



SNAP Shot: Jennie Zehmer



I am the Owner of Here to Home, Inc. **with locations in** Philadelphia, PA; Raleigh, NC and Hickory, NC.

I have been a Senior Move Manager for 3 1/2 years.

Before I was a senior move manager I was an exhibitionist. No, it's not what you think . . . I led museum exhibition projects: designing exhibitions, managing logistics of traveling shows, overseeing construction, and directing exhibit development (idea-generating).

I got into this business for two reasons. I was burnt out in museums. They say a camel is a horse designed by committee and I was getting tired of meetings, meetings, meetings and seeing good ideas picked to death. I was exhausted. The last project I worked on was the "King Tut" exhibition: 27, 53' trucks, 20,000 sq ft, complete installation in 5 weeks. It was the most visited traveling exhibition in the world in 2007. I spent hours standing in the cold on loading docks and in front of my Excel sheet, making sure the budget and schedules were kept. I was exhausted. Secondly, I had the opportunity to help my parents move from vertical living (a house with a stairwell) to a home on one level. "Old Arthur" (arthritis) was getting at my Dad's knees and he just couldn't get up and down the stairs. This was the house I was married in, so I understand about helping people leave a home they love. But I also understand about making a NEW home. My parents have been in their new home for 4 years, and it is hard to believe they ever lived anywhere else.

Right now the greatest challenge in my business is having three locations. It's like having three wind-up monkeys banging their cymbals. I shift from monkey to monkey, winding each up so it keeps running.

This profession has taught me a smile can go a long way. I see the stress and worry in my clients' faces. I see their worries as a gift to me. What do you do when given a gift? I smile and say thank you, knowing we can put their mind at ease. If I can manage the move for King Tut, I can manage their move – and their things are just as precious.

I grew up in rural Virginia and moved away from small town mentality as soon as I could, living in the big cities on the Atlantic Seaboard and traveling all over the world. It makes me appreciate HOME. Thus my business name, "Here to Home."

I will never ask a client to do any lifting, carrying, or moving boxes or furniture. I tell our clients, "We are the hands for your decisions." I will never ask a client to hire us if they don't see the value in what we do. If they have too many objections to the price or the service, then I won't force them to hire us.

My work in designing exhibitions for museums actually helped me prepare for this career. That work was essentially about imaging a place (ideating about an exhibition topic) and then bringing it into reality. Not so different from what we SMMs do – imagine a new home and then make that new home happen. It's a combination of dreaming and real-life implementation.

The one senior move job I will never forget is one of my first clients. She lived in an apartment where she had to climb a set of stairs. Her husband died a year before (she nursed him through cancer) and her sons honestly didn't know how to help her move. They were just clueless; loving, but clueless. We did what we do so well (You know, sort, donate, sell, pack, unpack) and she looked so relieved to be in her new home – and it REALLY felt like home, not just some stuff we moved, but really like home. She died a year later and her son asked my husband (who is a pastor) to conduct her funeral. It was such a touching gesture.

If my life had a soundtrack it would be like any movie, a little bit of everything: the oldies piece, the classical piece, the modern expansive piece, and the dramatic piece. If my life had a theme song it would be "I Like to Move It Move It," the original version by Reel to Real.

My favorite movie is usually the one I've just seen and we just saw "A Town Called Panic" a stop-action foreign film where Cowboy, Indian and Cavallo all live together. And they literally panic about EVERYTHING. Hilarious!

My favorite place I've ever visited is Tuscany (what a hoity-toity answer!) I spent a glorious summer there when I was younger. It is what I imagine heaven will be like.

I refuse to "let the turkeys get me down." We have a choice when it comes to our attitudes and our reactions to circumstances and 'turkeys' that come our way. No sweat.

I believe this business is all about "creating home." I tell my clients (AND their families) that this is an illogical move. They can take whatever they want as long as we follow the laws of Physics: 2 objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time. In other words, it fits in the floor plan. Home is a comfortable, illogical place – never the same for different people.

I'm good at Senior Move Management because I don't take it so seriously. Yes, we are accountable and responsible for people's stuff and for making a comfortable home. However, to make it a stress-free move, we ourselves need to appear stress-free. A little humor can diffuse any stressful situation. This CAN be fun!!

When I'm not doing Senior Move Management, I'm being a mom to our two fabulous kids and being a preacher's wife – something I never imagined I would be and if you met me, you would never imagine me as a preacher's wife!