



BINDER, ELSTER, MENDELSON & WHEELER, INC.

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(301)657-1898, (301)652-4983

December 3, 1980

Ms. Kathryn Taylor
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
MNBB 3208

Dear Kathy:

Here is the final report for Career Counseling Contract
#ADM-79-387.

I would be happy to discuss it with you and/or with Peter
Goldman at our mutual convenience.

Hope all is well with you.

Sincerely,

Irene

FOIA-85-182

A/3



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CAREER AND LIFE PLANNING COUNSELING PROGRAM

Conducted by BINDER, ELSTER, MENDELSON & WHEELER, INC.

September 1979 to September 1980

for the

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Irene N. Mendelson
Project Director for
Binder, Elster, Mendelson & Wheeler, Inc.

THE PROGRAM

From September 1979 through September 1980, Binder, Elster, Mendelson & Wheeler, Inc., conducted a career and life planning counseling program for 117 persons: 66 men and 51 women. This program was under contract to the Management Development and Training Branch of NRC (Appendix III).

The individuals ranged in age from 19 to 60 and from grades 3 through SES. They were seen for a maximum of four fifty-minute individual sessions, a total of 376 hours.

The attitude of the counselees was one of appreciation and commitment. Regardless of sex and grade, few had ever had the opportunity to systematically examine their career goals. They used this chance to analyze their interests and skills and to plot directions for their future. The emphasis on understanding decision-making as a focal point in the career counseling process helped clients to plan steps to achieve career goals.

Throughout this process the participants were reminded that self-reliance was essential -- that they would leave the program having learned how to confront future choices and that this knowledge would give them flexibility about those aspects of their jobs and careers that they themselves were able to control. There was considerable emphasis on developing better communication skills between counselees and their co-workers and supervisors as an aid in career development and in life.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Employees can be grouped into categories based on their primary need for counseling.

1. Those who had a pressing need to plan for the future.

These individuals who make up over 50% of the counselees can be considered the goal-setters and are generally highly motivated and frequently self-directed. We found an additional component, however. Individuals spoke frequently of having gone as far as they could within the agency and having found themselves with neither further challenges nor place to advance.

2. Those who were dissatisfied with their current jobs due to specific job-environment factors such as inadequate recognition of the value of their work, difficulties with regard to supervisors, or the nature of the work itself.

3. Those who believed that they have been victims of age discrimination. For the most part these persons were in secretarial positions and based their opinion on the fact that they have been rejected for numerous jobs for which they believed themselves to have been qualified. Younger women were seen to move into jobs for which they also applied. There were fewer of these than in the past. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the percentage of women counseled was smaller.

4. Those who had few personal resources with which to begin gaining control over their lives. While these individuals were generally unhappy, their difficulties ranged from emotional problems to severely limited intellectual abilities. These surfaced during the counseling and they were encouraged to seek additional professional help in these areas.

5. Those with no specific overriding concerns. Among the reasons these people requested counseling were curiosity and a general wish to discuss their careers to determine whether there were any opportunities available to them. For the most part they simply needed an opportunity to validate the position in which they were staying. Many of these individuals participated in only one session.

Many people in all of the above categories believe their futures will depend on their learning better communication skills for use in daily contact with supervisors and subordinates. They expressed a desire to see such courses made available to NRC personnel.

Quite a few individuals in the mid-level grades expressed concern over whether work at NRC could continue to be meaningful in the future. This concern centers on the fact that they have very little feedback about what happens to their work once it is submitted and accepted. There is a frustration of rarely seeing the project completed. The worker's name almost never appears on the document or report. This leads to a morale problem in some offices.

Many workers at the GS 13-14 level expressed concern over their lack of upward mobility if they remain in technical areas. They describe a double bind -- they cannot become managers without either managerial experience or managerial training. They are, however, ineligible for training if they are in technical areas. They have been counseled to seek training outside the agency as one strategy to overcome this problem. The feeling that one is not valued if one is "just technical" has been expressed by a number of people. The other impression from clients is that management tends to be "military," e.g., handed down from above.

For many with supervisors in this mold, there are, as one person put it, "few pats, mostly kicks."

Areas for training which might be profitably explored at NRC are required courses for managers and supervisors in communication skills and in management by objective.

Assertiveness training for staff and supervisors (but separately) is a form of developing honest, direct communications. The worker is often afraid to ask the supervisor a direct question, and the supervisor often is unable to respond in a manner which facilitates growth and positive change.

Another suggestion might be a workshop in conflict resolution for the personnel of an office which has personnel problems, where the entire staff participates together under the guidance of a skilled group leader.

For people who do not take career counseling, there should be a regularly scheduled SF 171 group workshop which concentrates on resume writing skills geared specifically to the SF 171 -- perhaps two sessions with instruction and discussion in the first session and follow-up and critique in the second.

