

WISHCRAFT: Using teamwork to reinvent your career

THE SELF-HELP INDUSTRY, FUELED BY A half-million support groups and their 15 million participants, sprang from cult books on topics like codependency and the problems of alcoholics' offspring. Now the next generation of self-help—realizing career goals—is emerging.

The movement is based on the book *Wishcraft*, an irreverent but commonsensical career guide by Barbara Sher and Annie Gottlieb, published 12 years ago and now in its 22nd printing. Like other self-help groups, which meet in church basements and suburban rec rooms, the "success teams" inspired by the book are popping up in cities and towns across the country. While it is impossible to track every group, organizers say that success teams now number more than 1,000 and exist in every state.

It doesn't matter if your dream seems unrealistic, Sher says; the key is to get moving. "What makes this process work is the group behind you," she says. "Isolation is the dream killer. We have so much more courage for others than for ourselves."

Team members encourage each other to act—to develop career plans, find jobs or build independent businesses. Debbie Featherston of JST Works, Inc., a career-planning and job-search company in Indianapolis, says the group approach works. "Most job seekers are not successful because they don't have support during the search," she says.



Unsatisfied with her job in a Seattle health-care clinic, Linde Risdon attended career seminars that gave her job-search tools but didn't help identify her goal. So she joined a success team. With a group that met weekly, Risdon did *Wishcraft* exercises, such as dreaming up 10 ideal lives. "In one of them," she recalls, "I used artistry through food." That vision led her to start a business—as a private chef. "I enjoy the sensual part of the food business," she says, "and I make good money."

Nancy Tuttle, a graphic designer in Teaneck, N.J., who tripled her earnings during a two-year period, says she could not have built her business without her team. "They got my head-space out of working on the kitchen table while cooking dinner for the kids." After Seattle

management consultant Heather Robinson reported to her team one week, they pointed out how animated she became when talking about the multicultural-training programs she was running as a volunteer. Robinson soon repositioned herself as a multicultural specialist.

Group support is more effective than individual career planning, says Mary Lyn Miller, director of the Career Clinic in Los Angeles, precisely because of the hand-holding. "People get stuck and afraid," she says. "But in the group process, they give each other confidence."

To find a success team near you, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: *Wishcraft and Success Teams*, Box 20052, Park West Station, New York, NY 10025.

—Ellie Winninghoff