

Planning Your Success Rather Than Just Letting It Happen

By CW4 Gary Marquez

As we near yet another warrant officer promotion board (less than 60 days from this writing), all attention is focused on maintaining your files, (i.e., Official Military Personnel File, Officer Record Brief and photo) and ensuring that they are verified, correct and represent the true you. This is after all what the promotion board reviews isn't it? True, three distinct documents will determine whether you will be selected for promotion and be eligible to continue in the Army. However, we may have become more obsessed with maintaining our personnel resume rather than applying the same amount of focus on building it.

Building great files begins with work, hard work. Unfortunately hard work alone will not get you promoted, nor will it get you recognized; there's more to it than that. It really begins with goal setting and developing a personal professional development program. You'll be surprised at the number of warrant officers that plan on getting promoted but don't have a plan to achieve that outcome. It takes more than just showing up for work and being just the Property Book Officer, the Food Service Advisor, the Accountable Officer or Airdrop Technician.

70 - 80 % of the reason that you get promoted is based upon a record of sustained superior performance. An officer who receives an Above Center of Mass (ACOM) OER or a Center of Mass (COM) OER with distinctly strong rater and senior rater comments normally reflects superior performance on the part of the officer. So should performing at your highest level and having that performance reflected in either ACOM or COM reports with clearly superior senior rater comments one of your short-term goals linked to your long-term goal of getting promoted?

We now have an officer rating system that limits the number of ACOM OERs the senior rater can provide. A common question that I'm often asked, "how do I break through the COM syndrome and obtain an ACOM OER"? Again, it goes back to performance and developing a personal professional development plan with short and long-term goals.

According to best selling motivational speaker and author, Zig Zigler, "a goal is only a dream until you write it down." Many of us have written down short-term goals in our day planners, on our desk calendars and on our refrigerators and in the majority of cases our goals were met because we saw the written goal everyday. If we take a long-term goal and break it up into several short-term goals, eventually the short and long-term goals will be met. Of course, reality sets and dictates that some goals will not be met. But while the goal still remains, you must readjust and change the metrics to attain it.

So where do we get ideas for setting short and long-term goals in the first place? In the latest Warrant Officer NEWSLINER, dated March 2002, COL Acker, Commandant of the Warrant Officer Career Center, stated "for warrant officers to be relevant in the transforming Army we must possess two key characteristics, **self-awareness** and

adaptability". Practicing self-awareness, or measuring your strengths and weaknesses will certainly provide you with ample areas for which to establish short and long-term goals. Adaptability allows us to assess the changing environment by determining what's new, what's changed, and how we need to adapt in order to be successful. As logisticians, we constantly adapt so that we can find newer and better tracking systems, new programs, and policies. As we are adaptable in our professional lives, we also need to include doctrine in our personal professional development plan.

Being successful means many things to many different people. Some may consider making CW5 as being successful as a warrant officer, while others may value success by attaining certain positions. Only you can determine what is successful to you. Write down your goal and plan the pathway to attain it, your success may depend on it. Whether it's your goal is to improve your performance or make CW5, you must first plan the steps to accomplish your development plan and through execution of your plan, you'll be on the right glide path to success and attainment your goals.

Practicing continual self-awareness, being adaptable to the changing environment, and establishing a professional development plan will ultimately improve your performance. This in effect will make you more competitive for promotion while gaining the desired recognition for prestigious positions and programs. In addition, much of your professional development plan can be easily transferred to your officer support form and vice versa.

The Personal Professional Development Plan

READ

In my first unit as a W01 my Battalion Commander welcomed me to the unit and gave me the Battalion Commander's reading file and a list of books for which all officers had to not only read but write a summation of. The reading file was filled with battalion policy letters, facts and figures on the unit, division and theater. The reading file proved to be interesting literature. The reading list was comprised of several military books on battlefield operations and of great American leaders. After completing the reading assignments we would gather and discuss the books and turn in our summations to the Battalion Executive Officer, I thought that I was back in high school. The Battalion Commander's philosophy was that we should all be continually reading, something – anything throughout our lives. It proved to be an invaluable lesson and one I adhere to this day. Whether it is a book on classic literature or new management practices, reading opens up our minds to new ideas. Shortly after assuming the position as the Army Chief of Staff, General Shinseki, published his reading list which provided Army leaders with a starting point. From that act many others followed suit with their own iterations of what books should be read. For Quartermaster Warrant Officers some of the books listed in General Shinseki's original reading list are very relevant to our business. However, when developing your personal professional development plan consider adding these to your reading goals:

- "In Search of Excellence" by Peters and Waterman
- "See You at the Top" by Zig Ziglar
- "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective people" by Stephen Covey

- "Ethics for a New Millennium" by the Dalai Lama
- "The Brand You 50" by Tom Peters

SPEAK

So what is your weakness, what do you need to improve upon, what do your superiors honestly say about your performance? These are hard questions but you need to really seek the truth. Many years ago as a young non-commissioned officer I realized that I was weak at public speaking (who isn't). As a result, I forced myself to speak up in any forum and any audience. College classrooms became my platform, and then staff meetings, Warrant Officer Association meetings, PTA gatherings and etc. Every opportunity to speak in a crowd made me a better speaker and in the long-term made me a better warrant officer.

