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Officer Career Development: General Unrestricted Line Officer Perceptions of the Dual-Career Track

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**Officer Career Development: General Unrestricted Line
Officer Perceptions of the Dual-Career Track**

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19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) This report is the eighth in a series that examines officer career development. The report's purpose was to describe the initial reactions of general unrestricted line (URL) officers to a new policy establishing the dual-career track. This track was composed of the General (or Leadership) Track (GT), which represented a continuation of the traditional path, and a new path termed the Specialist Track (ST). Questionnaire responses were collected from approximately 1,200 women, and 58 women were interviewed in the San Diego area. Correlations and descriptive statistics were computed on the questionnaire responses. Interview comments were used to gain a deeper understanding of questionnaire responses. The report centered on two questions of interest to the community's career managers and policy makers. The first question concerned the extent to which officers felt that the ST was a viable career option. Results showed that officers considered the ST to be an "unknown." For example, close to 40 percent of the officers (LCDRs and below) reported that they were undecided about which track to select. The closer the officer is to LCDR (the point at which officers can become specialists), the more			
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likely they are to prefer the GT. LCDRs selecting the ST tended to score lower than those selecting the GT in the following areas: (1) fitness reports (as recalled by the officers themselves) and (2) satisfaction with past assignments. In addition, LCDRs were more likely to select the ST, the more they reported they had cut back on their career involvement to meet the needs of their spouse and/or children.

The second question focused on whether General URLs feel knowledgeable about the dual-career system. On most issues, a third to two-thirds of individuals do not feel knowledgeable enough to make enlightened career decisions. For example, 78 percent of the officers were unaware that 75 percent of LCDR XO and CO 1000-coded shore billets are, according to policy, supposed to be fenced for General URLs. In addition, 54 percent were unaware that individuals are permitted to switch to the Materiel Professional (MP) track from either the ST or GT. Recommendations were offered in the study relative to each managerial question, and overall, the focus being on whether the ST should be continued, and, if so, how its implementation and further development could be facilitated.

FOREWORD

This research and development was conducted within the exploratory development project RM33M20 (Manpower and Personnel Technology), work unit RM33M20.06 (Career and Occupational Design, Personnel Distribution and Career Development). The purpose of the work unit is to identify career factors that are related to performance, officer continuance rates, and the development of skills necessary at senior officer levels.

This report is a management report and is based upon a briefing given by the author to the General Unrestricted Line (URL) Study Panel, which was convened by the community manager in May 1987. The briefing was entitled: "General URL Officer Perceptions of the Dual-career Track, Leadership Opportunities, and Leaders."

This report is the eighth in a series produced under this work unit. Previous reports described: (1) the factors that influence the early career development of surface warfare officers (SWOs) (TR 82-59), (2) background and initial sea tour factors that predict SWO continuance beyond obligated service (TR 83-6), (3) SWO career experiences and concerns (TN 83-11), (4) aviation detailer decision making in the antisubmarine warfare patrol community (TR 84-31), (5) career development problems of three unrestricted line (URL) officer communities (TR 88-13), (6) reactions of General URLs and SWOs to detailers (TN 87-40), and (7) URL officer perceptions of joint duty assignments (TN 88-26).

Appreciation is expressed to CDR Lynn Hanel (former Community Manager), CDR Lorraine Manning (former Community Manager), CDR Barbara McGann (former CDR/LCDR detailer), and CDR Carolyn Pevette (NMPC-4419), all of whom provided valuable information on the development and implementation of the dual-career track. Thanks are extended to CDR Mark C. Baker and Chief Greg Huebler (both of COMNAV-BASE, San Diego) for their help in notifying General URL Officers in San Diego of the interviews being conducted for the study. LCDR Annette Brown (MSCO, San Diego) and LCDR Jan Adams (Fleet Combat Training Center, Pacific) provided especially insightful comments on the dual-career track in the interviews. The following officers played a key role in arranging many of the interviews: CDR Ron Leverette and LT Gregory Copeland (Fleet Combat Direction Systems), LCDR Maradee Rider (Naval Training Center), and LTJG Kim D. Ingram (Naval Ocean Systems Command).

