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Relocation Trends: Follow the Money and the Jobs -- To Small Cities?

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By **Carol Berman**



It's a big decision to pull roots and move for a job, whether the move involves one person or an entire family. But tough times call for tough measures, and according to Challenger, Grey and Christmas, the second quarter of 2009 saw the most job relocations since 2006 -- 18.2 percent of job seekers relocated for new positions.

Sometimes you just have to go where the jobs are. But instead of checking job listings, you might want to research the hot spots for business development. If you're lucky, you could beat the trend, and find work.

The **Boyd Company**, based in Princeton, N.J., works with companies to find ideal locations for growth, expansion, or relocation. John Boyd Jr. says the trend is toward smaller markets with colleges and decent access to airports and health care -- places like Sioux Falls, S.D. and Boise, Idaho. According to Boyd, it costs 30 percent less to open and run a business in Sioux Falls than in New York City.

"We live in an era of cost-cutting and consolidations. There's a trend away from expensive markets," Boyd says. "People will go where the jobs are."

Hot spots in the U.S.A.

That said, business development sometimes can be a double-edged sword -- not everyone can just pick up and move when the company moves. Sometimes, companies just want to hire locally in their new cities. But, on the plus side, the cost of living in these smaller cities is far below big cities. For example, an employee making \$65,000 in New York City would only need to make \$34,112 in Boise, ID to maintain the same standard of living.

Other new hot spots according to Boyd include:

1. Las Vegas: It's no longer just a gaming mecca. It's becoming a leading health-care community. Just last year, the highly-regarded **Cleveland Clinic** opened the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas.
2. Other cities primed for explosion: Albuquerque, N.M., Omaha, Neb., Des Moines, Iowa, and Washington state. Also, Boyd says that South Florida is set for a rebound.
3. Hot states include those with no income tax including Texas, Florida, and Nevada.

Things heading up in South Dakota

Sioux Falls was long known as a meatpacking town. But now, the city has diversified to

include health care, financial services, credit card processing and retail. The largest employers are competitors in the health-care space: Sanford Health (7,200 workers) and Avera Health (5,200 people).

Weigh In

Would you be willing to relocate for a job?

Yes, even if I had to pay for it.

Yes, but only if the company paid for it.

No

"It's easy to say our success is based on our business and tax climate," says Dan Hindbjorgen of the [Sioux Falls Development Corporation](#). "However, we have a well trained, well educated work force. We have job opportunities here. We are able to show employers that we have people to meet their needs."

With an unemployment rate of 5 percent, no state income tax, and a median home price of \$137,000, the city is relatively affordable. There are 13 colleges, universities, and trade schools in the area, including a medical school. Annual events include a German Fest, JazzFest and RibFest, and Sioux Falls is known for hunting and fishing.

Location, location, location

For bi-coastal companies, Sioux Falls is in the middle of the country on I-90, a major interstate connecting Boston and Seattle. But flights tend to originate from bigger cities such as Minneapolis and Denver. For industries that require call centers, that Midwestern "no accent" speech pattern is approachable. Being in the Midwest is considered safer than the coasts for data centers.

Some companies and employees will still pay for the fancier addresses of the big cities. But with higher unemployment, the jobs may be slower in coming.

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