ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

Pers Planning

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Why Are We Losing Good Employees?

FROM:	EXTENSION	NO.
[redacted] STAT Chief, Policy and Programs Staff/OP 1006 Ames	[redacted] STAT	
	DATE	20 April 1982

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)	DATE RECEIVED	DATE FORWARDED	OFFICER'S INITIALS	COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)
1. DD/PA&E 1006 Ames				As part of the Personnel Planning project [redacted] STAT did the attached paper addressing the concern, "Why are we losing good employees?" Admittedly, a limited number of resignees was analyzed in this study. However, we conclude that the problem, insofar as one does exist, is not of sufficient magnitude to dictate a more extensive study at this time. This is particularly true in view of the relatively low attrition in recent months resulting in the need to slow hiring over the next several months.
2.				
3. EA/D/OP 5E58 Hqs				
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5. DD/OP				
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7. D/OP				[redacted] STAT
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FORM 1-79 610 USE PREVIOUS EDITIONS

January 1982

Why is the Agency Losing Good Employees

A. Purpose

Agency management asks, "Why are we losing good employees?" The purpose of this study is to look at this question, to see if there are answers, and to determine whether there are actions that the Agency can take to minimize losing good people; because implied in the question "Why?" is the larger question, "How can we keep from losing them?" This paper presents an overview of FY 1981 resignation statistics and CY 1981 exit interview reports before moving into the major part of the study which is a detailed analysis of a certain group of resignees.

B. FY 1981 Resignations

The resignee (not total separations) rate for the Agency in FY 1981 was 3 percent. A statistical survey indicates that some occupational families were significantly above this rate: legal (8.3 percent) and economics (5.9); others approximated the overall rate: data processing (2.8), engineers (3.7), medical (3.1), physical science (3.7), and security (2.3). (Source: HRPS study).

Another study shows that for employees entering on duty with the Agency since November 1978, 7.8 percent terminate employment prior to completing the three-year trial period. Experience since January 1980 indicates a continued rate of 7.8 percent. (Source: C/ID Weekly Activities Report, 24 November 81).

C. CY 1981 Resignees

Statistics on employees who have resigned in CY 1981 show a proportionately high number of younger (under 35), junior (GS-07 through GS-12) officers in the professional and technical occupations. Especially prevalent among these are data processing employees in ODP and NPIC. A review of exit interviews reports indicate that the younger, junior employees are often leaving for personal reasons (e.g., to accompany spouse to new employment location). There are quite a few employees leaving with under three years service. It is evident that in some cases, regardless of age and grade, employees' job and career expectations have not been met. Some apparently do not know where they stand, not in a statistical sense, but in that of career potential. (Source: SPD memoranda and exit interview reports).

D. Certain Good Employees Who Resigned

1. Methodology

How does one define good employee? Management seems to be saying that the good employees are the ones perceived as having qualities and skills that the Agency does not want to lose.

For this study the Official Personnel Folders of employees meeting the following criteria were reviewed:

Employees resigning during Fiscal Years 1978, 1979, and 1980, who, when they resigned, were

Supergrades/SISs, age 50 and under;

GS-15s, age 45 and under;

GS-14s, age 40 and under; and

GS-13s, age 30 and under.

It was assumed that such combinations would include employees who had attained their respective grades at relatively young ages for those grades, thus fitting the perception of good employees. At the same time the number of employees would be of workable size for analysis. There are good employees, who have left and who have stayed, of all ages and grades, and combinations thereof. Thus there is no implication that there are no good employees outside the criteria indicated.

Applying these criteria produced 53 names -- 5 Supergrades/SISs, 12 GS-15s, 16 GS-14s, and 20 GS-13s.

2. Findings

a. Who are leaving?

STAT

88.7 per cent of the employees received S (former rating system) or 5 (current rating system) or higher for their overall ratings on the last performance appraisal they received. None had overall ratings below P or 4.

b. Why do they leave?

Little information is available on why these employees decided to leave the Agency as distinct from why they chose their new employment.

Very few offered comments in their resignation statements or exit interviews suggesting that negative feelings about the Agency or Government employment were major factors in their decisions to leave. One employee noted "bureaucratic default in the management of my career." Another complained of the hardships on himself and his family because of his field assignment. A senior official believed that Congressional appropriations were insufficient to effectively carry out the mission of his office.

Several made comments critical of the Agency; however these were not presented as reasons for leaving. These comments included:

- o Agency too bureaucratic
- o Questionable personnel management practices in this office and directorate.
- o Disappointment at finding that Agency spied on Americans; totally opposed to various aspects of covert action.
- o Morale is Agency's No. 1 problem; Agency is overreliant on consultants.

c. Where do they go?