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SUMMARY

Background

In November 1984, the General Unrestricted Line (URL) community instituted the dual-career system, comprised of the Specialist Track (ST) and the General Track (GT). Both tracks were designed to meet specific Navy needs at the lieutenant commander (LCDR) and above levels; its need for technical expertise (the ST) and its need for quality leaders (the GT). The ST represented a break with tradition and thus represented more of a concern to the Navy than the GT.

Problem

Having instituted the new policy, the Navy after a suitable period of time wanted to evaluate the acceptance of the policy among officers and its impact on them. However, Navy policy makers did not have the necessary data available to them to perform such an evaluation.

Objective

The objective of this managerial report is to aid policy makers in their evaluation of the dual-career track, so that they can revise it, if necessary, and obtain at least a general idea of how many officers are considering the ST and GT as career options.

Approach

This study was conducted as part of a larger ongoing project on officers that was initiated in 1981. The project's goal is to be able to predict and evaluate the impact of career management policies. Since a policy's impact is inextricably linked with an officer's career decisions, the project focuses on the sequence of decisions that URLs make and the factors that influence those decisions. The dual-career track decision represented a critical new issue to officers and was examined, along with other decisions, in a questionnaire mailed to General URLs. A total of 1,204 questionnaires were completed and analyzed for this study. In addition, 58 General URLs were interviewed in San Diego to provide a deeper understanding regarding how officers had reacted to the new policy.

Managerial Questions and Answers

Two questions of interest to career managers and policy makers were examined in this study. The first question concerns the officer's decision on whether to pursue the ST or GT. The second question concerns the extent to which officers felt knowledgeable about the dual-career track. What the data showed with respect to these questions is as follows:

Do officers consider the Specialist Track to be a viable option?

Officers considered the ST to be an "unknown." For example, close to 40 percent of the officers (LCDRs and below) reported that they were undecided about which track to select. The closer the officer is to LCDR (the point at which officers can become specialists), the more likely they are to prefer the GT. For those preferring one track or

the other (as opposed to undecided), the following percentages of officers preferred the ST and GT, respectively, for each grade: Ensign (ENS) (73%, 27%), lieutenant junior grade (LTJG) (56%, 44%), lieutenant (LT) (45%, 55%), and LCDR (26%, 74%).

LCDRs selecting the ST tended to score lower than those selecting the GT in the following areas:

1. Fitness reports (as recalled by the officers themselves).
2. Satisfaction with past assignments.

In addition, LCDRs were more likely to select the ST, the more they reported they had cut back on their career involvement to meet the needs of their spouse and/or children.

LCDRs were more likely to view the ST as "appealing," the lower they scored in the following areas:

1. Satisfaction with their careers.
2. Satisfaction with the Navy as an organization.
3. Desire to strive for captain (CAPT).
4. Desire to remain in the Navy beyond the date they were eligible to retire.

Do General URLs feel knowledgeable about the dual-career system?

On most issues, a third to two-thirds of individuals did not feel knowledgeable enough to make enlightened career decisions. For example, 78 percent of the officers were unaware that 75 percent of LCDR executive officer (XO) and commanding officer (CO) 1000-coded shore billets are, according to policy, supposed to be fenced for General URLs. In addition, 54 percent were unaware that individuals are permitted to switch to the Materiel-Professional (MP) Track from either the ST or GT.

Recommendations

Two overall recommendations resulted from the study:

1. The Navy should decide if the ST should be continued, given the findings of the present study. If the track is continued, then a commitment should be made to further clarify and develop it.

2. The ST should be reevaluated in 2 years to determine if some of the current problems have been alleviated and if implementation of the track has progressed satisfactorily. Three groups should be asked for their evaluations: (1) those who still have time before having to decide whether to become a specialist (if asked by the Navy), (b) those who have advanced to the point where a decision is required of eligible individuals, and (c) those who have already accepted or rejected the Navy's invitation to become specialists.

CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Problem	1
Objective	1
Issues	2
APPROACH	2
Data Collection	2
Questionnaire Sample	2
Data Analysis	3
MANAGERIAL QUESTIONS: CONCLUSIONS, RESULTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	3
Do officers consider the Specialist Track to be a viable option	3
Conclusion from Results	3
Results	4
Discussion	6
Recommendations	7
Do General URL officers feel knowledgeable about the dual-career track and related issues	7
Conclusion from Results	7
Results	7
Discussion	9
Recommendations	10
OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS	11

INTRODUCTION

Background

In November 1984, the General Unrestricted Line (URL) Officer community instituted the dual-career system, composed of the Specialist Track (ST) and General Track (GT). The ST was designed to meet the Navy's need for specialized skills at the senior officer level. Approximately 30 percent of General URL lieutenant-commanders (LCDRs), or 60 per year group, would be selected for the ST. The remaining 70 percent would advance in the GT, which emphasized leadership billets.

