

'Talking It Out' Can Help . . .

By Margaret Koch
Sentinel Staff Writer

There's that old saw about "not being able to see the forest for the trees . . ."

Mrs. X could see neither forest nor trees — but she didn't realize she had poor vision until a Santa Cruz Department of Employment counselor got a hunch.

The hunch proved right. And Employment Counselor Connie Pio likes to tell the story. It's a success story, and she is the counselor who was responsible.

"A woman came in looking for work. She was on welfare, but she wanted to get off and become independent," Connie recalls.

Interviewing and aptitude tests were given — but Connie sensed that something was not right.

"I began to suspect she wasn't seeing correctly," she notes.

Connie referred Mrs. X for an eye examination. It turned out the woman needed eyeglasses desperately — no one had realized it before. She got her glasses and when a suitable job opening came along, she was able to pass the required written tests and get the job.

This is just one example of what employment counselors do. Santa Cruz Department has two: Mrs. Pio and Howard Crampton. Crampton specializes in youth counseling.

He tells another interesting story: "A young veteran came in—he wasn't sure just what he wanted to do. He seemed to be drifting—trying to find work, but with no definite plan. . ."

The fellow was a "very personable young man" according to Crampton, a young man who felt that his personality and looks alone would open doors for him.

During counseling sessions Crampton came to see that the boy's attitude was his own greatest problem: "I finally got it across to him that it is knowledge, skills, qualifications and abilities that count in the business world," Crampton says.

The boy decided to get off his personality kick, started job training sessions and is now working part time too.

But not every job applicant who receives counseling has problems. Occasionally counseling is needed just to give an applicant a realistic view of the changing labor market. The local Department office keeps up to the minute with all the newest state and federal publications on jobs and the labor market.

"We have resources that so many other job agencies don't have," manager Roger Pelz points out.

The Department counseling service is probably the largest counseling service in California. The local office conducted 1600 interviews last year. More young people are coming for counseling than formerly.



Not only "talking it out" — but "talking things over" in a private session with Manager Roger Pelz, right, is important too. Employment counselors with the Santa Cruz Department of Employment office are, left: Mrs. Connie Pio, and center, Howard Crampton.

The need for employment counseling is not restricted to any age group, however. Adults who must change their occupations, mature women entering the labor market for the first time, handicapped persons, culturally disadvantaged and the educationally deficient all may need counseling.

There are 23,000 classified occupations today. They are all listed in a volume at the local office.

One of the most important areas for local counseling is with high school students who are not going on to college, who have no plans, no training and no idea what they are suited for.

And here they told another interesting success story. One high school girl wanted to take more education but was blocked by financial problems. She came to the Department to inquire about work. Instead, after counseling, she discovered that as the orphaned daughter of a veteran, she was eligible for war orphan benefits toward more education.

Successful counseling sessions are made up of careful questions and careful listening on the part of the employment counselor.

"Applicants come to us from so many walks of life: some with almost no education, some with college training, some with definite skills, others with none," Crampton commented.

First the counselor tries to analyze the applicant's educational background, past work experience, interests, hobbies and self-concept. (This last one is important — remember the "personality kid?").

Then the counselor tries to find out what the applicant thinks he wants to do.

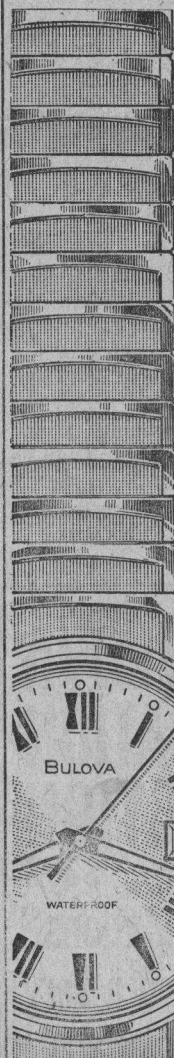
"Lots of time just getting the whole thing out in the open—getting a chance to talk about it, gives the applicant a better idea," Connie said.

Another key question asked in some cases is: Why didn't you like your former job?

Answers will bring to light all sorts of things from personality conflicts to lack of aptitude to incompatible physical conditions.

Counselors must have 15 college units in guidance and counseling courses. They also attend area training sessions.

Above all, they must have sharp eyes, keen ears and a heart.



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