

January 1982

Why is the Agency Losing Good EmployeesA. 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).

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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.

2
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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?

The 5 Supergrade/SIS employees had a range of Agency service of 10 to 24 years with an average of 14.4 years; the 12 GS-15s had a range of 2 to 23 years with an average of 9.3 years; the 16 GS-14s had a range of 2 to 21 years with an average of 8.0 years; and the GS-13s had a range of 1 to 11 years with an average of 6.8 years.

27 of the 53 employees were in the I Career Service, 11 in the R Career Service, 7 in the M Career Service, 5 in the E Career Service, and 3 in the D Career Service. (See Table 1).

The leading professional fields were engineering (10), economics (9), political (9), and science (8). (See Table II).

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?

Of the 53 employees, 26 went to private industry or practice, 22 to other Government activities, 1 to the staff of a university, and 1 to graduate study; the locations of 3 are unknown. 3 of the 22 who went elsewhere in Government have returned to the Agency. (See Table III).

d. Why did they choose their new employment?

One engineer stated he for some time wanted to start his own business. A lawyer and psychiatrist each stated that opportunity to enter private practice had suddenly occurred; the psychiatrist mentioned that his income would be doubled. One GS-13 wished to remain in California, 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. - *more options outside*

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- 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. ✓

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- 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.

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Why Are We Losing Good Employees?

FROM: Chief, Policy and Programs Staff/OP 1006 Ames	EXTENSION 	NO. _____ STAT DATE 20 April 1982 STAT
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TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)	DATE		OFFICER'S INITIALS	COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)
	RECEIVED	FORWARDED		

1. DD/PA&E 1006 Ames				As part of the Personnel Planning project _____ STAT 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.
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13. C/PPS. 20 JUL 1982			7/28 i	
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File: SEPARATION STUDY				

Approved For Release 2008/05/05 : CIA-RDP92-00455R000300050001-7

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15 Jan 81

TO: (Name, office symbol, room number, building, Agency/Post)	Initials	Date
1. C/PPB	JW	
2. C/PSB	JW	1-27
3. C/CSB	JW	2/1
4.		
5. C/SPD		2/1

Action	File	Note and Return
Approval	For Clearance	Per Conversation
As Requested	For Correction	Prepare Reply
Circulate	For Your Information	See Me
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comment	Investigate	Signature
Coordination	Justify	

REMARKS

Pls review and let me have your thoughts. I note Walter did not include clericals in this. I think he should; how 'bout you? Agree clericals should be included - C/PPB

It would be interesting to compare our results with results obtained from similar studies conducted by other government agencies. I too believe a study should be done on clericals in the hope that some findings other than common sense conclusions would result.

Definitely think clericals should be in -
 DO NOT use this form as a RECORD of approvals, concurrences, disapprovals, clearances, and similar actions *cluded.*

FROM: (Name, org. symbol, Agency/Post)

C/SPD

Room No.—Bldg.

Phone No.

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

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			DATE	
TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)		DATE		OFFICER'S INITIALS
		RECEIVED	FORWARDED	COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)
1.	C/SPD	2/1		COMMENTS OF PPB OFFICERS TEND FOCUS ON OUR JUDGMENT THAT THE 53 "GOOD" EMPLOYEES ARE PROBABLY "EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD" EMPLOYEES ^{STAT} TRULY REPRESENTATIVE OF MAJORITY OF RESIGNEES. IN MOST CASES SUCH EMPLOYEES LEAVE THE AGENCY PRINCIPALLY FOR MORE CHALLENGE OR INCREASED SALARY/BENEFITS ELSEWHERE. A LOOK AT CLERICAL AND TECHNICAL RESIGNEES MORE OFTEN THAN NOT GIVES A DISTURBING PICTURE OF CAREER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND POLICIES IN THE AGENCY. THIS IS MORE TRUE IN SOME COMPONENTS THAN OTHERS, O/COMMO FOR INSTANCE, BUT STILL THE THREAD RUNS THROUGH ALL AREAS. HOPEFULLY WE CAN HEAD SOME OF THESE PROBLEMS OFF AT THE PASS THROUGH THE FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW XXXXXXXX SURVEY OF NEW EMPLOYEES WHO ARE AT ONE YEAR POINT IN THEIR EMPLOYMENT.
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