

## Ep. 41: What can your Career Advisor do for you?

Welcome to Sword and Shield, the official podcast of the 960<sup>th</sup> Cyberspace Wing. Join us for insight, knowledge, mentorship and some fun, as we discuss relevant topics in and around our wing. Please understand that the views expressed in this podcast are not necessarily the views of the U. S. Air Force, nor the Air Force Reserve, and no endorsement of any particular person or business is ever intended. (Light music)

Welcome to another episode of the Sword and Shield. I'm a Chief Master Sgt. Chris Howard with the 960<sup>th</sup> Cyberspace Wing. And today with me I have- - Master Sgt. Amanda Helberg, the Wing career advisor for the 433<sup>rd</sup> Airlift Wing, as well as the 960<sup>th</sup> Cyberspace Wing. - Well, welcome, I appreciate you taking some time to talk to us today, right? So we talk about Airman Development and the future of our airmen, the career advisor is one of those key positions. I was wondering if you can kind of tell our listeners a little bit about what you do. - We provide guidance to airmen. We help them during the selective retention program when they're eligible for re-enlistments or extensions. Also, we provide information on retraining opportunities and we process incentives or entitlements that airmen are eligible for. - Okay, awesome. So as a supervisor what kind of tools can I come to you for? - So we have a lot of information on the 433<sup>rd</sup> Airlift Wing for career advisor SharePoint site. We have AFI references and it's a quick guide for the member as well as supervisor to give direction to individuals. Because a lot of time that's, what's lacking. They don't know where to go first. So supervisors can direct their airmen to the SharePoint as well as supervisors can go there and educate themselves on certain entitlements and processes that the career assistance advisors program works. - Okay, So if I'm a brand new supervisor and I have an airmen that is approaching their end of the term of service, right? And we're in the process of determining whether they're going to re-enlist or not. Can you walk me through the process as a supervisor, what I need to do? - Absolutely chief, so all individuals, when they're coming to their ETS or end of contract, they need to ensure that they're eligible for reenlistment so that we have a re-enlistment worksheet that's posted on our SharePoint site. And there are certain steps that have to occur in order to be cleared for re-enlistment. For instance, they have to receive an article 137 Brief to provide information as well as the member has to be cleared by medical and recommended by the commander. - Okay, so where would I find that 137 Brief or who provides that? - Actually, it's on our SharePoint? So the SharePoint is a one-stop shop. We tried to streamline it and make it easy for individuals to find the information, rather than looking at five, six, seven different spots. - Okay, and then also, a very important there is the timeline. So when does that timeline start? And what's that process look from the timeline? - So there's a few different timelines when it comes to a member's career. So from the selective retention program is about seven to 14 months prior to their ETS, so expired term of service or their separation date. So this is an opportunity for supervisors or commanders to speak

