

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

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15 April 1988

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MEMORANDUM FOR:   
National Academy of Public Administration

SUBJECT: Dual Track System

*Don,*

Attached is information on a dual track system for the Agency.

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If you have any questions, please contact me at

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Chief, Planning and Component  
Support Division  
Office of Personnel

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1.1 a**OVERVIEW**

The "gray book" proposal for a dual track system (i.e., the opportunity for employees in certain occupations to advance beyond the full-performance level without assuming managerial responsibilities) won overwhelming endorsement from the Agency populace. The only negatives were directed toward the proposed Manager/Expert Incentive Program (MEIP) which called for higher bonuses and up to 120 hours of annual leave carryover for managers and experts and was seen to create yet another special class. While one might expect a dual track system to elicit a positive response, some of the outpouring of support may have stemmed from a misunderstanding of the number of positions likely to be available for experts. Employees may have assumed that virtually everyone who did a good job could expect to get beyond the journeyman or operating level of their occupation--if not as a manager, then as an expert. That simply is not so: most jobs will be worth the midpoint of journeyman pay rate. Nonetheless, in adopting a formal statement encouraging dual track--beyond what currently exists in the Agency--one would expect to see a significant increase in the ratio of expert positions to manager positions.

**BACKGROUND: A BRIEF HISTORY OF DUAL TRACK IN THE AGENCY**

Currently the Agency has a limited dual track system (i.e., opportunity for employees in certain occupations to advance beyond full-performance level without assuming managerial responsibilities). Two formal, Directorate "expert" programs exist--in the DS&T and the DI. A less formal program exists in the DO for certain operations officers with unique knowledge and skills.

In addition to these programs which were established to accommodate GS-15 and SIS-1/2 level officers, several Offices (FBIS, OSO, NPIC and OTS in the DS&T, and OIA and OCR in the DI) have identified certain positions primarily at the GS-14 level which are considered senior officers, but may or may not be designated as "expert" or "SOP" (Senior Officer Program) positions. Some positions have been classified one grade higher than full performance based on substantive job requirements without an "SOP" designation. Others carry the "SOP" suffix on official personnel records.

- o DI: The Senior Intelligence Analyst Program (SIAP) was created in February 1980 to "provide a parallel advancement ladder for substantive all-source analysts through the GS-15 and SIS-1/2 ranks without regard to their managerial responsibilities." Initially, the program called for [ ] positions ( [ ] at the SIS-1/2 level and [ ] at the GS-15 level) to be filled during a two- to three-year period. In November 1981, the number of SIS-1/2 positions was doubled, raising the total number of SIAP positions to [ ]. There are currently [ ] positions designated as SIAP in the DI. As positions are identified for the program, the positions are moved from the sponsoring office's T/O to the O/DDI. When they are no longer required, the positions are returned to the T/O or Staffing Complement of the sponsoring office.

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DS&T: The Senior Scientist and Engineer Program (SSEP) began in 1982 and was intended to provide non-managerial advancement opportunities for scientists and engineers who had demonstrated exceptional technical expertise and creativity in advancing the technological capabilities of the Intelligence Community, and whose contributions merited advancement without entry into the managerial ranks. The SSEP began with [ ] positions ( [ ] at the GS-15 level and [ ] at the SIS-1/2 level). In December 1985, the total complement was raised to [ ] at the GS-15 level and [ ] at the SIS-1/2 level). In January 1987, [ ] GS-15 analyst positions--primarily from NPIC and FBIS--were added to the program and it was retitled the Senior Scientist, Engineer and Analyst Program (SSEAP). In January 1988, the DS&T increased the number of SSEAP positions by [ ] raising the total from [ ] (one percent of S&T careerists) to [ ] (1.8 percent of S&T careerists).

- o The DO has no formal dual track program but does through its evaluation panel system permit a small number of operations officers to advance to the SIS level without holding management responsibilities.

When the DI and DS&T programs began, the Office of Personnel's Position Management and Compensation Division (OP/PMCD) and the Deputy Directors agreed that the sponsoring offices could use GS-14 positions to offset the GS-15 senior officers and GS-14 positions to offset an SIS senior officer, unless new SIS ceiling was approved for a particular position; OP/PMCD and the Directorates would provide points when it was not possible to identify existing points to accommodate the program; when the requirement for the expert or senior officer was deemed obsolete, the position would revert to the original grade level and original Office, Division, or Branch at the previous grade level.

## ISSUES

The dual track concept involves two elements: experts and managers.

