

INTERVIEW WITH JOE BLACK: HOW THE AMERICAN MADE A NEW START IN DÖBELN

Joseph D. Black grew up in Washington D.C., studied Business Administration at the University of Maryland and later Music Business at Omega Recording Studios in Rockville, Maryland. In 2005, he met his wife, who is from Central Saxony and was working as an au pair in his home country at the time. They became a couple and lived together in his hometown for several years. With the addition to their family, they thought about moving to Germany for a number of reasons. In an interview with Nestbau coordinator Helen Bauer, Mr. Black discusses his motives and talks about the challenges he faced on his way to Central Saxony. He appreciates very special things about his new home and gives advice on integration.

Mr. Black, your wife first contacted us in December 2016. What situation were you in at that time?

We both lived together for several years in Washington D.C. I am American and was born there. I met my wife, who was born in Central Saxony, during her time as an au pair. In March 2016, we had our little daughter, which made us realize that we would prefer to live in my wife's native Germany.

What were the reasons for moving?

She was offered the opportunity to move into her family's apartment building. In the USA, a larger loan would have been required for a house. The family and financial prospects therefore persuaded us to move the center of our lives to Central Saxony.

In addition, the healthcare system works much better for us in Germany, and in our opinion this also applies to the daycare and school system. But we also had some unresolved special questions and sought help from the Nestbau-Zentrale on the advice of friends.

What questions did you ask the service-center?

We had very different questions. It was important for me to find a job, because I couldn't continue working in my previous American company from Germany. My wife was employed by an American global company after her time as an au pair. Therefore, the job change for her only took place within her company and she didn't have to go job hunting.

We were also interested in family-related topics, such as how to apply for child benefit.

How we can exchange our American driver's license in Germany and how things work with my residence permit as an American were also open questions for us.

What did the support look like in concrete terms?

As we were still living in the USA at the time and therefore had a big time difference compared to Germany, we were always in contact by email and received specific answers to our questions as well as job offers and application tips for me. The Nestbau-Zentrale clarified the issues with its network partners and passed the information on to us.

We are still very grateful to our family and the Nestbau-Zentrale for this. In 2016, it was a great relief for us to know that we had this support, because our move date was fixed: we wanted to move into our new home in May 2017 and there were still many issues that needed to be clarified before then.

How did you find your way as an immigrant in our district?

My advantage was that I had already lived in Frankfurt am Main with my wife for a few years from 2008-2014. During that time, I took language courses up to level B2. My work in marketing and sales at the time also required me to speak and write a lot of German, which helped me a lot. In my opinion, it is extremely important to constantly improve your language skills. To get used to the culture here, I did a lot with people from here. And I was and still am open to adapting to new ways of life. These qualities are helpful when settling into a new region.

Were you able to integrate professionally?

Initially, trial days at regional companies helped me to immerse myself in the job world in Central Saxony. However, it wasn't easy for me to find a regional job in employment. I was accepted several times in job interviews - and then never heard anything about it again. So at the beginning of our time in Central Saxony, I decided to work as a freelancer. So I worked freelance and took on various jobs from clients, including some from the USA. You can work very well remotely in the retail & marketing sector, this means from anywhere in the world.

How did you come to found your own company?

Life is about doing what makes us happy and what we believe in. Since employment didn't work out, I took the risk and founded my own company - Joe Black Marketing Solutions. With my company, I support my customers in the area of online marketing or set up online stores for them and accompany them in the area of sales. Incidentally, I also benefit from the service provided by the Nestbau-Zentrale. For example, I received information about entrepreneur workshops at the Chemnitz Chamber of Industry and Commerce or regional exchange meetings with other newcomers. I even made new customer contacts there recently.

How does your life in Central Saxony look like today?

My wife has a job in the region, our daughter goes to school here and I have an office in Döbeln. A trainee has already worked for me, which makes me very proud. We can say that we have arrived very well.

What do you particularly appreciate about your new home?

What I notice in contrast to big cities is that people in rural areas are friendlier. When I go to the doctor here, he takes time for me. I feel more comfortable and can connect with people more easily. We have the same feeling at our daughter's elementary school, which we are very happy about.

What do you recommend to other people who want to move in?

Try to adapt to the culture and be open to new things. However, always remain true to yourself and your character and do not lose sight of your original origins. Don't let things that are out of your control upset you. And the Nestbau-Zentrale can help you with numerous resources to make your dream of starting your own business a reality.

Are you still in contact with the Nestbau-Zentrale today?

Yes, very often in fact! Over the years after the move, I've always had issues that I've been helped with. Even today, I still receive valuable event tips or seminar offers. As a freelancer, I enjoy taking part in networking events and further training opportunities for companies, which allows me to develop and meet great people!

Thanks for the interview, Mr. Black!

ALWAYS BEING OPEN TO NEW PATHS

