

Experts Make Relocation Manageable

BY DAVID J. KNIGHT

Urgency sets relocation apart from everyday residential real estate brokerage. An individual seeking relocation services often has an infinitely greater sense of immediacy and seriousness than the native New Yorker shopping for a new place to live.

The pressures facing a "transferee" or newcomer can be enormous. The anxieties of beginning a new job, perhaps with a new company and commonly in a city that the transferee knows little about, is just the tip of the iceberg. Worries over whether a spouse and children can adapt; potential language or cultural barriers; and concerns over the lifestyle, friends, family and comforts one is leaving are common and can often lead to a tremendously traumatic experience. Add to this the complexities of the New York metropolitan area on an average day (abundantly stressful even for us die-hards who know Grand Central Station from the Grand Central Parkway), and it's a wonder that anyone would ever relocate at all!

What is the most important component of a successful relocation? The answer lies first and foremost with the relocation broker. Unlike the traditional real estate broker whose job is to unite buyer with seller or tenant with landlord, a genuine relocation broker provides a far greater array of services. For example, the relocation broker becomes more intimately involved with the day-to-day life of the client and their family over the entire course of the move. This relationship begins long before they ever leave their home city and can potentially last months and months after the last box is unpacked (and in many cases beyond!).

Rare is the person that requires and expects nothing more than finding and moving into a new home. Most clients feel more secure being able to turn to one source to provide help with the entire moving process including the movement of household goods, finding interim housing, destination services, home sale assistance, and property management.

A good relocation broker ought to be flexible with the services he/she provides to a client. The concept of relocation service can be as general or as intensely specific as required. A "pre-assessment interview" allows the broker proper insight into the extent of services that might be needed. It is during the interview, that the relocation specialist is able to evaluate crucial factors including family status, social involvement, special interests, and housing allowance limitations versus current lifestyle, to determine the extent of services that will be needed. The broker will assist the transferee (and family) in learning more about their new city as a place to live and work. To many, moving to a new, strange city can be highly stressful and a source of frustration and anxiety. Counseling sessions should be offered to help alleviate any fear or misgivings the client may have. It is often helpful as well, to direct transferees to specific professional and social support organizations upon their arrival.

I founded DJ Knight & Company in 1987 with the goal of transcending the relocation services provided by traditional residential brokerage firms. Having relocated numerous times myself — to London, Caracas, Geneva and Houston — I became quite aware of the many components that come to bear on a positive relocation experience. Each subsequent return home to New York made me

particularly sensitive to the needs of newcomers in a city unlike any other.

With these needs in mind, DJ Knight has grown to be a leading provider of relocation services to both individual transferees and numerous Fortune 500 companies. From the sales manager relocating from Sydney, to the investment banker repatriating from Tokyo, to the anti-trust attorney moving three states north from Washington, D.C., our commitment to personalized attention and value-added service are the driving forces behind our relocation programs. We have found our niche in a complex marketplace and pride ourselves on offering much more than real estate brokerage alone.

In future columns, I plan to address more specific relocation-related issues including: repatriation, the economics of self relocation; home sale options if you are being relocated and assessing your moving needs—what to take, what to store and what to buy in your host city. I invite your specific relocation queries that I will answer in future columns. Please e-mail your questions to me, at david.knight@djknight.com. ■



David J. Knight is a member of the Real Estate Board of New York, the Employee Relocation Council, Co-chair of the Relocation Council of New York, and a member of the National Advisory Council of the U.S. Small Business Administration. He is a Certified Relocation Professional (CRP), and has addressed the Employee Relocation Council, the Academy For Continuing Education, and numerous Fortune 500 companies.