In March 1987, the Navy Personnel Research and Development Center (NAVPERS-RANDCEN) received a request from the General URL Community Manager (OP-130E3) to brief the General URL Study Group on research results regarding the dual-career system. The community manager was aware of questionnaire and interview career research being conducted by NAVPERSRANDCEN in FY86 and FY87.

NAVPERSRANDCEN's research was part of an ongoing project on officer career development that had been initiated in FY81.¹ This project was concerned with predicting and evaluating the impact of career management policies on URL officers. As such, it represented an appropriate vehicle for examining the reactions of officers to the dual-career track policy. In fact, as part of the project, NAVPERSRANDCEN had given a briefing (June 1983) calling attention to the need for General URL Specialist Tracks.

A major premise of the project is that the impact of policies can be measured by the types of career decisions officers make (e.g., whether or not to strive for commander-command). Thus, in 1982, over 9,000 URLs (AWOs, SWOs, and General URLs) completed a questionnaire that focused on career decisions, the sequence in which they occur, and the factors influencing them. Then, to expand this data base, a second wave of questionnaire data was collected in 1986 from over 12,000 current or former URL officers, including those who had changed designators, attrited, or retired. For those individuals currently in the General URL community, additional questionnaire items were included at this time on the dual-career track.

Problem

Having instituted the dual-career policy, the Navy had little subsequent information on how well it had been received by the officer corps. Without such information, it was difficult to modify the policy, if necessary, or to project the numbers of officers who would be selecting each track as they progressed in their careers.

Objective

The objective of this report is to provide information to career managers and policy makers that will help them decide whether the dual-career track should be retained as is, modified, or dropped.

¹Morrison, R. F., & Cook, T. M. (1985). Military officer development and decision making: A multiple-cohort longitudinal analysis of the first 24 years (MPL TN 85-4). San Diego: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center.

Issues

Research results bore on two issues that were of interest to the General URL Study Group; namely:

1. Do General URL Officers consider the ST to be a viable option?
2. Do General URL Officers feel knowledgeable about the dual-career track and related issues?

APPROACH

Data Collection

Two methods were used for collecting data: questionnaires and interviews. The primary source of data was the questionnaires, and interview results were used primarily to gain further insights into the meaning of questionnaire results. A total of 2,531 General URLs were mailed questionnaires, virtually the entire community, with a return rate of 48 percent (N = 1,204). Most of the respondents completed their questionnaires in July and August 1986. A total of 58 interviews were conducted in San Diego later in the year.

With the interviews, the strategy was to concentrate on LTs through CDRs. Their length of service permitted them to give a broad, experienced perspective on the issues of interest. In addition, some LCDRs would be close to the point in time at which they would have to decide which career track to pursue. Fifty-eight individuals at 20 San Diego commands were interviewed in individual or group sessions. Most CDRs and LCDRs were interviewed individually for approximately an hour each. Lower ranks were interviewed in group sessions, ranging from 4 to 10 in number. It was found that individuals were quite candid in the group sessions, and the remarks of one person tended to stimulate others to contribute. In all, 3 LTJGs, 27 LTs, 22 LCDRs, and 6 CDRs were interviewed. Commands included a communication station, the Navy Regional Data Automation Center, the Naval Training Center, the Fleet ASW Training Center, Personnel Support Detachments, Recruiting District, Military Sealift Command, Integrated Combat Systems Test Facility, and others.

