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MEMO TO: Lillian Van Santen, MDTs  
FROM: BEMW, Inc.  
DATE: JUNE 8, 1983  
SUBJECT: FINAL REPORT FOR CONTRACT YEAR ENDING MARCH 30, 1983  
ONGOING CONSULTATION AND LIAISON WITH NRC REGIONAL  
CAREER COUNSELING PROGRAMS

CONTRACT #ADM-82-358

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BEMW, INC.  
CAREER/LIFE PLANNING OPTIONS  
4948 St. Elmo Avenue  
Bethesda, MD 20814

## FINAL REPORT FOR CONTRACT YEAR ENDING MARCH 30, 1983

### NRC REGIONAL CAREER COUNSELING PROGRAM

#### INTRODUCTION

The NRC Regional Career Counseling Program was completed well within the contract time period, with two of the regions finishing the counseling by the end of the third quarter. In total 108 employees chose to take advantage of the opportunity for career counseling and 500 counseling hours were fulfilled. The program was enthusiastically received in all five regions and a substantial number of employees have placed their names on waiting lists to be seen during the subsequent contract. Although there has not been any formal study to determine the direct impact of the counseling program on present job performance, the evidence through informal, word-of-mouth and supervisory feedback seems to clearly indicate that employees who have participated in counseling demonstrate improved job performance through positive attitude, improved morale, clearer sense of direction, and greater ability to take charge of their jobs and control of their future. Each of the five counselors expressed the view that the NRC employees were some of the most committed and self-directed individuals with whom they had had the opportunity to work. They believed that this was a direct reflection of sound management policy, concern for employees and effective utilization of human resources on the part of NRC.

#### GENERAL FINDINGS

Based on the philosophy of helping individuals to help themselves, each client was enabled to set goals and to assume responsibility for his or her own career/life decisions. Common counseling needs met through the regional career counseling program have been:

1. Self assessment to clarify goals
2. Determination of options
3. Improved self-confidence
4. Improved oral and/or written communication skills
5. Upgraded SF-171's and resumes
6. Resolution of supervisor-supervisee problems on an individual basis
7. Impetus or motivation to pursue long delayed educational ambitions

The entire process has resulted in a more positive perspective on NRC as an employer. In more general terms, because adulthood is not a plateau, growth is necessary to cope with the sometimes expected, sometimes unpredictable, sequence of changing patterns and preoccupations during the adult years. Adults with professional, managerial, and technical jobs are twice as likely to need to undertake additional learning opportunities because they have to "run faster to stay in the same place." Many changes are implied in such careers: changing technologies, changing government regulations, changing markets, and intense competition among them. Because change implies transition, and transitions are stressful, they often trigger personal reassessment, reorientation of goals, and/or a new look at personal resources and impediments in the light of the probability of attainment of goals and aspirations. In relation to income prospects and job satisfaction concerns, work-related events are especially stressful for the middle-aged person. Individuals such as these, represented a substantial number of those NRC employees who chose to take advantage of the Career Counseling Program.

### CONCERNS

Many of the generalized concerns such as those related to relocation and restructuring of the agency have been discussed in the previous quarterly reports in some depth. Suffice it to say, these concerns continue to be reflected by employees during the career counseling process in all the regions. To the extent that it is possible to communicate directly and openly regarding such changes, even if these changes will be of a negative nature, employees can better deal with reality than with the generalized anxiety of what might happen. In an effort to provide assistance to management as it plans for employee and agency development, Regions I, II, III, and IV articulated the following concerns:

#### Region III

1. Women moving into positions traditionally held by men have found that being too skilled and too able can prove a serious handicap.
2. Constant restructuring and relocation have proved to be upsetting elements to productivity and job satisfaction.

#### Region V

1. The career counselor reports concerns centered on anticipated adjustments with a new Regional Administrator coming on board.

2. Concerns relative to reorganization were expressed, i.e.
  - a) Will promotional opportunities disappear because slots must be filled with relocated personnel?
  - b) Will there be heavier workloads for existing staff in order to support new functions such as licensing?
3. There are continuing reports of a disparity between training opportunities available to technical/professional and non-technical (support) staff. For example, structured training in problem solving was limited to technical and professional staff, although the need for problem solving and communication skills training certainly exists within the ranks of the remaining staff. On the other hand, it is evident that increased awareness on the part of the Assistant to the Regional Administrator regarding the role and needs of support staff has resulted in a more balanced use of training funds. For instance, most administrative support staff were provided with an opportunity to train in San Francisco on the use of the new computer and more attention is being given to their training needs, both in technical and non-technical areas. Those who were involved were most appreciative of the opportunities.

#### Region I

1. Some of the older employees utilized the career counseling to deal with concerns relating to retirement.
2. Younger individuals with increasing family responsibilities were evaluating their careers vis-s-vis an agency in a state of flux and change.

#### Specific Recommendations:

1. More emphasis needs to be placed on "Bridge" positions and the DARE program, of which the latter appears to be nominal at best.
2. Make mutual problem solving training available to all administrative, support and secretarial staff.
3. Staff want and need to be kept informed as to the effect reorganization will have on their region.
4. It is strongly recommended that rigorous recruitment efforts be made to hire more women and minorities into professional positions.
5. Because adult transition and change is stressful, and because adults may feel less able to cope with change than when they were younger, it is recommended that stress management training be offered to employees.



6. Communication skills training needs to be offered to all levels of employees, particularly those in the lower GS levels.
7. Since education is positively correlated with job advancement, satisfaction and higher salaries, employees without college degrees should be encouraged to seek training that will help move them toward possible promotions.
8. It would be extremely helpful to set up a very basic library of career reference materials in each region for use with clients. This would include books such as What Color Is Your Parachute? by Richard Bolles, Guerilla Tactics in the Job Market by Tom Jackson, the Occupational Outlook Handbook by the Department of Labor, and Richard Lathrop's Who's Hiring Who?

## Region II

1. A follow-up survey or counseling session with participants previously cycled through counseling to determine the effectiveness of the program and to assess progress made towards goals would be beneficial. This session might also include establishment of new goals.
2. A more long-term recommendation would be the design and conduct of in house workshops to deal with ongoing career development concerns.

Finally, a recommendation from all the counselors to continue the Career Counseling Program in the Regions. Although it may seem unnecessary since the project has already been renewed, all of the counselors felt it was important to state it in writing. It was reported that many clients were exceedingly appreciative of the opportunity to take this time to reflect and think about their career/life directions.

## CONCLUSION

BEMW, Inc. has found it a privilege and a pleasure to work with Damona Sain, Pat Russ, Rich Nawyn, Dolores Linhart and Mildred Jurgens. We are sorry that Region IV was dissatisfied with Mildred Jurgens' performance, but hope that their selection of another career counselor will bring what is basically a sound and well received program up to the standard set in the other region. We found, with perhaps that one exception, the counselors to be highly professional and competent in the initiation and implementation of a new program even under the stressful circumstances of agency reorganization.

The NRC liaison people were outstanding in providing facilities, scheduling and administrative support, contributing to the success of the program.

The Regional Counseling Program has been a challenge. It offers excellent developmental opportunities for employees, who recognize it as providing a concrete method to make plans for moving ahead in their careers. By providing this type of opportunity, NRC and MDTS rank among organizations and agencies with the most progressive human resource development policies.