

Finding a Career That Travels when You do

By Leslie Rigoulot

My best interview line was: my husband may get transferred in the next six months, but for those six months, I will work harder for you than anyone else. Some times it worked. Some times it didn't. Finding a job or career is especially difficult for military spouses. Although some rotations are easy to peg at three years, others are much more frequent. Employers near military installations know that.



Tiffany Gorski hands out cookies to U.S. Army Soldiers on Camp Atterbury, Ind., Dec. 11, 2007. The cookies were donated from churches and families throughout the area for members of the 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team who are mobilizing for a 12-month deployment to Iraq. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Russell Lee Klika) (Released) Photo provided by JCCC/JSINGH

I had a brilliant idea after having started at the bottom of three bookstore chains, working my way up and then moving. I'd become a lawyer. Here are the military spouse specific problems with that idea: **1)** you have to finish Law School in three years because unless you are transferring from Harvard to a state university, your credits won't transfer. **2)** you usually practice law in the state where you studied law because many laws are state specific. **3)** You have to pass the bar exam in the state where you practice law. **4)** a good number of your clients are word-of-mouth. So just about the time you pass the bar and build up a practice, it is time to pack up and go.

Erica Dingman, age 28, has looked at these issues and found the perfect career for herself. She sells couture wedding dresses online. When she met her future husband, Marine 1st Lt. Chris Dingman, she had worked for three years at Price, Waterhouse, Cooper as a Certified Public Accountant and had already moved on to Robert Half, an accountant and finance recruiter company.

"Chris and I got engaged and I was moving to Lemoore NAS. There is a Robert Half in Fresno so I transferred," she says. "But every time you move, you have to build your contacts and accounts all over."

Ah, yes, the "building your business every time you move" trap.

"The drive time and starting over put me off and besides, I was planning our wedding," she smiles. While looking for her wedding dress, a friend at Robert

Half mentioned that she had a friend who not only sold the designer gowns but was looking to sell her business.

"It was listed for sale in the Wall Street Journal and I made an appointment to look over the financials and the tax returns," says Dingman. [ture.com had a strong market and "it travels with me, has great flexibility and I love the gowns" says Dingman.](http://www.bridecou-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Before agreeing to buy the business, Dingman learned the process of buying the gown from high end stores and salons.

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“The previous owner took me to meet contacts at the flagship stores, salons and the designers themselves,” she states.

In order to carry the designer elite many stores are required to buy a certain number of gowns from a particular designer. To make room for next year’s designer gowns, dresses are sold in bulk to buyers like Erica Dingman.

Wedding gowns sell for \$5000 to \$8000 in salons, while bridecouture.com offers the same dress at 50 to 70% off the retail price. The catch is that bridecouture is only going to have one dress in one size. So if you are looking for the Vera Wang gown that you saw in the salon and Dingman has it in your size or close enough that it can be altered, you are in luck. And so is she. With an inventory of 150 to 200 gowns, the Dingman house in Lemoore was overflowing.

“We are talking about having a brick and mortar store in San Diego, when he is transferred there because we know he will be there for three years,” she says confidently. “Chris will be thrilled not to have to clear out of the house when someone wants to come by and try on dresses.”

Dingman’s advice to those considering buying any business would be to know the person you are buying it from, study the financial statements and even hire an accountant to go with you. As someone



Friends and family members of U.S. Navy Sailors assigned to the Oliver Hazard Perry-class guided-missile frigate USS Reuben James (FFG 57) watch as the ship approaches the pier of Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Feb. 22, 2008. Reuben James returned to Pearl Harbor following a six-month deployment in support of the global war on terror. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class James E. Foehl)

who has worked in recruiting, she also recommends registering with temp and recruiting agencies.

“It is really hard to find good temps and if you work well in Fresno, you can get a recommendation if you move to San Diego,” she says.

Or you can do what I did. Bounce from job to job until you discover that your mother was right after all; I should be a writer. If you tell everyone you are a writer, it puts pressure on you to become one. Being a writer, being a published writer and being a decent writer are three different things, but that is another article. What you have to do is get paid.



A senior chief petty officer and family member pin the chief petty officer (CPO) anchors onto the uniform of Chief Master-at-Arms Derrick Vaughn during a CPO pinning ceremony at Naval Station Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, Sept. 21, 2007. Twelve selectees were pinned by friends, family and fellow chiefs in a traditional ceremony. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Michael Lantron) (Released)

Knowing yourself,
your limitations and
your expectations
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rewarding work.

About.com has hundreds of areas that need someone to write about them. The catch is that they don't want one article on foot disease, they want an expert who can write two articles a month on foot disease with a weekly blog.

So when you go to beaguide.about.com, look for a category you know about and can write about consistently. They offer a minimum of \$725 a month, but depending on how popular your area is, you could make up to \$100,000 a year.

Before you get too excited, about.com is going to want to see writing samples. If you are published already, that is going to help you a lot. Ever notice the base newspaper, the community paper and the local newspaper? They all need writers. The pay is liable to be minimal at first.

I convinced a local paper that they needed a film critic and they said they needed an advertising sales person. I became the highest paid person at the *Southlake Journal* because I was selling ads and writing reviews. Of course, being the highest paid person at a little newspaper isn't that big of an accomplishment, but it can open other doors and teach you the trade.

If you are looking for a solid job think insurance. Every insurance claim needs an adjuster to evaluate it and resolve it. Getting your foot in the door means getting an adjuster's license.

Some insurance companies will even help you get through the necessary training. Your aim is to get hired by a national insurance company.

It may take sweating out a year at a small firm to get the experience you need to make it to the national companies, but use that year to learn as much as you can and to network with as many people in your industry as you can. They will know about openings at other companies before the listings hit monster.com.

Then when your family is transferred, you can either get a transfer within your own insurance company or to another national company that has an opening.

Knowing yourself, your limitations and your expectations is crucial to finding rewarding work. ●