Questionnaire Sample

Only the questionnaire results from General URL women were analyzed for this report because of their predominance in the community. The primary way of determining whether questionnaire results are representative of the entire community is to compare the relative proportion of each grade in the questionnaire sample and the community in general. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on the questionnaire and the General URL officer population. Comparing columns 1 and 2 ("% of Sample" and "% of Population") gives an indication of how representative the sample is of the entire General URL officer population. Although the sample and population percentages for LTs are appreciably different, LTs still represented the largest number of officers in both groups. The corresponding percentages for LCDRs--21.8 percent and 14.6 percent--are not considered to be appreciably different. The last column in the table (see "Power") provides additional information on whether the sample is representative of the population. The closer the power is to .05 or below, the more confidence one can have that survey results for a given grade are representative of the population. Only two values (.078 for CDRs and .071 for CAPTs) are slightly above .05. It is thus concluded that, for all intents and purposes, results were representative of the entire community and that such results can be considered valid information for managerial decisions.

Table 1
Sample and Population Description by Grade

Grade	% of Sample	% of Population	Sample N	Population N	% of Sample/ Population ^a	Power ^b
ENS	11.7	11.3	141	264	53.4	.057
LTJG	18.9	20.5	228	478	47.7	.048
LT	40.9	48.3	492	1,129	43.6	.034
LCDR	21.8	14.6	263	340	77.4	.029
CDR	5.5	4.7	66	110	60.0	.078
CAPT	1.2	.6	14	15	93.3	.071
Total	100.0	100.0	1,204	2,336	51.5	.020

Note. General URL officers were only included in these analyses if they were not part of the NuPOC Program, and they had been commissioned between 1961 and 1985.

^aThese percentages are the result of dividing the Sample N by the Population N.

^bThe closer the value is to .05 or below, the more confidence one can have that survey results for a given grade are representative of what would be obtained for the entire population at that grade.

Data Analysis

Correlations are presented in this report. They were viewed as important if they were statistically significant and .25 or greater. It was decided that correlations below this magnitude would not provide enough useful information for managerial decisions.

The report is organized in terms of the two questions mentioned. For each question, the general conclusion from the results is given, then the results themselves, then discussion and recommendations. The questionnaire data form the basis for the "Results" section; and, interview data, the "Discussion" section.

MANAGERIAL QUESTIONS: CONCLUSIONS, RESULTS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Do officers consider the Specialist Track to be a viable option?

Conclusion from Results

Officers consider the ST to be an "unknown." If forced to make a choice, they would choose the GT.

Results

Some of the officers see the ST as viable, but many officers are undecided. More specifically, officers were asked: "Looking at recent changes in the General URL career path, which of the two options have you selected (ST or GT)?" Of those junior enough to have a choice, 23 percent indicated that they had chosen the ST; 39 percent were undecided; and, 30 percent indicated the GT.

The proportion of officers selecting the two career tracks is related to grade, such that junior officers choose the ST and the more senior officers, the GT. (Those who were "uncertain" were not included in these analyses.) The percentage of individuals selecting the ST and GT, respectively, are as follows for each grade: ENS (73%, 27%), LTJG (56%, 44%), LT (45%, 55%), and LCDR (26%, 74%).

General URL women are split in their opinion, or are uncertain, about various ST issues: (1) its promotion potential, (2) its general appeal, (3) its prestige, and (4) the opportunity it affords for geographical stability. Figure 1 presents the results on these issues. For example, 29 percent of the officers agreed that the ST affords them a good opportunity for promotion; 45 percent were uncertain; and 26 percent disagreed. In short, opinion was split on the issue of promotion potential (agree and disagree), and a large percentage was uncertain. Responses regarding the appeal and prestige of the ST were split across the three response categories, while officers were predominantly "uncertain" on the issue of geographical stability.