Toast Masters International is world-renowned organization which promotes public speaking. Attendance at their meetings is fun, challenging and guaranteed to turn even the shyest person into a speaker of JFK's caliber. I highly recommend that everyone attend at least one meeting to see if this interests you. Above all, include public speaking in your development plan.

WRITE

Many warrant officers would rather talk than write. Remember the phrase, "power of the pen", it shaped this nation and continues to make a difference in our Army everyday. Include writing in your development plan. Make it a goal to get published in the QM Journal, Army Logistician magazine, the WOA NEWSLINER, local newspapers, etc. You will not only improve your writing skills, but at the same time, you are also broadcasting both your accomplishments and those of the your unit.

Start writing decision papers, point papers and information papers for your commanders and supervisors. Never brief the commander/supervisor on a topic without having a written document (even a 3 x 5 card) ready to provide them, remember, words are easily forgotten but the written document stays in the "in box".

Write and rewrite your support form. Ask for other's support forms. How can you improve upon yours, theirs? Share ideas but don't forget to write.

ASSOCIATE

Many books on becoming successful suggest that in order to become successful you must associate with successful people. Joining professional organizations that actually conduct organized meetings or functions will help improve your insight into becoming successful.

As logisticians we easily become focused on our own technical world and tend to give little thought to what other warrant officers are doing. Many warrant officers tell me that they believe that they have top-notch files when in reality they are merely in the middle. Their perception of being in the top 10% comes from not knowing what others are doing and how they are doing it. Belonging to a professional organization will broaden your horizons and provide you with a different perspective on just about anything that you are willing to ask about.

Some recommendations of organizations to affiliate with are:

- Warrant Officer Association
- Association of Quartermasters
- Association of the United States Army
- Toastmasters International
- Retired Officers Association
- Society of Logistics Engineers (SOLE)
- Parent Teacher Association
- Local civic organizations

In addition to joining or affiliating with organizations such as these, the next step is to get involved with the management of the organization. Make it a goal to volunteer to be on a committee, be a chairperson or run for an elected position. Some of the most successful people I have met are constantly involved with the inner workings of volunteer and professional organizations. Getting involved will help you grow as a person and will ultimately make you a better officer and person. And of course include it on your support form and let your command know what you are doing.

TOOT YOUR OWN HORN

No one will know what you are doing if you never tell them. Say you accomplished 100% inventory on the first count, tell somebody! 100% CBS-X rate for the past 3 months, tell somebody! Use either a point paper, Significant Activities Report memo, a 3x 5 card, office newsletters, web pages or other media get the message out about what you and your office is doing or has done for the command, post or Army.

Develop a briefing chart on butcher paper and an easel and have it updated with facts and figures and have it ready and positioned in your work area so that whenever any one comes by you can give them a quick snap shot of what you have accomplished. Develop a desk side brief for those sit-downs with commanders and dignitaries who drop by your office. Include the habit of, "tooting your own horn", in your plan and seek out other ways to improve upon it.

The bottom line - tell the world about what you are doing otherwise they will never know.

CALLING CARDS

As a young W1 I went to a Christmas reception at my Battalion Commander's house and was told that I needed to show up in a coat and tie and have a calling card. Imagine, a W1 with a calling card, get real! There was a small wicker basket just inside the entrance that was overflowing with calling cards and being a loyal soldier I threw one of the two cards that I had printed into the basket. Later I received a very nice thank you card from the Battalion Commander.

So, the bottom line is whenever or wherever you are meeting new or influential people always have a calling card or business card in your pocket. You never know when you will get a call from someone that was impressed with you and has your contact information.

In Summary

One of the habits from Steven Covey's book, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" is to "begin with the end in mind" and this is so true for the planning process. No matter what plan you are developing, be it a vacation, retirement, or personal professional development plan, you must start with the end in mind - the goal. Once you know what the goal is then the path is merely a filling in the details, tiny step/goal by tiny/goal step.

Best of luck to those who are in the zone of promotion this year and to all of you who are developing your personal professional development plan!

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