Not an institutional problem - individual

A problem which has always existed but which has become more manifest in this contract has been that of last minute cancellations. About one-fourth of appointments were "no shows" -- e.g., the appointment was either canceled too late to give the client credit for the time, or the individual did not bother to call us. In the coming contract, Binder, Elster, Mendelson & Wheeler, Inc., will try to emphasize more strongly the clients' responsibility to the counseling.

EVALUATION

Binder, Elster, Mendelson & Wheeler, Inc., distributed evaluation forms to each client at the end of the last session of counseling. Of the 117 persons who received the form, 39 were returned. The evaluations are appended to this report as is a breakdown of the responses (Appendix II).

APPENDIX I

TABLE ONE

Grade level of participants

Males 66		Females 49	
Grades	3	3	
	4	5	
	5	9	
	6	11	
	7	10	
	8	5	
	9	2	
	10		
	11	7	
	12	9	
	13	12	
	14	21	
	15	14	
	16	1	
	SES	1	
	Unknown	2	

TABLE TWO

Level of Education of participants

No statistics listed	6
High School graduate	27
Some college	17
College degree	28
Graduate degree	
M.S. or M.A.	28
Ph.D.	7

TABLE THREE

Number of Years of Government Service

No Information	2
Less than one year	9
1-4 years	29
5-9 years	36
10-14 years	22
15-19 years	9
Over 20 years	7

TABLE FOUR

Age Range of Participants

Under 21	2
21-30	38
31-40	40
41-50	22
51-60	7
Over 60	
Unknown	5

APPENDIX II

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES ON EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Please rate your growth in the following areas:	<u>Very High</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Very Low</u>
Increased awareness of your own abilities and limitations as they apply to your career goals	9	19	12		
Clarification of your career goals	2	25	11	2	
Knowledge of options available to you	3	21	15		
Ability to make career-related decisions	2	20	15	1	1
Job finding skills	5	16	13	3	
Confidence in making career-related decisions	3	21	20	1	

pretty heavy!

What other areas do you feel have been enhanced as a result of the career counseling?

Communications with supervisors and/or co-workers	12
Clarifications of values and priorities	32
Knowledge of job and/or occupational requirements	20
Others (Specify)	
How to package and sell oneself	
Apply for interviews and have interviews	
Initiative to improve position	
Self confidence	
Self awareness	
Understand self as a risk taker	
Knowledge of available resources (X118, DOT)	

During or since counseling, have you taken specific steps in your own behalf toward realizing greater potential?

34 Yes 4 No

What do you plan to do?

Courses through NRC	18
Courses through an outside educational institution	13
Work toward a degree	10
Specific career investigation	15
Application for other jobs within NRC	22
Initiating communications with supervisors about career-related questions	15
Initiating work with PMA about opportunities within NRC	3
Exploring options outside NRC	30
Other (Specify)	

- Develop improved 171
- Explore places for retirement
- Work toward a higher degree
- Work with supervisor to complete 2 year plan
- Explore government training and professional conferences
- Consider other geographical areas
- Take editorial course
- Improve house for investments

To what degree did you attain previously stated goals:

Much less than expected	1
Somewhat less than expected	7
Expected	20
Somewhat more than expected	22
Much more than expected	17

Goals attained which were previously unarticulated included:

- Self confidence
- Confidence in career growth at NRC
- Obtained direction
- Increase decision making ability
- Better understanding of family relationships and things which make me happy
- Identified problems in my working environment
- Learned to appreciate my own skills and talents



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APPENDIX III

CAREER AND LIFE PLANNING COUNSELING PROGRAM

Binder/Elster Associates will provide career and life planning counseling to employees of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission who have expressed an interest. The emphasis of the counseling will be on self-reliance and self-help. The outcome for each participant will be on the development of more specific career and life goals and the acquisition of skills useful throughout life in making career and life decisions. To achieve this, the counseling sessions will have as their objectives:

- * Increased awareness of skills, interests and aptitudes
- * Clarification of values and priorities
- * Increased understanding of obstacles to career planning and development
- * Short and Long-term goal setting
- * Increased ability to analyze jobs in functional terms
- * Acquisition of realistic information about the world of work
- * Increased knowledge of job requirements
- * Understanding of the process of making career decisions
- * Specific practice in making career related decisions

In addition to interviewing and counseling techniques, role playing will be used to increase effectiveness in career-related areas. A Vocational Interest Inventory will be administered, and the interpretation of test results will be an integral part of the counseling process.

The focus of the counseling will be on the individual counselee. Each person will participate in a maximum of 4 individual sessions of 50 minutes duration.