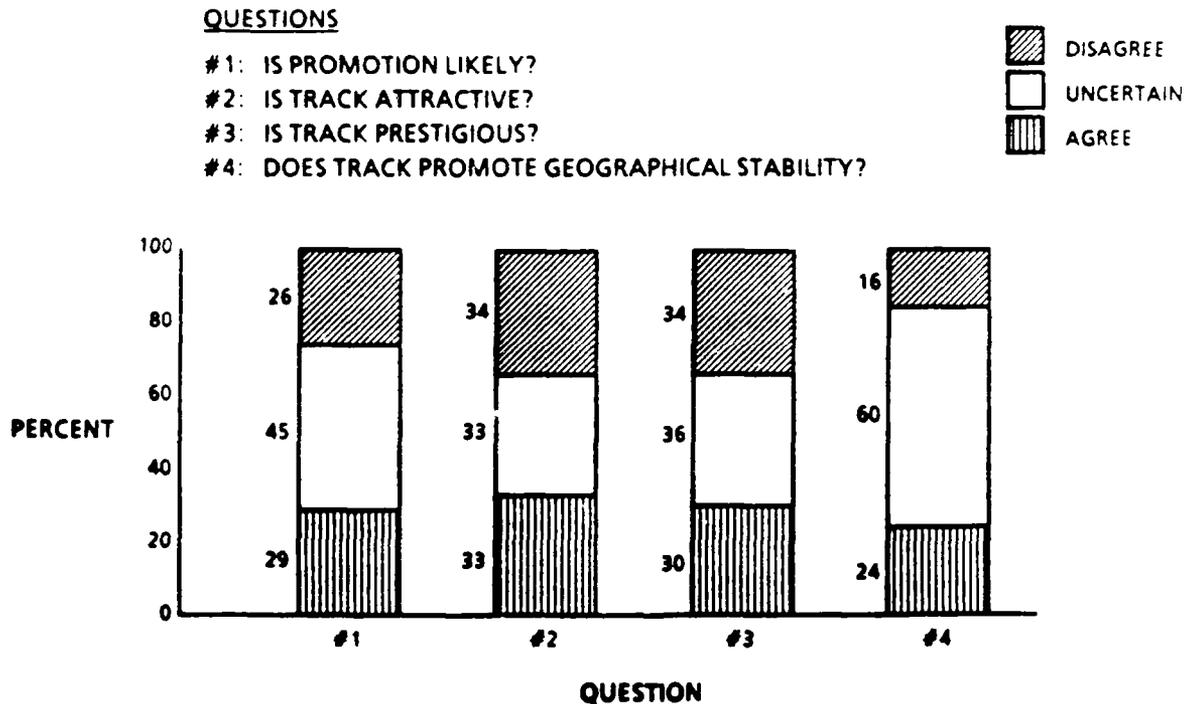


Figure 1. Do officers consider the Specialist Track to be a viable option?

Analyses by grade on these issues showed that the more junior the officer, the more likely they were to view the ST as appealing, prestigious, and as affording the opportunity for advancement. The more senior the officer, the more likely they were to view the ST in favorable terms. There were no significant grade differences regarding the geographical stability afforded as a result of being in the ST.

Table 2 presents all significant correlations (at least plus or minus .25) among the questionnaire items involved. As officers' perceptions of the prestige of the ST increase, so does its appeal ($r = .67$) and the perceived opportunity for promotion ($r = .39$).² In addition, as the officers' perceptions of the promotional opportunities increase for the ST, so does the appeal of the track ($r = .33$). Further, the greater the appeal of the ST, the more likely an individual was to see the ST as affording the opportunity for geographical stability (.26).

Table 2
Correlations Among Four Dual-career Track Questions

Question	2	3	4
1	.33	.67	.26
2		.39	--
3			--

Question 1. How appealing is the Specialist Track?

Question 2. What are the chances for promotion in the Specialist Track?

Question 3. How prestigious is the Specialist Track?

Question 4. To what extent does the Specialist Track afford an opportunity for geographical stability?

Note. $N = 1,186$. Only correlations of at least plus or minus .25 were included in this table. Two hyphens (--) meant that the correlations were lower than this established minimum.

Since individuals are first eligible for the ST at the LCDR level, analyses were conducted with this group ($N = 223$) to determine what kind of individuals selected the ST.

²These correlational results do not conflict with the above findings that large numbers of officers were uncertain regarding promotion opportunities, geographical stability, etc. The .39 correlation, for example, means that as officers' perceptions of the ST's prestige increase (from unfavorable to uncertain to favorable), so does the appeal of the track.

It was found that the lower LCDRs scored in the following areas, the more likely they were to select the ST (correlations are enclosed in parentheses and are significant at the .01 level):³

1. Overall performance as measured by their recollection of their fitness reports ($r = .47$). (In the questionnaire, individuals submitted the results of varying numbers of fitness reports.)

2. The degree to which they were satisfied with past assignments (.30). In addition, individuals were more likely to select the ST, the more they had indicated they had cut back on their career involvement to meet the needs of their spouse and/or children (.36).

