

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESULTS FROM THE 2005 DUAL CAREER PROGRAM SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

While a job offer involving relocation can be an exhilarating career move for a candidate, the candidate's spouse/partner often finds that a move can derail their career plans. To attract top-notch employees and ease their families' transitions to new locations, universities throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe have developed dual career programs that offer job search assistance to the relocating partners. Given this specialized support that relocating partners receive, why are only some relocating partners successful at quickly becoming reemployed after moving to a new geographic region?

A study sponsored by the University of Nebraska at Kearney surveyed the relocating partners of university employees. These relocating partners received support for their job search from dual career programs at the academic institutions. Universities from the United States and Europe participated in the survey. The goal of the research was to explore potential factors that might assist dual career directors in improving the success rate for the reemployment of relocating partners.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The survey was completed by 29 relocating partners of whom 63% were female. 56% of respondents were between 26 – 35 years of age and 22% between 36 – 45 years of age. There were 11% each in the categories of “under 25 years of age” and “over 46 years of age”.

Almost half (48%) of relocating partners reported having master's degrees with 26% having doctoral degrees and 22% having baccalaureate degrees. 4% reported having specialist degrees. A majority of respondents were white/Caucasian (68%). 20% of the relocating partners indicated their ethnicity as Asian and there were 4% each in the African American, Middle Eastern, and East Indian categories.

BEGINNING THE JOB SEARCH

When asked how they had learned about the dual career programs, 79% of relocating partners indicated that their spouses/partners were told about the program during the interview process. Application packets provided initial information about dual career programs to 13 % of respondents and 4% indicated they learned about the programs either via email or a self-directed search using the Internet.

67% of relocating partners indicated they began their job search before moving. Interestingly, a separate question asked if they were in contact with the dual career representative before or after their move and 56% said they were in contact before they relocated. When asked what best described the first contact with the dual career representative, 54% stated they initiated contact by calling or emailing the dual career representative. 31% said that their spouse/partner

BEGINNING THE JOB SEARCH (CONT.)

made the initial contact with the dual career director, and 15% said that the dual career representative made the initial contact.

WORKING WITH DUAL CAREER DIRECTORS

Relocating partners were asked questions about their working relationship with the dual career representatives at their universities. 73% of relocating partners stated that sometimes they initiated the phone/calls or email and sometimes the dual career representative did while 15% said that they always initiated the contact. 12% of relocating partners indicated that the dual career representative always made the initial contact.

When queried as to which assistance from the dual career program was most helpful, 67% of relocating partners indicated the personal contact with the dual career representative. (See Attachment 1 for additional comments.) 21% said the information provided (e.g. area resources) was most helpful while 12% said it was the coaching provided (e.g. updating a résumé).

The relocating partners were asked how often they communicated with the dual career representative either by phone, email, or in person. 52% said less than once per month and 15% said one to two times each month. 26% of relocating partners indicated that they communicated three to four times per month and 7% stated it was five or more times each month.

The next question inquired as to the nature of the working relationship with the dual career representative for those relocating partners still receiving services from the dual career program. (More than one category could be checked for a total of 20 responses from 12 relocating partners.) The category mentioned most was “receiving emails from her” at 45% of responses followed by “calling/emailing” her at 30%. 15% of responses indicated the relocating partner was meeting with dual career representative in person and 10% of responses indicated the relocating partner was doing assigned work between meetings (e.g. updating résumés, calling employers).

AFTER RELOCATION

Relocating partners were asked if they had attended any local meetings after they had relocated. (More than one category could be checked for a total of 38 responses from 23 relocating partners.) The category mentioned most was “meetings related to personal hobbies” (26%) followed by “networking events at the university” (21%). Both the categories of “attended local meetings of my professional organization” and “networking events at other community organizations (e.g. art museum)” garnered 16% each of responses. Only one relocating partner indicated that he/she attended a local Chamber of commerce meeting. Seven of the 23 respondents to this survey item said that they had not attended any local meetings after relocating.

Regarding volunteer work in the new place of residence, 60% of respondents indicated they had participated in some sort of volunteer effort. However, the volunteer work did not lead to job opportunities for any of the relocating partners.

