Sunrise Medical Outsourced Relocation to a Single, Full-Service Vendor to Save Time and Manage Costs

Sunrise Medical, one of the world’s largest manufacturers of home-care products, had challenges with managing multiple vendors for relocation. They decided to consolidate all their relocation needs with a single vendor—Cartus—to improve efficiency and, perhaps more importantly, ensure better and more consistent cost management of its program.

The Challenge

Annie Middlebrook, senior human resources manager, has overseen Sunrise’s relocation program from the company’s worldwide headquarters in Carlsbad, California, since mid-2004. Shortly after she undertook that responsibility, Sunrise required a number of simultaneous employee moves. “Suddenly,” she says, “what should have been a very small portion of my job became a very big portion.”

At the time, Middlebrook’s biggest challenge was managing multiple vendors. “We had three household-goods vendors that rotated through our program,” she explains. “Counseling 10 or 12 relocating associates at one time, answering their questions, and dealing with three separate vendors was very time-consuming. Outsourcing the operation to one vendor was key.”

Expense processing was another issue. “People requested reimbursement for their house-hunting trips, for example, on regular expense reports, without coding them as move-related expenses,” says Middlebrook. “By not tracking those often substantial amounts as relocation costs, we were unable to determine the true cost of our relocation program.”

Accurate and consistent cost management, therefore, became the tipping point for Sunrise to take action. “That’s when we seriously looked at outsourcing,” she says. “And when Cartus said it could handle expense processing for us, I was happy to say, ‘Here you go.’”

Enter Cartus, the Single Outsource Provider

Since its inception in 1983, Sunrise grew rapidly and today has 2,400 employees, working in offices and manufacturing facilities throughout the United States and Europe, as well as in Canada, Mexico, and Australia. About one percent of those employees relocate each year. Nearly all involve domestic moves within North America; a few relocate between Europe and the United States.

In early 2006, Sunrise outsourced its entire relocation program to Cartus, which already managed the home-selling piece of Sunrise’s relocation policy. “We wanted to partner with a company that understood our culture, recognized the burden of moving a family, and showed compassion to our associates,” says Middlebrook.

Sunrise’s relocation program is supported by a Cartus team that specifically focuses on companies that have a limited number of moves each year.

“Based on our long-term relationship with Cartus, coupled with feedback from people who had benefited from our home-buying program, we knew it would be a good outsourcing partnership.” Cartus now manages a four-tier relocation policy for Sunrise, which may include the Buyer Value Option for some employees. “It’s a full-service program,” says Middlebrook. “I simply authorize the service, indicate whether the associate is a renter or home buyer, and then the employee goes through the designated program.”

Contacting Cartus

For more information, please contact your Cartus representative, or send an email to: deliveringmore@cartus.com
The Benefits: Saving Time and Managing Costs

For Middlebrook, outsourcing is a tremendous timesaver. “I now have a 20-minute conversation to initiate an associate into the program, explain the relocation policy, and mention that someone from Cartus will be calling—and that’s it. Everything goes through Cartus, including all expense processing.” Sunrise receives detailed reports from Cartus that allows Middlebrook to see, line by line, every cost item for every relocating associate. “And by analyzing costs correctly and consistently,” she notes, “we make better decisions regarding our program.”

Sunrise relocated 28 associates in 2006, including two international moves from Europe to the United States. “As our business changes, the potential for more international moves is always there. It really depends on how our markets change. Sunrise believes in moving talent and exposing people to growth positions, so I would not rule out a future increase in moves between international destinations and the United States.”