### EXPERT TRACK:

- o The Agency traditionally draws its managers from among those who are substantive experts. That process has worked well for us. Where we have gone wrong is in creating organizational structures to allow experts to advance only as managers. In so doing, we sometimes put a square peg into a round hole: we create a poor manager at the same time we deprive the Agency of critically needed expertise. Viable dual ladders would encourage both pure experts and manager-experts to concentrate on work where they are most productive.
- o Experts are drawn to organizations having dual career tracks; establishing such a system here will help our recruitment efforts and provide career opportunities to persons in both tracks who might otherwise become discouraged and feel forced to seek employment elsewhere for continued advancement and fulfillment.
- o Over the past 10 years, the number of professionals in our workforce has continued to grow. Not all our professionals have the ability, inclination or opportunity to become managers. We need new ways to reward them and keep them with us during their most productive years.

Although the concept of expert ladders is not new to the Agency, existing programs need to be revamped because of:

- Problems of prestige: We need to ensure that our new or revised expert programs neither are, nor are perceived to be, dumping grounds, but rather a legitimate, prestigious career development option.
- Structural flaws: These result from a lack of detail in the original design. The designated experts flounder, uncertain of their duties, organizational roles, and career requirements and prospects.
- Scope: Current formal programs are designed only for the GS-15 and SIS-1/2 levels. There are no criteria for designating people or positions below the GS-15 level. Furthermore, there are currently GS-15 positions which should probably be incorporated into a dual track program since they are above the full performance level but are typically handled separately if the desired grade level could be justified on substantive job requirements.

#### MANAGER TRACK:

- While the Agency has little experience with or interest in generic managers, there are generic management skills which need to be fostered and developed.
- Much of Agency population's reluctance to implement the more extensive changes proposed by the Task Force stemmed from a feeling that Agency managers would not manage human resources within budget limits, make fair decisions about incentive pay, or play an active and informed role in counseling and coaching employees and giving them honest feedback.
- Plans to decentralize awards and job classification authority mark the beginning of a trend which, if it is to continue, will require more attention to how we define, identify, groom, and assign managers, to how we reward them and hold them accountable. This can be done more systematically by defining a management ladder and linking it to other forecasting, career development and evaluation tools.

#### ARGUMENTS AGAINST CHANGE

- Will create inequities because not all occupations will call for a dual track, and experts can never be equal to managers in terms of rewards.
- Our current dual track programs are adequate; why raise expectations.
- Dual track systems sound fine but they have not proven to be a panacea in private industry.
- Our managers are in fact substantive experts; we don't see a need to develop generic management skills. At minimum, we need to ensure there are no artificial barriers to movement between tracks.

## DECISION POINTS FOR DUAL TRACK

If the Agency is to expand the dual track concept, the following decisions are needed:

- Will there be a single dual track program for the entire Agency or a series of dual track programs geared to directorate/office needs?
- Where will the control rest to establish dual tracks? Will authority rest with the DDs, to be redelegated to Office Directors as appropriate?
- Who will maintain records on dual track positions and personnel, costs, position descriptions, effectiveness measures, trends? How do we ensure fairness while permitting directorate/office variations?
- What will be OP's role? Fostering dual track programs? Publishing reports? Validating position descriptions for jobs above the full performance level? Developing guidance on common elements or particular issues that must be addressed in designing any given dual track program?
- Is senior Agency management committed to dual ladders, with selection procedures, etc., for both experts and managers?
- If both, how do we define "expert" and "manager" for purposes of a dual track? Will there be some minimum grade or is anyone who progresses beyond the full performance level of any occupation automatically either an expert or manager in that occupation?
- How will we get this information? Convene occ panels for those occupations having a dual track? Leave it up to the DDs to decide how to collect the info for occupations under their purview. Convene special panels to define the management occupation and any occupations which have dual tracks but cross directorate lines (e.g., computer systems analyst/programmer)?
- Must all non-management positions beyond the full performance level be designated part of a dual track program or may some remain independent, i.e., justified on their own merits?
- How do we handle the transition phase for those who are neither experts nor managers but are already above the full performance level for their occupation? Do we grandfather them in and risk "contaminating" the prestige attaching to the program? Do we leave them outside the program but with salary retention?
- What happens to the expert whose field is no longer of priority interest to management? What happens to this expert in terms of salary, perks, slotting?
- To whom do experts report? Do they report to the local manager even if they outrank him/her?

