



Family Member Employment

Career Management Strategies: Fitting into the Washington Job Market

Many family members will be returning to the Washington Metro area this summer after years of overseas assignments. Often these family members are concerned about how they will fit into the Washington job market. There are several free and inexpensive job search resources available to our family members and FLO would like to encourage the publication of this information (list available at end of article). However, prior to returning to the U.S., there are many things family members can do in preparation. These activities are all part of good career management.

Good career management involves you, the job seeker, as the President of your own company. As a Foreign Service family member, career management is vital to maintaining a career in this frequently changing lifestyle we live. So, the first step is to define the direction you want to move in and develop a plan of action that will get you there.

Career counselors always advise clients to begin with **self-assessment** so that any goals and plans made will fit with an individual's values, skills, abilities, priorities, personality, motivations, lifestyle requirements and organization makeup. There are a wealth of books and articles describing the formal and informal tools available to complete a self-assessment. There are also many websites offering self-assessment.

Whatever resource the job seeker chooses should feel comfortable to the job seeker. It is vital to complete this self-assessment step, as career goals that do not match a person's characteristics are doomed to failure.

The next step in career management involves **research**. Job seekers, whether changing careers, returning to a career, or continuing an established career, must:

- know the market,
- know that a given position or career field matches identified strengths and weaknesses,
- determine the odds of securing a position in the identified fields and functions, and
- be aware of his/her value in the job market.

By accessing salary surveys, the job seeker can determine a salary range prior to beginning the job search. Research can be done in several ways. **Informational or investigative interviewing** is one way. Asking someone currently in a position of interest is an excellent place to obtain information on the specifics of a position or field. Other resources include Temp Work, for an insider's view of a company or profession, Job Boards, for current information from people in positions of interest, Career

Counselors, for assistance in locating positions and the Occupational Outlook Handbook, published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which lists several hundred professions and job descriptions of each.

Once the research stage is complete the job seeker is ready to begin **actively searching for the right job**. Family members can access unlimited resources if they have an Internet connection. One source is **The Network**, FLO's listserv and e-news that sends subscribers numerous government and non-government positions. To receive this resource, family members can email FLO and request to be placed on the mailing list. Additionally, there are a large number of excellent government and non-government job-hunting websites that provide job listings and job seeking advice. A lengthy list of such web sites is available on the FLO Internet website at <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo>. Click on (Family Member Employment / Employment for Family Members Returning to the United States) to view more resources.

Family members interested in beginning work immediately upon returning to the U.S. need to be reminded to **hand carry all employment papers** (resume, evaluations, SF-50s USG personnel actions), and any other documentation they might need in their job search. The perfect job may be available immediately but be lost because the candidate is awaiting the arrival of their lost luggage, delayed air freight or household shipment that holds all their important paperwork that vanished somewhere between post and D.C.

Once a family member arrives in the D.C. area, there are **additional resources available**. Make an appointment for career advising provided by the **Employment Program staff of the Family Liaison Office**. The Employment Team can assist spouses interested in working for either the U.S. Government or in the private sector. Such assistance in guiding family members through the labyrinth of choices helps avoid pitfalls. Family members can also join the Job Seekers Network Group and attend monthly networking meetings.

The Foreign Service Institute's **Transition Center** hosts courses for returnees. And finally, there are also several local **One-Stop Employment Centers, Women's Centers** and **Career Centers** that offer services.

Finding employment that is both career rewarding and enjoyable is always difficult. The Family Liaison Office encourages family members to take advantage of the valuable resources available to them. These resources can provide them with the necessary knowledge required for choosing the right job.

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<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/4592.pdf>