

HOORAY, I GOT AN OFFER! OH NO, I GOT AN OFFER! Some Things to Consider...

You've done your homework, you got your references and notified your school that you're considering moving on, your flights are booked, your hotel room is reserved, you've taken days off from school, you've broached the subject of "moving away" with your parents or your grown children or the kids you'll be taking with you.

All of the above, however, may have been the easy part...now comes the decision-making time. If you're one of the lucky ones, you will be offered and accept a position while you're at a Job Fair. For many of you, however, you may not get the offers at the fair, but sometime after the fair. For others, you may get offers as a result of further email exploration you do...and for still others, you may get your offers at another Search Fair later in the academic year. No matter when it comes...the offer requires a great deal of thought!

Can it feel overwhelming? Yes!

- Will you figure it out? Absolutely!
- Will your Senior Associate be there to guide and advise you when you need her/him? Positively!
- Will you make the right decision? If you have the right tools at hand, take the time the decision deserves, and give it all the important thoughtfulness required...of course you will!
- What are these tools?!?! Please read on...
- One of the most common mistakes job searchers make is to not have anything on which to base a decision.
- "Of course, I know how to make a decision", you say to yourself, "I've been dreaming about this for years"!
- Indeed you have. But dreaming about it and being faced with the reality of the decision making can be worlds apart!

In order to be prepared to weigh the benefits and suitability of any job offer, you MUST have something against which to measure what it is you're being offered. Most of us will try to make a decision from our gut...or based on what other people think is the right thing for us to do. We can feel pressured by any number of players in the decision-making process. We can feel constrained by the timeline which for most, feels way too short for such an important decision. We are expert at playing "head games" on ourselves, convinced that we can sort out the right answer by just thinking about it. Proceed with caution on that count. One of the best and most important things you can do for yourself, to help make a well considered decision, is to write things down! No fair just saying you've made the lists in your head. Our heads can be an extremely murky and ever-changing field of play when making this sort of life decision. Give yourself the gift of some quiet time with some well-planned list making! You will be glad you did...no matter how tedious it may feel when initially considering it. The list that I'm going to suggest can become your adult job search equivalent to a well-worn and much-loved security blanket. Use it and be glad that you did.

Imagine that you've been offered a job. It's in a country you're thrilled about. You felt you really connected with the Head of school and any teachers from the school that you've been able to speak to. You have the support of your friends and family. The position sounds good...you think...but do you really know what the position is? Have you gotten information about the package? Have you seen a contract? Do you know the timeline that you're on for responding to the offer? What if you don't like it? What if it's too far away? What if you can't save money? What if there are not books or materials. What if the host country nationals don't like expatriates? What if...what if...what if...and down the ever-spinning spiral you go!

Let's replay this now. Imagine that you've been offered a job.* You've collected as much information as you possibly can about the offer. This will include what your teaching assignment(s) will be, what the package will look like. What the timeline will be. Who your contact person at the school will be from this point forward? This list goes on...the more information you have to begin with, the better a decision you will make. But wait...something's missing. How will you know, if what you're offered speaks to YOUR needs and what you're hoping to find? You can take a guess at it in your head, and probably make a good decision. OR...you can be prepared with a list of those things that are important to you in your next position/home, and have a great format against which to weigh the offer. Now, that feels lots better!

My advice to you is this. Take some nice quiet time with a cup of tea or coffee, a glass of wine, or a bottle of scotch...whatever helps you to think best and most clearly...put on some quiet music, make sure you're alone, and be brutally, totally honest with yourself. What is it that you're looking for in your next job? Begin by creating a list that covers three major areas of what you're hoping to find on this next leg of your journey. These should include what you want Professionally, Personally and Financially (PP&F). The list is for YOU and only you, unless, of course, you find it helpful when you're doing your decision making to share it with a friend, or your Associate, or someone who helps you sort through decisions. Nothing you write down has to be shared with anyone...so be very straight with yourself. Remember, that you could see these lists from ten or twenty or one hundred people, and while they'll all have some similarities, they'll all be different. What Teacher A needs and wants, is not necessarily what Teacher B needs and wants. It's these differences that make faculties such interesting groups of individuals. This is YOUR decision...make it for what works for YOU.

I have provided you with a form that you are welcome to use...or make your own...if you're an artist, decorate it...if you're a scribbler, scribble on it...if you're a cook, dribble on it...it's yours to use as you see fit...but use it! While I cannot guarantee that it will make the decision for you (of course it won't...YOU have to make the decision)...I can assure you that by using it, or something similar, it will put you on the right track to making these all important and incredibly exciting decisions that await your attention.

A second list of which I'm a big fan is a Pros and Cons (P&C) list for each and every offer you receive. What I've found through my years of career counseling, however, is that the P&C list as a standalone, does not do the trick. BUT, once you've done your PP&F list, then you'll have something to measure the pros and cons against...and only then does the P&C list become a truly helpful tool.

One final thought about all this. Lists, no matter how much time you give to them, and how well designed they are, are only lists. Do not ignore those inner feelings in your tummy and/or the little voices in your head. If you make a decision based solely on what you've come up with in black and white, and then with pros and cons, but it doesn't feel right to you...listen to that voice inside. Pay attention to it...find someone you trust to discuss the "disconnect" with...and you'll find your decision.

Finally...no seriously...this time it really is...for now, anyway...educators have been making these important decisions about overseas teaching positions for years...at job fairs...under pressure...feeling confused...feeling excited...all the things you might feel during this upcoming Fair. They made their decisions, they've accepted positions, they've gone off to live fabulous adventures and do some of the best teaching ever. Rest assured...you will do the same.

*Make sure that what you think is a job offer, REALLY is a job offer. As strange as it might sound to you, if you think you've been offered a job, ask the individual interviewing you, "Is this a job offer?" In the excitement and pressure cooker atmosphere of a recruitment fair...we can sometimes THINK that a job has been offered, when really, what's happening is the recruiter musing to her/himself, "you'd fit in really well in our community" ...or something of that nature. Clarify!

