

## **A Commuting Marriage?**

A colleague asks for your advice on a major life and career decision he is facing. Two years ago he was fired from his job at a company in Madison, Wisconsin for having publicly “blown the whistle” on some unethical activities by high level managers after efforts to solve the problems internally had failed. His wife and two young children, then ages 9 and 6, loved living in Madison, which is often appropriately rated as “the most livable city in the United States.” Madison is an extremely friendly and beautiful city with a population of 200,000, spread out on an isthmus between two lakes. It has a wonderful family environment, hardly any crime, and the best public school system in the nation. Indeed, his wife had no desire to move from Madison. They lived there for ten years and she had a great job and several very close friends. Nonetheless, she moved with her husband when he accepted a particularly challenging, and fulfilling, job in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Your colleague knew his wife was miserable living in the Bridgeport area, despite her new great job, and longed for mid-western hospitality. But, he was shocked a month ago when she demanded that the family move back to Madison. Both children also wanted to move back to Madison, having missed their friends and being treated like outsiders the past two years. During the past month, her desire to move grew even more intense and she has decided to move back to Madison with the kids whether he likes it or not. There is no place else in the entire country she wants to live. Since they were married, she moved four times because of his job, and now wants him to do the same for her.

Meanwhile, your colleague has had a wonderful time at his job in Bridgeport, and is very committed to the company, its employees, and customers. He has accomplished a lot already and is involved in several fascinating new projects that could benefit many people. These projects would end if he quit his job.

In addition, your colleague is very unlikely to find a job in his profession back in Madison given the extensive media coverage of his whistleblowing activities just two years ago. His former employer is by far the largest in the city. He could change careers, but even then many people may still hesitate to employ him. His activities were widely covered in newspapers throughout the city and state, and caused a major public relations problem for his previous employer. Nonetheless, his wife has already been told that she could have her previous \$50,000 a year job back, which is almost sufficient income for the entire family. Importantly, your colleague has been very involved in the daily life of his children. He loves them dearly and has no desire to obtain a divorce or force the kids to stay in Connecticut. His employer has already agreed to allow him to take one week off every month to be with his family.

Should your colleague move back to Madison with his wife and children or should he keep his wonderful job in Bridgeport and commute to Madison (about 2,000 miles west of Bridgeport) by airplane one week every month for the next year on a trial basis?

What would you recommend? Why?