The question “After you relocated, have you stayed in touch with any of the following people?” was asked. (More than one category could be checked for a total of 69 responses from 25 relocating partners.) The category of “my former coworkers” was mentioned most often (32%)

AFTER RELOCATION (CONT.)

followed by “friends at my former place of residence” (28%). The next categories were “my former employer” (14%) and “my former professors” (13%). The last two categories were “my former professional association contacts” (9%) and “my former community organization” (4%).

JOB SEARCH SELF-EFFICACY

The job search self-efficacy scale was administered to the relocating partners to determine how confident they felt about performing job-search related tasks. Responses could be given as feeling “not at all confident”, “a little confident”, “some confidence”, “pretty much confident”, or “a great deal of confidence”.

Of the relocating partners that responded to the survey, almost 50% felt “pretty much confident” and 33% felt “a great deal of confidence” at making a list of the skills they had that could be used to find a job. For the item “talking to friends and other contacts to find out about potential employers who need your skills”, almost 50% felt “pretty much confident” and 37% felt “some confidence”. 44% felt “pretty much confident” and 33% felt “some confidence” in talking to friends and other contacts to discover promising job openings that are suitable.

44% of relocating partners indicated “a great deal of confidence” in completing a good job application and résumé with 30% saying “pretty much confident” and 22% having “some confidence”. “Contacting and persuading potential employers to consider you for a job” showed 33% for both “some confidence” and “pretty much confident” responses with 15% in the “a great deal of confidence” category. 44% indicated “a great deal of confidence” in making the best impression and getting their points across in a job interview with 30% saying “pretty much confident” and 22% saying “some confidence”. Only one relocating partner indicated that he/she was not at all confident with some job search tasks.

JOB SEARCH BEHAVIORS

The job search behavior index was given to determine how much time relocating partners spent performing different job search tasks. 38% said they spent “a moderate amount of time” making inquiries or reading about getting a job. There were 26% of relocating partners in each of the following categories: “a little time”, “much time”, and “very much time”. As to preparing or revising their résumés/vita, 42% of relocating partners said they spent only “a little time” and 23% said “a moderate amount of time”. There were 26% of relocating partners in the combined categories of “much time” to “very much time”.

While 54% of relocating partners spent “a little time” to “no time at all” reading help-wanted ads, 38% were in the combined categories of “much time” to “very much time”. 52% indicated they only spent “a little time” talking with friends or relatives about possible job leads, 28% spent “a moderate amount of time”, and 16% spent “much time” to “very much time”.

Only “a little time” to “no time at all” was spent speaking with previous employers or coworkers about possible job leads by 69% of relocating partners. 12% spent “a moderate amount of time” and 19% spent “much time” to “very much time”. 48% of relocating partners did not attend any networking events or job fairs and 52% spent “a little time” to “a moderate amount of

JOB SEARCH BEHAVIORS (CONT.)

time”. While 54% spent “a little time” to “no time at all” looking for jobs on the Internet, 38% spent “much time” to “very much time”.

When it came to making inquiries to prospective employers, 65% of relocating partners said they spent “a little time” to “no time at all” while 15% spent a moderate amount of time and 20% spent “much time” to “very much time”. 62% spent “a little time” to “no time at all” sending copies of their résumés/vita to prospective employers while 8% spent a moderate amount of time and 30% spent “much time” to “very much time”.

Of the relocating partners who responded to the survey, 42% said they spent “no time at all” going on job interviews. 27% indicated that they spent “a little time” going on job interviews. 19% said they spent “a moderate amount of time” and 12% said they spent “much” to “very much time”.

JOB OFFERS

Relocating partners were asked where they were in their job search. (More than one category could be checked for a total of 28 responses from 23 relocating partners.) 39% of responses indicated some relocating partners had found a job in their career field. 29% of responses showed some had found a temporary position and 21% indicated some were still looking. There were 4% of responses in each of the categories of “found a job in an alternative career field”, “telecommuting for my former employer”, and “taking a break and planning to resume my job search in the future”.

26 relocating partners responded to the question, “How many job offers have you received in the past six months?” The number of job offers ranged from zero to three. The average number of job offers received in the past six months was one.

The number of months it took to find a job ranged from zero to twenty-four for the 13 relocating partners that responded to this item. The average number of months to find a position was 6.5.