The lower LCDRs scored in the following areas, the more likely they viewed the ST as appealing:

1. Desire to remain beyond eligible retirement date (.28).
2. Desire to strive for CAPT (.37).
3. Satisfaction with their careers (.37).
4. Satisfaction with the Navy as an organization (.33).

Discussion

As noted, many individuals were uncertain about which career track to choose. Conceivably, both tracks may look great, or individuals may not have had enough time to make up their minds. However, viewed in the context of the other results and interviews with General URL officers in San Diego, it seems reasonable to conclude that many individuals are unconvinced that the ST is a viable option.

The results showed that of the LCDRs who had made a decision, 26 percent had selected the ST. It thus could be argued that this percentage comes close to matching the policy's guideline that 30 percent of the General URLs be selected for the ST. However, since many individuals in the community are uncertain about the ST, perhaps some of the LCDRs who selected the ST were not as informed as they would have liked. In short, given more information, they may have been in a position to make a more effective decision and may have opted instead for the GT.

It is not entirely clear what factors determine whether or not the ST is perceived as prestigious. Perceived promotion opportunity was shown by the results to be correlated with the ST's prestige. Along these lines, many officers stated in the interviews that the ST precludes assignment to an XO billet--an important factor for promotion to CDR. Thus, the prestige of the ST may not be as high as the Navy would like. This state of affairs might, in turn, explain why the officers selecting the ST had poorer fitness reports than those selecting the GT.

³Technically speaking, to understand the positive direction of the correlations, reinterpret this sentence as follows: "It was found that the lower LCDRs scored in the following areas, the less likely they were to select the GT and to select the ST instead.

Recommendations

1. To counter the uncertainty of officers, intensify information-dissemination activities regarding the dual-career track. This recommendation is elaborated under the second issue addressed in this report: knowledgeability of officers regarding the ST.
2. Republish the ST policy and state whether it is necessary to serve in an XO billet in order to be promoted to CDR.
3. After more officers are selected for the ST, analyze the CDR promotion statistics for the ST and compare them to statistics for the GT. Also, analyze promotion rates to CDR for individuals in the ST who have served in an XO billet and for those who have not.
4. Publicize the billets that have been identified for each of the STs so that officers can see that the tracks actually exist.
5. Fence off CAPT and CDR ST billets.

Do General URL officers feel knowledgeable about the dual-career track and related issues?

Conclusion from Results

A substantial number of individuals do not feel knowledgeable enough to make effective career decisions.

Results

Six questionnaire items pertained to policies or procedures that would be expected to have a bearing on which track an individual selected. Figure 2 presents the percentage of LCDRs who were: (1) uncertain about whether such policies and procedures existed, or (2) had a mistaken impression about how the Navy operates in these areas. LCDRs were selected (N = 223), because individuals are first eligible for the ST when they are promoted to LCDR. Thus, LCDRs should be familiar with the relevant policies and procedures in order to make an enlightened decision, should they be selected by the Navy for the ST.

The six questionnaire items are as follows. The correct answers to these questions are enclosed in parentheses (T for true, F for false).

1. "The Navy has mandated that 75 percent of the shore LCDR CO and XO 1000-coded billets be reserved for General URLs, although the specific billets being reserved will not always be the same." (T)
2. "Only proven subspecialists are considered by a board for designation to the ST." (T)
3. "It is possible for an individual to switch from both the GT and ST to the MP track."
4. "Once an officer has been selected as a proven subspecialist, the Navy cannot rescind this decision." (F)

5. "Individuals in the ST are not considered for CO slots." (F)
6. "Individuals in the GT do not serve in subspecialty billets." (F)

