

10 CAREER DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR TRAILING SPOUSES



~ Written in partnership with Miranda Van de Kuyt

1. **Get clear on your work values.** Understanding what is really important to you when it comes to why and how you work, will make it easier to identify the right career opportunities. A career development practitioner (CDP) can administer a values assessment tool or you can get started with an [online self-assessment](#).
2. **Identify your motivated skills.** Although you have a vast array of skills that have kept your career portable and you adaptable, satisfaction comes when you identify and use the skills you most enjoy (i.e., skills you are motivated to use). Again, a CDP can administer a motivated skills assessment tool or you can get started with an [online self-assessment](#).
3. **Document your experience.** Things can easily get lost when you're moving multiple times. Create a career portfolio by collecting evidence of your experience, training, and skills (e.g., conference brochures, reference letters, certificates) and organizing them in one place (e.g., a binder, port-a-file, or website). This way you won't have to search for things when you settle into your new city.
4. **Establish your presence online.** Although you've relocated to a new city, you don't have to start over when it comes to your career. Platforms such as LinkedIn allow you to build your professional portfolio virtually, creating a career that transcends borders.
5. **Maintain a master resume.** A resume that lists ALL your experience, training, and skills isn't ideal for employers, but comes in handy when you're creating a new targeted resume. As trailing spouses tend to have more jobs on their resume than someone who's lived in just one or two cities, remembering all you've done can be difficult. A running log, or master resume, can make your next job application a little easier.
6. **Update your resume and portfolio often.** Things can change quickly when you're a trailing spouse. One week you're feeling like you've finally settled in and the next week you're handing in your 2-weeks notice. Make a point to update your master resume, portfolio, and online presence frequently. Once you've completed something noteworthy, collect evidence, reference letters, and recommendations and add them right away; you might not get a chance to do it tomorrow - you might be busy packing.
7. **Stay connected with colleagues and references.** Don't leave relationships behind just because you've moved; job references are essential no matter where you apply. Stay in contact with your colleagues and references by using social media or a periodic email/phone call. Consider asking your colleagues to recommend you on LinkedIn.
8. **Reflect on what success means.** Success for the average person looks different than success for someone who moves every couple of years. Stop trying to measure your ideals by the world's standards. Consider the life you've chosen as a trailing spouse and define what success means to you.
9. **Continue learning.** Every experience is an opportunity to learn and there will be an abundance of new experiences when you arrive in a new city. Traditional educational programs can be tough when you're on the move; therefore, consider online learning, webinars, and conferences instead.
10. **Consider a virtual career.** Consider the field you've chosen and look for opportunities to take your career completely virtual (i.e., 100% online). This way, it doesn't matter how often you move or where you land next—your work is just a click away. This is extremely helpful if you are unable to work locally where you've relocated due to visa restrictions or other reasons.

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