

The Benefits of Professional Networking

Enriching your career as a relocation professional



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Having worked in the relocation field under the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Uniform Act) for over 20 years, I am continually amazed at the wide variety of displacees that we encounter as relocation professionals. The range of businesses and cultural backgrounds of residential tenants and owners seems endless, making the relocation field both challenging and rewarding.

However, no matter how long someone has been practicing relocation—no one has “seen it all.” The different factual circumstances in each relocation case make the application of the Uniform Act entirely unique.

Beginners in relocation often ask how to effectively analyze the ever-changing landscape of relocation cases and all the details that must be considered in order to determine benefits. Where to

begin on a case and how to handle it are two of the most common questions I am asked.

Learn How to Network

My first response to these newcomers is to start by studying the Uniform Act and participating in IRWA training. These two undertakings are the foundations for any new relocation professional’s understanding and career growth.

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However, there is a third crucial career building block—it is the informal network of other relocation professionals who are available both nationally and internationally. Because no one has “been there and done everything,” both new and seasoned relocation practitioners can benefit from the experience of others. You will likely find that someone, somewhere, has relocated a similar business or worked with residential displacees in a similar situation to the one you are facing. The question then becomes where to find that individual and can they help?

Finding the Right Mentors

IRWA has several tools to help connect you with a relocation professional that can assist. A good start for “newbies” is to join the IRWA Young Professionals Group, which aims to help newer professionals deal with common challenges and help them get acquainted with mentors. Members of the YP Group are exposed to different disciplines within right of way so that they can get a well-rounded picture of the industry.

But you don’t have to be a young professional to take advantage of IRWA’s vast relocation knowledge. One of the primary repositories of relocation experience and information

can be found in IRWA’s Relocation Community of Practice (Relo CoP), which is open to all IRWA members. The Relo Cop can be easily joined online through IRWA’s Member Network.

After joining, the relocation professional will have access to a wealth of relocation resources. One of the most vital resources is an open forum where questions can be posted and replied to by other members. By posting your question in this open forum, you are tapping into the experience and knowledge of over 150 relocation practitioners. The Relo CoP is one of the most active CoPs, and it is likely that someone in the group will give you guidance on your question. It should be noted, however, that answers given in the open forum are from members’ own experiences, and those inquiring should always coordinate with their displacing agency and funding source before implementing any solution suggested on the site.

The site also has an extensive resource library with commentary on various relocation subjects. This is a good place to obtain basic information on your topic before asking a detailed question. There are also a number of “how-to” guides that may be accessed on topics such as relocation planning and farm relocation.

Get to Know Us

The Relo CoP generally holds a Spring and Fall meeting to determine what annual projects they will work on and what educational sessions may be presented at the IRWA Annual Education Conference. The locations of these meetings vary from year to year.

The group allows time for professional and business networking at these functions. Informal group activities such as tours of the host city are also conducted. In between these activities, members present and discuss the relocation issues they are currently working on in their day-to-day practice. Various opinions and perspectives are given and practical advice is shared about a variety of relocation issues. Previews of any upcoming regulatory or other legal changes are also presented.

While building a career in relocation, training and on-the-job experience are key. Yet, creating and tapping into an informal support network is also essential—and IRWA offers a variety of ways to get connected. Needless to say, taking advantage of these IRWA opportunities will help any relocation professional looking to advance and enrich their career. ☺



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