with individuals and provide different opportunities if they're on the fence for whether they wanna stay in, get out, maybe retrain into a different job, if they're not a 100% satisfied with what they're doing. So that's an important opportunity that supervisors and commanders can have with their airmen. And then once they get closer to that ETS date or separation date, within six months of that date, they can start the re-enlistment process. So get cleared by medical, complete the necessary briefings and then coordinate the re-enlistment with their unit or advisor. - Okay, just to kind of flush that out a little bit. So 14 months out, we get notified that, "Hey, this individual's coming up on their ETS," right? And that starts the SRP process, right? And the paperwork starts going through the leadership, correct? - Yes. - Okay. - And then that's when we first notified the member and the unit makes the first determination of whether they're going to endorse that reenlistment, right? - That is correct. - Okay. - And then after the SRP is submitted to the MPF, we update it in the system. So somebody is undecided, whether they want to re-enlist or not. It actually identifies it in the system for the group. And then career advisors to reach back out to that number, once we're within three months of their ETS. - Okay, so if we've gone to the 14 months and we started 14 months, the paperwork was processed, the unit says, okay, we are on board. We're going to endorse for re-enlistment. Then the member has a timeline up to the last day of that enlistment to reenlist, correct? - That is correct, sir. - But that's not right, that's kind of bad, wait until the last day, right? Let's go back a little bit. What's the earliest date that an individual can do the re-enlistment? - The earliest date is six months prior. If they're not receiving an incentive, if they are receiving an incentive payment, they have to re-enlist within 30 days of their ETS. - Okay, so that's a really key piece, right? So if I know that I'm going to get an incentive bonus, then I need to do it at 30 days before, otherwise I could make myself ineligible, correct? - So if you're currently receiving a bonus that you have to reenlist within 30 days, because you must complete that full contract in order to receive your entire entitlements. - Okay, awesome. Any other key points or timelines in that 14-month window from being notified to the end of term? - So, they just need to do it by the seventh month prior to the ETS and provide that paperwork back to the wing level of the MPF in order to update it in the system. - Okay. So I want to cover down up first, let's peel the Band-Aid off on the ugly first, right?? And say, okay, let's say as an airman, I've decided that I don't wanna re-enlist, what items do I need to accomplish prior to that final day? - So if you don't want to re-enlist, it's very imperative that the airman is out-processing properly at the unit as well as at the MPF level. So the member can verify their record is up to date, receive any DDT 14, to verify the service that they performed, make sure their awards and decorations are up to date, as well as providing an exit survey for the career advisors. So we can see what's working well in units and what we can possibly improve on. - Right, and that's really where we want that airmen to call the ugly baby, right? Tell us what really is the issue with service, if there was one, right? Or if it's just personal, correct? - Absolutely. And the survey is 100% anonymous, so we're not giving names out. We're just giving the information that they provide to us. So they can be honest and give us the feedback that we need to hear. - So from your perspective, why is that important? - It's very important because then we can keep the right individuals and make changes to improve the organizations. - Great,

so I would say that as well, and kinda piggyback on that, from a leadership role, why that is important? When we talk about finance issues, when we talk about the DTS issues that we've seen over the last few years. That helps us articulate the message to leadership. That here's a significant issue that's causing retention issues. It's putting undue burden under airmen, which helps give us a little bit more strength in fighting some of those issues, right? So that's a big wall. So even if as a member, I don't want to continue to serve this last act of service with that survey, could be the thing that helps drive the change that that individual wanted, right? So let's go to the much more, a nice part of it. The part that I hope that we get to more often than not is I've decided as an airman to go ahead and re-enlist. So what items do I need to accomplish to get my reenlistment paperwork started, towards the end of that timeline? - So absolutely like I said, they have to complete the reenlistment worksheet, which has mandatory requirements. After that, then they'll coordinate the reenlistment with an officer that they select and perform the reenlistment. During that time, they may be eligible for an incentive if they are in a critical job or AFSE. So those are additional incentives that they can receive and entitlements to help keep them in the service. - Okay, awesome. Let's say that I have an inclination to serve, but I'm not necessarily happy with the quarter that I'm currently in. Do I work with you as a career advisor to help myself find other options? - Absolutely, that's a great question. So a lot of people think once they're in the reserves, they have to go through a recruiter if they want to change jobs. And they actually come through the career advisors and at the MPF level, we have multiple offices that help facilitate the retraining action. So first stop can be the career advisors, and then we can direct them to what is required to retrain, possibly look at their record and see what they qualify for as far as jobs and the availability within the Wing to help fill vacant positions across the Wing. - Okay, and you're in a unique position, seeing that you support both the 433rd and the 960th. So you have purview across almost a large gambit of emphasis within the air force. So I would argue for the most part, we have a large percentage of the FSCS and the Air Force in JBSA that you might have access to, right? - Absolutely. And that's the advantage because with the retraining, once you're in the service, both the losing commander and the gaining commander, if you're transferring units have to agree for the transfer. Because retraining does cost, it does take time to send members to technical school that is an opportunity for someone to change the job and align it with more of their goals and ultimately help out the Air Force. - Right. And, when that determination is being made, there's a number of things that are being looked at, but from your experience, it can be fairly simple, especially when we're talking about airmen and NCO tiers. Right? Of finding those new positions and finding that growth opportunity, right? - Absolutely, it's all about networking and then being the Wing career advisor for two wings, it provides that network opportunity. I can reach out to those senior airmen and help facilitate interviews to get the right individuals in the right positions. - Right, and I would challenge that any individual that comes to you, looking for some knowledge and some input to what these different AFSC offer, we can make that connection, right? And then I might be able to have like a shadow day, so you could see what that AFSC does. And then get a good feel for, is this the right AFSE for me? - Absolutely. And we want to get individuals in jobs that they like. So they have the motivation and

