

Teach Yourself and Enjoy a More Rewarding Career in a More Desirable Location with a Better Quality of Life

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Many people find themselves torn between the attractions of two desirable locations. I'm one of them.

I love to visit Hawaii. After I'm there for a little while, I find myself missing Boston where I usually live. The two locations are about 5,000 miles apart so my excursions to Hawaii are infrequent except when I am fortunate enough to be on a consulting or speaking assignment there. As a result, I'm much more often yearning for Hawaii on cold winter nights in New England than I am lying on Waikiki pining for the Boston Marathon on Patriot's Day.

If the distance between attractive locations is small enough, you can spend extensive amounts of time in both places. I learned that lesson when I took a great job at a company located in a beautiful little town about 120 miles from my home. The "commute" took about an hour and forty-five minutes each way during good weather. Eventually, I couldn't bear all the driving. I quit my job and started a consulting firm.

As you can imagine, I wanted to avoid travel. At first, I only accepted consulting clients located within 10 miles of my home. My basic love of travel caused me to reverse that policy after a couple of years to include a few of my favourite places. I was soon going back and forth to my old haunts, but much less frequently than before. My first Hawaiian assignment followed in 1979.

When the U.S. economy weakened in the early 1980s, I learned that business conditions were still strong in California's Silicon Valley, another of my favorite places, and I shifted almost all my practice to serving clients there, 2,700 miles from home. Every other week I flew to northern California on Sunday night and returned on the "red eye" overnight flight on Saturday morning. I eventually established an office near Stanford University and recruited a great group of Californians to work there, and my travel was reduced a bit.

While in California, I met with as many CEOs as possible. Imagine my surprise when I learned that one Silicon Valley CEO lived in London, England and commuted across the Atlantic and North America every weekend. He regaled me with stories of what he did with his frequent flyer miles, and we swapped all-too-familiar tales about how to stay alert on Saturdays after being up most of the night before on a plane.

I thought the CEO's long commute was pretty remarkable at the time. I'm sure you agree. Clearly, leading such a life was a young person's folly.

Imagine then my surprise when 20 years later one of my best friends became a weekly commuter between the southern United States and London, England. Although my friend was far from a young man, he was committed to indefinitely keeping up this hectic travel schedule across the pond. As I watched the bags under his eyes grow to rival those he carried onto the first-class cabin of his favorite airline, I was reminded that such regular long-distance travel should be avoided.

A better approach is to spend long periods of time, ideally several years, in each place ... rather than scurrying back and forth every few days or weeks. Unfortunately, most people in such circumstances don't have the luxury to choose one location or the other because their careers demand shuttle flights over long distances.

While sitting on cross-country flights, I have often wondered how someone who is attracted by two great places could find ways to alternate living in first one and then the other for several years at a time. I was delighted when Ms. Gudrun Adam, a Rushmore University MBA graduate, taught me how she accomplished this enviable result.

Let me introduce you to her and explain how she did it. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised by the answer.

Ms. Adam is a native of Germany. While she was in elementary school, her father frequently moved the family to take new academic jobs. While many youngsters dislike being uprooted from their friends, that wasn't the case for Ms. Adam. She loved the changes because it gave her a chance to meet new people, to learn new ways, and to explore new opportunities.

She briefly settled down in one part of Germany while she attended high school, and it seemed for awhile that moving wouldn't play much of a role in her future. Delighted with what she was learning from her high school teachers, she chose to major in English and French.

Before long, she was tutoring other students to earn some spending money. Deciding that she wanted to take a trip abroad, she also took a job at a local restaurant at age 14 to earn enough money to pay her own way.

After enjoying her first trip abroad, Ms. Adam became interested in serving as a diplomat. To prepare, she began a seven-year law program that included studies in the north German city of Kiel, Paris, and Munich. Devoting an intensive semester to being part of a winning moot court team was a highlight of her legal studies.

While studying law, her interests changed again. Upon graduation, she shifted focus and took a job as a sales and marketing trainee. She did well and was soon appointed to be head of worldwide advertising for Pirelli Motorcycle Tyres.

Just three years after her law school graduation, Ms. Adam decided to check out Australia by working there. At first she did contract work, but she soon found a permanent job as an account manager for a Sydney-based advertising firm, Foster Nunn Loveder, responsible for Audi, Volkswagen, Seiko, and the *Australian Financial Review*.

She found working for clients to be much more challenging than hiring advertising agencies as she had done at Pirelli. As a non-native speaker of English, it also took her awhile to understand all the humorous things her clients and colleagues said.

After just three years in Australia, Ms. Adam was appointed as the marketing manager for Audi Australia, where she quickly established a marketing department from scratch. She worked long hours for Audi Australia but felt the effort was worth it after receiving awards from Audi AG on behalf of her team for best improvement in market performance and communications.

Mr. C. K. Liew, Audi Australia's CEO at the time, provided a lasting benefit when he taught her to follow the Montessori Way, "help to teach

yourself.” From that time onward, she subscribed to the Montessori philosophy and continually worked on improving her ability to master new knowledge and skills. As a result, her career choices dramatically improved.

After just a year, Ms. Adam established a small consulting firm with a friend. The two of them assisted a dot-com firm, a software developer, and the Audi dealer network with their marketing.

Her husband’s career then changed, sending the family first to Germany and later to the United States for three years. Despite being a busy mother, she worked part-time at first as a marketing consultant in Germany, and later as a cross-cultural trainer in the States, providing services to Global Assignees being relocated to different countries.

As time passed, the Adam family yearned for Australia, and Ms. Adam began to think about what kind of career she would like to have there. She realized that she also loved Europe and wanted to have a home there, as well, travelling back and forth as her family’s interests and the seasons dictated. This two-continent life style would be easiest to accomplish if her next job was a high-paying one, and she could eventually afford to retire while still quite young.

Having always planned to learn more about business, she decided it was time to earn an MBA degree and to use her studies to establish the knowledge and credentials needed to switch from marketing into human resources (HR) management. To boost her credibility further after becoming an MBA, she earned a certificate as a Global Professional in Human Resources from the largest human resources organization in the United States, SHRM.

Although Ms. Adam’s business experience was in marketing and she had worked part-time for a decade, she succeeded in making a rapid transition into being an HR professional and was appointed as the Human Resources Officer for Audi Australia in Sydney where she is enjoying the challenges.

I asked her what role earning an MBA online played in helping her to switch careers and return to Australia. She said that the degree gave her the confidence and skills to dive right back into the workforce.

Here's her advice if you want to move forward faster in your career and to head to a place where you would love to live:

“Go for advanced online degrees and certificates! It is a great experience. Your life is permanently enriched. You are able to master handling much more difficult challenges. You can also study at your own pace so your courses fit in with rest of your life.”

Here are a few other lessons that I see for you from her experience:

1. Travel around the world when you get the chance so you can find out if there are places you like better than the ones you know.
2. Try living for a few months in the place you liked best during the visits.
3. Make connections with the people there.
4. Think about what kinds of work would best serve your family's needs and your personal goals.
5. Consider what skills would open up the most attractive geographical and career doors.
6. Start learning the new skills and how to become your own teacher whenever you need to again learn new skills!

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