- Do we develop a "management" occupational handbook?
- Should the Individual Career Development Plan (ICDP) be adopted as a means of counseling employees who seek advancement as either an expert or manager.

#### STRATEGY

Our approach to dual track is predicated on the following assumptions:

- It is unrealistic given our separate career services and their different needs to develop a single set of rules for how expert tracks will be defined and administered. There are certain common points, however, which need to be addressed.
- Establishment of dual tracks should be a matter of joint agreement between OP and each directorate.
- We need to adopt an Agency-wide approach to identifying and developing managers that goes well beyond our current "required training."

#### IMPLEMENTATION

- Develop a common format or outline for submitting dual track proposals to ensure key elements are addressed, e.g:

Name of program

Expected benefits of program/problems program is designed to correct.

Approximate number of participants.

Estimated costs.

Other programs which this subsumes; transition procedures.

Locus of control: Role of occ panels, career service boards, office directors, DD's.

Designated point of contact for program at Directorate staff level.

How participants will be identified, approved and tracked.

How positions/slots will be identified, approved and tracked.

Relationship to promotion.

Advertising of positions.

S E C R E T

Roles and duties of program participants.

Perks and privileges for program participants.

Requirement that each expert have a clear and detailed job description in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding, Performance Plan, etc. to be drawn up annually between the expert and his/her line manager and reviewed by the office director.

Plans for use of ICDPs.

Movement out of the program.

Movement between expert and manager positions.

Career guidance for junior personnel.

Sources of information on program, e.g., training programs, occ handbooks, etc.

#### PROPOSAL

That the Executive Committee (EXCOM) issue the following policy statement endorsing dual track programs and setting forth guiding principles.

#### ---PROPOSED EXCOM STATEMENT---

It is official Agency policy to encourage dual career track opportunities. This means that we recognize that in certain occupations, the Agency expects to have a real and continuing need for both managers and experts. To ensure we have the experts and managers we need, we favor a significant change in the Agency's career pathing structure that would offer employees a choice between a career as a manager and a career as a substantive expert. Each path would offer challenge, success and its own unique set of experiential opportunities and rewards.

The following principles will guide the Agency's approach to dual track:

- o Agency managers tend to have first earned their stripes as substantive officers. That practice has served us well, and we expect it to continue. What will change is the tendency to create extra layers of management as a device to provide promotion headroom for those who can make a greater contribution and whose personal inclinations would be better served by becoming or remaining experts. With dual tracks, "the distinguishing thing should not be whether a person works alone or manages others, but whether his or her principal interest is becoming a better manager or becoming a better state-of-the-art technologist."

S E C R E T

- Not all occupations will have a dual track. Some occupations will by the nature of their work end at what is variously called the "full performance," "journeyman," or "fully operating" level. Other occupations may call for work beyond full performance, but only for those who enter management.
- Whether there is to be a dual track for a given occupation is a resource, not a "morale" issue. The justification for a dual track is that this is a better way to use human resources to accomplish our mission. Ultimately, it is a management decision whether experts are needed in an occupation and if so, how many; how high the expert track will go; and what perks will be offered. It is our expectation, however, that the number of senior positions open to experts will grow substantially over the next few years. Since for the most part someone designated expert will stay an expert for the remainder of his or her career, it becomes a question of tradeoffs and shaping future options, a question of long-range resource strategy. So, for example, while an office may have some sense that it wants to allocate a certain percent of its positions for an expert track, it may elect to phase that in rather than allocate the full number to begin with and either prematurely fill the available complement or leave many positions vacant until we can hire or grow persons who meet the test of expert credentials and reputation.
- Not all dual track programs will look the same. Experience with dual track programs tells us there are certain common issues that need to be addressed, e.g.:
  - Definitions of manager and expert
  - Availability of career track information and counseling.
  - Job descriptions for expert positions.
  - Application procedures.
  - Selection procedures.
  - Recognition or rewards systems.
  - Evaluation and promotion procedures.
  - Procedures for the orderly removal of experts if their area of specialization is no longer needed.
  - A method to evaluate the cost and benefits of the program and to implement required changes.
- How those issues are answered will be a matter of joint agreement between OP and each directorate. Some dual tracks may be both occupation-specific and office-specific; other dual tracks may be occupation-specific but the occupation crosses office lines; still other dual tracks may encompass several occupations which are unique to an office or directorate. Although there will be certain differences between programs, a key concern will be to maintain intra- and interdirectorate equity.

---END OF POLICY STATEMENT---

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