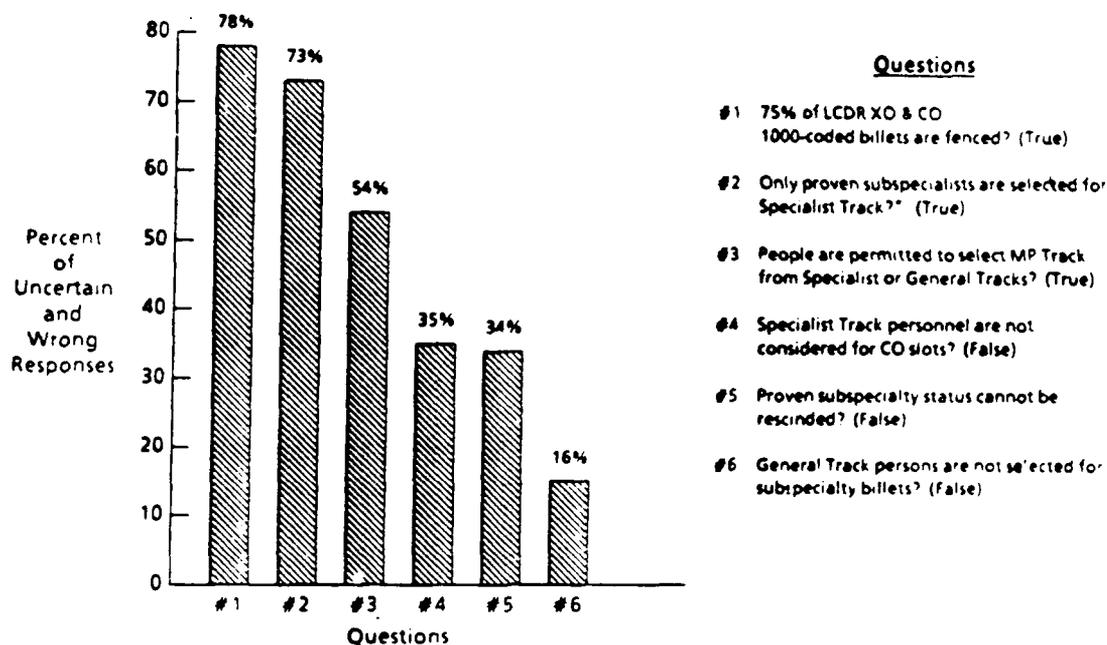


Figure 2. How knowledgeable are LCDRs on the dual-career track and related issues?

Regarding Question 2, while the policy does not formally require that candidates for the ST be proven subspecialists, actual selection operates this way because of supply-and-demand considerations.

The percentage of LCDRs who were uncertain or mistaken varied from 78 to 16. The largest percentage pertained to the item inquiring about the "fencing" of LCDR leadership billets, and the smallest percentage pertained to the item about GT individuals serving in subspecialty billets. For all items except this last one, at least one-third of the LCDRs were uncertain or mistaken.

Other questionnaire items were analyzed after combining LTs and LCDRs (N = 719). Although these items are not directly concerned with the dual-career track decision, they are germane, because they concern subspecialty development: a requirement for entry into the ST. In addition, responses to these items assess the ability of LTs and LCDRs to effectively counsel those more junior in rank on issues related to subspecialties.

Two of the items that were analyzed for LTs and LCDRs measured their knowledge regarding subspecialty-related issues. The correct answer to each item is enclosed in parentheses (T for true, F for false), together with the percentage of individuals who gave "uncertain" or wrong responses:

1. "An individual must serve in two subspecialty billets in the same area, such as Manpower, Personnel, and Training (XX33), and be selected by a board, before they are designated as a subspecialist." (F)⁴ (61%)

2. "When a General URL ensign's initial assignment is such that he/she cannot gain subspecialty or division experience, he/she will, if possible, be split toured to gain such experience or be given a 2-year, instead of a 3-year, tour." (T) (54%)

Four additional items analyzed for the LT/LCDR group were as follows. The percentage of individuals who agreed (A) with an item, disagreed (D), or were uncertain (U) is enclosed in parentheses:

1. "Available information on subspecialties helps (helped) me to decide which subspecialty I should pursue to advance my career (A, 38%; D, 46%; U, 16%).

2. "Available information on subspecialties provides (provided) me with a clear idea on how to obtain a subspecialty" (A, 47%; D, 40%; U, 13%).

3. "Detailers provide useful information on subspecialties" (A, 32%; D, 48%; U, 20%).

In short, results show that large numbers of individuals are critical of the available information on subspecialties. On the positive side, 94 percent of LTs and LCDRs (and 91% of all General URLs) knew that subspecialties are important for their careers, and 94 percent of LTs and LCDRs (95% of all officers) knew that obtaining a postgraduate degree would strengthen their chances for promotion. In addition, officers using Perspective to obtain information on the GT and ST found it to be very helpful. (Forty-five percent of the officers used Perspective more than any other source. Other officers chose almost equally among six other sources mentioned in the questionnaire, such as detailers and the community manager.) No differences were found in the way officers of different grades evaluated the usefulness of information disseminated by Perspective on the dual-career track.