purpose behind what they're doing. - Right, exactly, right. So, I mean that's some of the beauty of being a citizen airmen is, I'm volunteering to be here on a weekend and we're looking for that connection of the uniform and having that purpose, right? That's part of our job as leaders and you as a group as well. Is there anything else that the Wing or a unit career advisor might do? - Yes, absolutely. So a big thing that the group and Wing career advisors handle is the incentive programs. So right now across both wings, we have over 400 individuals that are currently getting incentives. So each year AFRC publishes critical jobs that are eligible for incentives. So if somebody wants to retrain into that job, that's an opportunity that they have, as well as it's a retainability tool and retention tool to keep individuals who may get more money on the outside doing the same thing, but get that kind of incentive to keep them in the air force and help the mission. - So are there just one kind of incentive pays or what kind of incentive pays are out there? - There's a lot of incentive pay out there. So officers have different incentives as well as enlisted. There are different values, depending on if you complete a six-year contract or a three, four, five-year contract, there's different amounts. The six-year contract, you can get \$15,000. Three, four or five year is \$7,500. And the payments are based off of your participation during the drill weekends. So whether you're on long-term orders over the drill weekend, or just performing a one weekend a month, that's how your payments are prorated. - Okay, gotcha. And then also if I'm looking at it there, if it sees, let's just say that I have an inclination that after a few years of doing the cyber thing, I'm just done, and I wanna be, let's say a load master. You would have the insight on what that timeline looks like as well as what flight plan might look like for time and everything like that, correct? - Yes, and in the career advisor program, there are a lot of other offices that handle portions of what we do. So we're resourced to kind of direct individuals to the appropriate office that could better answer 'cause finance handles a lot of pay things that we do not as the career advisor, but we have direct line of contacts with those offices to give the best information to the individuals. - Okay. There's also so when we talking about incentives, there's a travel incentives that come with certain emphasis and locality incentives, correct? - Absolutely. That is the inactive duty training program. So travel program. So if a member lives greater than 150 miles outside of the duty location where they're training and they're doing performing their drill weekends, they may be eligible for mileage reimbursement up to \$500. If they're listed on the critical AFSE and every year on the fiscal year. So one October AFRC publishes the incentive listing for bonuses, as well as the IDT travel reimbursement. And then also going into that is seasonal training program is another opportunity that career advisors like to educate members on that's when they complete tech school. And then depending if they have a critical AFSE, AFRC can pay for them to come out on orders in order to learn their job, rather than trying to get upgraded just on the drill weekend. - Right, and that's the infamous STP, right? - Yes, it is. - Versus a prop tool. - Correct. - Okay, and it depends on the AFSE and how that works right? I'd like to step back just a little bit to when we talk about the CSL, the critical skills list, the IDT travel law funds and the importance of making sure that if you do live outside of the local area, having the correct address so that the qualification based on CSL all matches up in (indistinct), because that's where that disconnect happens more often

