nothing' all day. My identity, until my marriage, had been tied up with my career. I liked to work, to feel I was achieving something and to be financially independent. I liked the camaraderie of colleagues and the opportunity to keep learning and developing. With no support or inspiration from my husband's employer, I decided to make my own luck and, over the next 20 years on the move, acquired a range of skills that would allow me to create, maintain, pick up and pack my portable career. Despite living in five different countries, in the end I learned how to look inside myself to discover what I most enjoyed doing and how I might adapt my interests and my skills to match them up with opportunities in each location.

During the first decade I made and sold chutney, and taught French, creative writing and computers. I became a journalist, wrote manuals and newsletters and self-published a cookery book. When I noticed how desperate the local expatriates were for books I turned to network marketing and sold Dorling Kindersley books and CD-ROMs. When I heard my dinner guests commending the delicious curry our Indian housekeeper had prepared, I ran a small take away service. I soon realised that problems are simply opportunities in disguise.

When we returned to England for a few years in 1997 with our two children, I noticed that things had changed. People no longer had careers for life back home either. Mothers wanted some work life balance and their frequent domestic relocations meant they wanted portable careers too. By 1998 I had formed Summertime Publishing and published the first edition of *A Career in Your Suitcase*. Since then, not only has that book sold out and been well received all over the world, but its message has inspired thousands of men and women, mobile and non-mobile, and encouraged them to create a career based on their passions. Since the first edition was released I have travelled the world speaking about my own experience and sharing the knowledge I have acquired. Along the way I've also been inspired by other people who have also created careers for their suitcases, and have learned from them.

After seven years back 'home', and a second edition of this book, we moved abroad again, to The Netherlands this time and my career came too, continuing to grow and develop along the way.

This third edition is a culmination of everything I have learned and all the people I've met - not only since the first book came out but from the very beginning, more than 20 years ago, when I inadvertently became involved in what is known as a dual career partnership.

I believe that a successful portable career is possible for anyone. First we must look inside ourselves to find our passions, then we must look outside ourselves to find the opportunities in the locality, and finally we must find a way to blend this together so that we can tailor-make a career that fits our values, aspirations and lifestyle.

A Career in Your Suitcase is there to inspire, inform and support anyone who wants to find work that they love. It's for all those people who, like me, want to continue working despite relocation. It's for everyone who believes that challenges are merely opportunities in disguise and that our world is full of surprises. Take a look at this book, be inspired by its contributors and then move onto its accompanying website www.career-in-your-suitcase.com so that your journey may never end.

Ten Steps to a Career in Your Suitcase

1. Consider hiring a coach or career consultant to join you on your journey at any or all stages of the process.
2. Find your passions, values, mission and meaning.
3. Assess your skills, talents, strengths and uniqueness.
4. Discover what you want and need from a career at this stage in your life.
5. Brainstorm the perfect portable career for you.
6. Adjust your career to fit your current location and the opportunities it holds.
7. Do the research and learning you need to prepare for transition and your chosen career.
8. Create the marketing materials you need (CV, website, cards, brochures).
9. Network to meet the people you will need as they become your clients employers, role models and support team
10. Make it happen by setting goals, staying motivated and developing the self-belief and confidence you need.

2 *find your
passion*

In this chapter I will help you find out who you are and what you would like to do for a living. I'll begin by showing you how I was fortunate enough to turn something I love doing into a portable career that earned me money. Then I will inspire you with ways to find your passion too.

*'Your reason and your passion are the rudder
and the sails of your seafaring soul.'*

Khalil Gibran

In this chapter:

- How I found my passions
- Life without work
- How my passions became portable
- How my career in my suitcase came home
- Why our passions can be hard to find
- Find your passion
- Getting started
- Put your passions on paper
- Ask your friends
- Self assessment tests
- Putting it all together

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