COMMENTS

Some of the comments from the relocating partners (Attachment 1) indicated they were pleased with the dual career program services that they had received. In responding to the question “Which assistance received from the dual career program was most helpful?”, the partners first chose one of three items and then had the opportunity to elaborate upon their choice. (The three choices were: “the information provided (e.g. area resources)”, “the coaching provided (e.g. updating résumé)”, and “the personal contact with the dual career representative”.)

One relocating partner said, “I believe all three answers above fit. However I have really enjoyed having a different perspective regarding my skills, accomplishments and employment experience.” Another stated that “All three were very helpful. The personal contact and her understanding of ME was great!”

In response to an open-ended question asking for general comments, a relocating partner stated, “My experience with the dual career program was excellent. It made us feel that the university

COMMENTS (CONT.)

cared about our home life.” Another comment was “The [dual career program] was a very positive experience for me.”

However, not all relocating partners felt that the dual career program at their university had met their needs. There were some general comments such as “It was no help at all. My spouse had to relocate to another state because the program was not able to help him at all. The person just send him web site pages. That is somethings he could have done by himself.” Another relocating partner stated that “They promised that I would have no problem finding a job in my field, that I would get paid more than what I found out later was reasonable for the area, and they made it seem that they would find the job for me, which I didn't expect, but nothing came of any of it.”

While some concerns were expressed regarding dual career program services, a review of the comments in Attachment 1 shows that a majority of the comments (71%) were positive.

POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is important to keep in mind that the relocating partners who utilize the dual career services offered by universities are not those who can easily find a job in their career field. For example, in many communities, a relocating partner with a degree and experience in nursing will be able to find a job quickly with little to no assistance. Therefore, the relocating partners who avail themselves of dual career program services are those whose job search requirements are more challenging for a variety of reasons. That is assumed to be the situation for the relocating partners who responded to this survey.

Although the number of survey respondents was too small to allow for statistical conclusions to be drawn from the data, some interesting findings are highlighted in this section along with recommendations for dual career program directors.

Regarding self-efficacy as it relates to networking, a majority of relocating partners indicated “some confidence” to “pretty much confident” in talking to friends and other contacts about potential employers and promising job openings as well as in contacting potential employers directly. Yet, when asked if they actually engage in these types of job search behaviors, a majority said only “a little time” to “no time at all”. It appears that the relocating partners’ confidence about networking may not be exhibited in the types of networking behaviors necessary to obtain employment. Coaching relocating partners in the area of networking techniques may first need to help them obtain a realistic view of their actual behavior and then assist them in learning and engaging in the networking strategies that will result in productive job search outcomes.

In the section titled “Beginning the Job Search”, a higher percentage of relocating partners began their job search before moving than were in contact with the dual career representative before moving. This seems to imply that some relocating partners began a long-distance job search on their own before moving and contacted the dual career office after arriving in the new place of residence. It would be interesting to know if relocating partners who showed initiative in beginning their job search were more successful in obtaining meaningful employment.

The “After Relocation” section shows that most of the relocating partners who completed the survey attended some type of local meeting in their new place of residence. While this is encouraging, the survey results also showed that only a small percentage attended local chapter

POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY (CONT.)

meetings of their professional organization and/or local Chamber of Commerce meetings. Additionally, few relocating partners indicated that they had maintained contact with professional association contacts at their former place of residence. Educating relocating partners about the value of contacts in professional associations could be an area in which further emphasis needs to be made so that relocating partners can quickly make the connections necessary to find employment in their career field.

In addition, many relocating partners overlook the social network contacts that former friends and coworkers might be able to provide if they were just asked. About half of the relocating partners indicated they only spent “a little time” talking with friends or relatives about possible job leads. Almost two thirds said they spent “a little time” to “no time at all” speaking with previous employers or coworkers about possible job leads. Relocating partners may not be taking advantage of a rich source of contacts. Coaching a relocating partner on what to ask the people they knew in their former place of residence may assist them in generating some employer/professional contacts in their new place of residence.