STAT

d. Why did they choose their new employment?

[redacted] STAT

knew that he could not do this and progress in his Agency career, and accepted a GS-12 with NASA. A GS-15 whose prior experience was entirely in academia could not refuse the opportunity to become an associate dean at a university. In many cases there are no stated explanations; it is assumed that these employees perceived opportunities for increased responsibilities, professional advancement, and accompanying salary increases.

It can be inferred that in many cases professional and Agency job-related associations led to these employees either seeking or being sought for other employment. For example, two employees on detail to the Department of State were hired by State, and two employees in the Office of the Legislative Counsel joined the staffs of Congressional committees.

E. Conclusions

This review provided no startling conclusions; nor any hard evidence to support the perception that we have a problem. The conclusions noted below are essentially common-sense ones that probably could be drawn without a study:

- o Capable employees, many with lengthy service, are leaving the Agency.
- o The overall resignation rate is not severe.
- o Certain "hard to hire" fields -- data processing, engineering, science, and economics -- are also prominent among fields being lost through resignation.

- o Retention of employees cannot be approached in isolation from other factors.
- o A sizable number of employees who leave go to other Government activities.
- o Contacts resulting from Agency assignments can lead to other employment.
- o There is no significant disaffection with the Agency by resignees.
- o Some employees who leave apply and return to the Agency later.
- o In many cases there is no indication that salary is the overriding factor resulting in the decision to resign.
- o The vast majority of employees are good employees, but not all of these are exceptional.
- o The problem of losing good employees may be alleviated, but not eliminated.

F. Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, there are few solid recommendations to be made except for those that, again, are common sense:

- o Office of Personnel, working with managers throughout the Agency, should look at certain critical job categories and propose any changes that might better attract, motivate, and retain employees in those categories.
- o Managers and supervisors should be made aware of the importance of developing and maintaining rapport with their employees on a continuing basis in order to identify problems, including thoughts of leaving, early on.

- o Office of Personnel should develop means to maintain contact with employees who have left the Agency if there is a strong desire for, and perceived likelihood of, their return to the Agency.
- o Managers should consider the use of the PATB in hiring decisions, not necessarily from the standpoint of qualifications for the job, but in evaluating an applicant's ability to adjust to the Agency environment and potential for managerial responsibilities.

Since this review was limited to statistical reports and exit interviews, it might be worthwhile to do the other half: a review of exiting employees' complaints or comments to the IG, and discussions with the mid- and first-level supervisors who most likely are the source of the concern about losing good employees. It is to be expected that some resignees might not be totally open with a Personnel Officer because of a perception that it would do no good anyhow; they might feel differently about an IG officer.

TABLE I

SAMPLE OF RESIGNEES
CAREER SERVICE AND OFFICE

CAREER SERVICE	OFFICE	GS-13	GS-14	GS-15	SG/SIS	TOTAL
D						
	CI					
	EUR					
E						
	OEEO					
	OGC					
	OLC					
I						
	O/D/NFAC					
	OER					
	OPA					
	OSR					
	OSWR					
	DETAIL-NSC					
	DETAIL-STATE					
M						
	OC					
	ODP					
	OL					
	OS					
R						
	NPIC					
	ODE					
	OSO					
	OTS					
	CTS(ROT)					

STAT

TABLE II

SAMPLE OF RESIGNEES
PROFESSIONAL FIELDS

PROFESSIONAL FIELD	GRADE GS-13	GS-14	GS-15	SG/SIS	TOTAL
Contract Negotiation (LOG)					
Data Processing					
Economics					
Engineering					
Equal Employment Opportunity					
Law					
Operations (DO)					
Political					
Psychiatry					
Science					
Security					
TOTAL					

STAT

TABLE III

SAMPLE OF RESIGNEES
EMPLOYMENT AFTER RESIGNATION

GRADE	EMPLOYMENT AFTER RESIGNATION					
	OTHER GOV'T AGENCY	PRIVATE INDUSTRY OR PRACTICE	ACADEMIC	ACADEMIC STUDENT	UNKNOWN	TOTAL
13						
14						
15						
SG/SIS						
TOTAL						

STAT

(a) 1 reapplied to Agency, was put into process, but was security disqualified.

(b) 3 reapplied and were rehired by Agency.

(c) 1 subsequently was hired by another government agency.

(d) 3 reapplied but were not rehired by Agency.

(e) 1 reapplied but was not rehired by Agency; was hired by another government agency.