



WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Alison Van Dalen, Pricoa Relocation & ARP Chair



Originally my career started as a Home Economics teacher, working for 3 years in South London. After that I went to the Middle East for 10 years spending time in Dubai, Bahrain and Abu Dhabi as a Corporate Expat's wife.

When I returned to the UK I wanted to find something to do part-time and some friends suggested Relocation. They themselves were relocated by Karen Deane Relocations and gave me the number to call - the rest as they say is history!

I spent two years on the road as a Home Search Consultant and was then asked to take on the full time role of managing the Home Search team. Karen

Deane was always - and with the Pricoa label still is - the only Relocation Company to have its own exclusive team of consultants on the payroll. I was then invited to become a Director of the Company in November 1990. In May 2001 we were acquired by Prudential and in 2003 rebranded as Pricoa.

We are now a Global Relocation Management Company covering virtually every service possible, but we still retain the boutique DSP side to our business and, of the 20 Home Search consultants who work for us, 10 have been with us for a decade.

As Karen Deane, most of our work was in London and the Home Counties, but we now cover the whole of EMEA, with a supplier network throughout the whole of the UK and EMEA. However, the majority of our work is still in the usual suspect areas of central London.

The main change in the industry over the years is definitely on the financial side where companies are trying to keep relocation costs as low as possible - Company Lets are not very common anymore and most Assignees are on a total package where they determine how much they will spend on housing etc rather than having a housing allowance and all their bills paid for by the company. Those packages still exist but are definitely in the minority.

I think there will be more of this change in 2009 as companies look to cut costs even more. Also the Relocation packages will be cut down - 5 days to 3 days - 3 days to 1 day etc. Length of time allowed in temporary accommodation will be reduced to cut costs which, in turn, puts more pressure on us as DSP's to find housing and move people into their accommodation within a specific time frame. Often this can be part of an SLA so puts huge pressure on us. All clients are looking for lower fees with no reduction in service, whilst overheads are increasing.

The greatest challenge at the moment is to manage the expectations of the Assignees and to deliver the good quality service we are known for, in a shorter time frame. All of them are under the assumption that there are huge deals to be had and that rents have dropped dramatically. But the fact is that the good properties are still holding their value. Agents need to educate their Landlords, especially the new ones who have been forced to let because they can't sell, that it is the properties which are in good condition which will go quickly!

Question: What would I like to see changed in the industry?

Answer: To see all Estate Agents being regulated!