One consideration is that this survey did not delve into any particulars regarding dual career couples in which both spouses/partners wish to pursue careers in academia. This is an area that would benefit from further research.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Michelle M. Fleig-Palmer
Doctoral Student
Management Department
College of Business Administration
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
CBA 209
P.O. Box 880491
Lincoln, NE 68588-0491
Phone: (402) 472-3915
Fax: (402) 472-5855
Email: mfp@bigred.unl.edu

ATTACHMENT 1

Which assistance received from the dual career program was most helpful? Please explain your answer.

the information provided (e.g. area resources) Please explain:

the coaching provided (e.g. updating résumé) Please explain:

the personal contact with the dual career representative. Please explain:

There is a lot of information but in an other country you do not always know what information you need. The representative helps you look in the right angle. Her being [nationality] is very important here in [country] where everything is different from anywhere

I believe all three answers above fit. However I have really enjoyed having a different perspective regarding my skills, accomplishments and employment experience.

Showed me that I can't count on the dual career representatives

the dual career advisor was instrumental in directing me to focus on my strengths and experiences in the process of updating my resume and cover letter

All three were very helpful. The personal contact and her understanding of ME was great!

I can update my resume alone and the person in charge can just the language better. The office give me no personal contact

The representative I met with was warm and encouraging and has continued to show support for my situation.

none of it was helpful

The personal help with my resume and current job climate in the area, as well as the additional exposure for my name that came along with working with the [dual career program].

the dual career program, unfortunately, could not have been less helpful for me. none of the above apply.

None. It was no help at all. My spouse had to relocate to another state because the program was not able to help him at all. The person just send him web site pages. That is somethings he could have done by himself.

Gave me good ideas and pointed me toward career resources I hadn't considered.

[My representative] was always positive and kept me upbeat, even when there were very few job prospects

Just reassured me that I would find something that would work and not to worry.

University was able to find money to fund a part time position at the school that fit my skill set. This was an excellent transition position for me.

Once relocating, finding out the place where I could go to also find jobs.

[My representative] have helped me a lot when i was searching fo ra job.The way she modified my resume has made a tremendous difference and her suggestions have helped a lot finding a job.

If you have any comments that you wish to share about your job search and/or the dual career program at your university, please use the space below.

I am a housewife with young kids. I am happy to have the opportunity to look after them for so long. I chose this but as kids will grow older I do have a problem coming in this country (XXX). I should just not expect a high management job but that is fine since I do not plan to work full time ever if conditions stay the same. Family is and will always be more important.

I believe it is very helpful especially to new residents. Job search is very difficult here in XXX. It is a lot about who you know and when your new that doesn't help. Pay scale I believe to be less compared to bigger city I moved from.

My experience with the dual career program was excellent. It made us feel that the university cared about our home life.

They've continued to be very supportive of my process.

They promised that I would have no problem finding a job in my field, that I would get paid more than what I found out later was reasonable for the area, and they made it seem that they would find the job for me, which I didn't expect, but nothing came of any of it.

The [dual career program] was a very positive experience for me. It is unfortunate that the program isn't regarded as highly by University administration.

the dual career program at XXX is not, as far as i can tell from my experience, structured to be able to help academic couples. i would have been far more helped ... had they said to me, outright, "in the case of academic couples, you are best served by working with your partner's chair and your own contacts and not by us." instead, i got mixed messages about the center's ability to talk with deans, provosts, etc. about propositions for myself, when in fact all of these people needed to be approached by my partner's chair and not by the center. i have a number of helpful advisors and contacts in academia who have helped me negotiate the difficulty of finding a position after moving away from my institution to be with my partner. my suggestion is that [they] interview professors who have themselves dealt with this situation and prepare handouts and speils about how couples might handle this situation. while [they] needn't provide contacts, they could say things like, "the best way to get an offer from XXX is to get an offer from somewhere else; i encourage you and your partner both to aggressively apply for positions anywhere you can and to be forthright yet kind to your chair about the difficulty of your situation." perhaps somebody could undertake as a research project accumulating information about skills and tacts and approaches that have been successful for folks in this situation. as it is, i found that i was doing more explaining to [them] than the other way around. although i accepted early on that this ... was not the place for me, this certainly needn't be the case for others who are in my situation. i think that it is wonderful that XXX has this [dual career program], and i very much hope that in the future, work is done to deal better with academic couples. Thanks for your time in compiling a survey!

The program has to be evaluated really good to see why is not meeting its purpose. When I accepted my job I though tghat that program was going to help my spouse bur it did not. My spouse is well prepared with advanced college degrees.

Completed MBA first and used those resources extensively