than not, right? - Absolutely, and when the CSS, they're the ones that generate the order in order to get that money back, or that incentive paid out. The address, like you said has to be correct. So individuals should be updating the record of emergency data yearly, and that will help ensure that the correct address is listed. So they get their full entitle. - Right, and then also some clarification, it's not a flat rate it's based on the actual... It's up to \$500. So it's an actual cost up to \$500. And that's where I'm at. - That's correct if basis that off of the miles, as long as they're over 150 miles from the duty location. - Okay, awesome. So when we look at your position, my position, we really start talking about talent management. And what do you see your role in talent management from a career advisor perspective? - So, the role that I see in talent management is just advising members, taking a look at their records, seeing what they may be eligible for and just having a conversation. What do they enjoy doing? What do they enjoy while serving in the military and try to align their needs or wants with how it can help the Air Force. So aligning those individuals into the appropriate positions. - Great, yeah, there's needs, there's wants, there's a balance, and then what we qualify for. And then how do we make that happen? Also, I want to clarify that you're not part of recruiting at all, correct? - That's correct. - So there's no quotas, there's no incentives for you to push individuals in any one direction, right? - That is correct. We're here to help the airmen. We're here to educate and provide guidance. - Okay, so I'm going to ask you a personal question is why did you want to be a career advisor? - The reason I wanted to be a career advisor is because I love helping people. I love teaching. I love training. I love just giving information. So I have been lucky in my career to work in many different offices across the personnel platform. I've worked in force management for development, so the different areas. So I have a lot of knowledge that I want to share with individuals to make sure that they're on a right path to meeting what they want or need. - Okay, so now I'm going to put two things together. If you don't mind working with me on this one. So you got your passion and you have your experience. What frustrates you with this job? Because I can imagine for me, the frustration to have that love and that position is just under utilization of what you do. - So chief I'd say the biggest frustration is trying to get the right message, trying to get it out to the masses and educate people on what we do, because what you don't know, you don't know. And I found that a lot, even with my unit level career advisors and group career advisors, the training that was provided was not necessarily what they needed to succeed in the program. So just getting that information, getting on these podcasts or commander's call to get the information out there and hopefully get people to start listening and asking questions. I hate when somebody comes and they're like, "I was doing incentive two years ago "and they never asked why they haven't received a payment." So those are just things that I think I'm frustrated with and just ask the questions. Don't be afraid to ask at the wing level, we're approachable, we've got the group for advisors to help on the UTAS. And then on the UTAS, also the unit career advisors. So individuals have several levels that they can go to for information. - Okay. Some good points, right? I mean, 'cause the end goal for what we're here at is to find the right fit for them, find what's going to work for them and match that with the needs of the air force, right? And finding that place so that we can get to a good, strong why we put the uniform

on and why do I take this time away from my family and my career to do this on a regular basis? And what are your thoughts on that? - I completely agree with you chief. We want to keep the right people in the right positions and that's ultimately what we're trying to do to help, like you said, the needs of the Air Force. - Okay, awesome. So any anything you want to add? Did I, or that you want to get out to the 433rd and to the 960th at the airmen? - I just want to close with just thank you for everything that everyone does. It's truly appreciated the dedication from our airmen and leadership and the support that our career advisors at least specifically have received from the 960th. - Awesome, okay. So what I'd like to say is thank you for all the effort that you put in, right? I know that for a career advisor at the unit at the group, and the wings, sometimes it just feels like it's a very thankless job, right? A lot of times it gets wrapped up into the administrative portion of, is this piece of paper here. And of course, because of all the different timelines that we talked about, 14 months out where we're putting that out. And when we're dealing with the emotions of individuals making that choice to re-enlist or not re-enlist, or what I want to do, sometimes it takes us to a very finite amount of time left to execute for that ETS. And that's where, getting this conversation started early as a supervisor is very important. If we can talk to our airmen well, in advanced of that ETS then we can take away some of the inks, some of the emotion when it comes time to execute that piece of paper so that everything is in place in time. And it's not a mad rush. It's not one of those hair's on fire gotta find that office right now to re-enlist and I got to get this paperwork in town, right? So thank you for taking that on. Thank you to your career, your group career advisors that do it, and thank you for the unit really at the tactical level to start that conversation. So thank you for all of that. And then I'd like to emphasize how important this program is, right? So when we talk about not just the administrative piece, but the counseling piece, right? That counseling piece is very important because even as a supervisor, sometimes based on a relationship, that unit career advisor group career advisor, or the Wing career advisor can help flush out those ideas, maybe provide a different perspective and then help shape that airman's service, which is really what we're going to look upon. After 20, 20 plus years of potentially, what was that pivot point? Maybe I talked to that career advisor and they realized that I just wasn't happy doing a comp support. Maybe I just wasn't happy doing services. And you guys provided that opportunity or that spark somewhere else that gave me that sense of why. So, and then just doing it in a timely manner so that it's not set up for failure, right? Because there's been opportunities where people just wait to the last minute and were in, because they would just that one day too long, weren't able to re-enlist them. Thank you, and then thank you to the airmen out there. Thank you for your time. Thank you for your service. Thank you for putting the uniform on. It's because of you that we're possible and all the good things that you do help keep our enemy at bay and kind of keeping up with the tradition. Let's keep on stabbing people in the face through Cyberspace. Thank you. (Bright upbeat music)