Discussion

Many officers appear to be confused about the ST. One cause of this confusion may be the short period of time that the track has existed. This track was only introduced in November 1984. It takes time for a community to learn that a new policy has been promulgated, and for managers to successfully implement the policy and educate officers. A second cause of the officers' confusion might be the complexity of the General URL career system. Identifying exact career paths and the relationship among them is a problem in the General URL community because of the extremely wide variety of functions this community performs. It will take time and a major ongoing effort to disseminate sufficient information about the dual-career system to clarify the two tracks in the minds of the General URL officers. Furthermore, information needs to be

⁴An individual must meet these conditions to become a "proven" subspecialist. However, an officer need only to have received an educational/skill code (digits 3 and 4 of the 5-digit subspecialty code) by serving in one subspecialty-coded billet or obtaining appropriate education to be designated as a subspecialist.

disseminated to all leaders that General URLs consult on career development. For example, many General URLs are at commands where their superiors are from warfare communities. Thus, information regarding the dual-career track, and all career development issues, needs to be disseminated, not only within the General URL community, but to warfare specialists who are in a position to advise and counsel General URLs.

It is less understandable why information about subspecialties is viewed as inadequate by many officers. Subspecialties have played key roles in General URL careers since this community was formed, and this importance is understood by the majority of General URLs. What officers feel is missing, however, is an understanding of how the system works and what various subspecialties imply for career advancement.

While it is encouraging that officers find Perspective to be helpful, officers need improved access to informational sources that are "interactional" (i.e., they need to be able to ask experts questions that apply to their particular career situation). Some questions that surfaced in the interviews were:

1. What is the relationship between subspecialties and the ST?
2. If one person is from the GT and another is from the ST, which one will be assigned as XO or CO at a command such as NARDAC?
3. Are subspecialties really as important as Perspective says for promotion, or is performance in leadership billets the overriding issue?
4. Who is the point of contact on the dual-career track?
5. Should individuals avoid non-observed fitness reports until they make LCDR, or go to postgraduate school earlier in their careers?
6. Should individuals strive for leadership positions as junior officers and wait to strive for proven subspecialty status until after becoming CDR, or should they attempt to excel in both areas simultaneously?

Recommendations

Intensify information-dissemination activities related to the dual-career track and related issues. For example:

1. Identify the questions that most trouble officers on the dual-career track and on related topics, and disseminate the answers.
2. Attempt to disseminate the same information to those people that General URL officers rely upon for guidance (e.g., detailers, department heads, XOs, and COs). Conflicting messages lead to confusion and obstruct the successful implementation of the dual-career track.
3. Educate warfare specialists in shore leadership positions on General URL career issues.
4. Encourage more discussions between General URLs and three sources available to them: (a) their detailers, (b) NMPC-440, and (c) the community manager. The Navy

has designated NMPC-440 as the clearinghouse for information on the subspecialty system. As such, individuals are encouraged to call in for answers to their questions.

5. Encourage individuals in the ST to speak at the Women Officer's Professional Association (WOPA). This approach would impress upon officers that the ST is a reality and not just a concept on paper. It would also provide needed role models.

6. Publish information on what General URL "project managers" will do. While this position is included in the community's career chart, many officers are unfamiliar with the types of responsibilities that would be involved.

7. Clarify the career chart and use the same version in all information-sharing situations. At present, some versions have a footnote that XO and CO positions are available in the ST, while others do not have this reference. In addition, the "general experience" tour is shown in the portion of the chart devoted to the GT. Does this tour apply also to the ST? Fill in the rest of the junior officer portion of the chart for the ST. For example, no reference is made to division officer and department head assignments.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Navy should determine if the ST should be continued, given the findings of the present study. If the track is continued, then a commitment should be made to further clarify and develop it.

2. The ST should be reevaluated in 2 years to determine if some of the current problems have been alleviated and if implementation of the track has progressed satisfactorily. Three groups should be asked for their evaluations: (1) those who still have time before having to decide whether to become a specialist (if asked by the Navy), (b) those who have advanced to the point where a decision is required of eligible individuals, and (c) those who have already accepted or rejected the Navy's invitation to become a specialist.

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