

## Letters to the Editor

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### NCO-ERs require more thought, honesty

Raters have what I consider to be a different perspective on what qualifies and quantifies "Excellence" and "Success" ratings in the responsibility block (part IV, f) of NCO-ERs.

As a command sergeant major I review all NCO-ERs my unit produces. I frequently discuss the entire evaluation process with the unit's sergeant major. Overall, most units do an outstanding job in rating the soldiers and writing quality and quantifiable bullets. The one exception is the responsibility block where I often see "Excellence" ratings with supporting bullets such as:

- maintained 100 percent accountability of over \$5 million in specialized equipment or
- disbursed over \$2 million in cash with no shortfalls

Other units throughout the Army write similar bullets because I sometimes see them as "Excellence" bullets of the quarter in NCO-ER updates.

Here's the question raters should answer before writing these bullets: "What percentage of this equipment or dollars could this NCO lose or have a shortfall on to earn a "Success" rating?"

If the answer is "zero" then the NCO deserves a "Success"—not an "Excellence"—rating in that block.

The Army entrusts multimillion dollar items of equipment to NCOs daily. An armorer or a tank commander is responsible for safeguarding the weapons

and sensitive items issued to them. Would they earn a "Success" rating if they lost one weapon or component? Probably not, and they shouldn't get an "Excellence" rating for having all of the items.

We NCOs are expected to maintain 100 percent accountability and have no discrepancies or shortfalls. We don't expect those standards to be "achieved by a few" but by all. NCOs can help control inflation of NCO-ERs in this block by applying a simple statement I once saw in a Post CIF at Ft. Devens, MA: "We want it back from you the same way we issued it to you, same quality, same size, same quantity!" That's the expected standard and that's "Success."

CSM Maceo V. Mays  
USA Security Coordination Det,  
Ft. Belvoir, VA

*[I agree with CSM Mays. But, I'd also like to point out that many of the other rating areas on NCO-ERs are inflated as well. I recently sat on a DA promotion board and was appalled at some of the bullets used to "try to justify" an "Excellence" rating. One example comes to mind on block IV, c, Physical Fitness and Military Bearing. The bullet: • "Soldier willingly participates in Army PT program," was used to support an "Excellence" rating. It seems to me there are many NCO raters who don't take the time to do justice on their junior NCOs' rating. In the end, it's the rated soldier who pays the price. I'd be happy to receive a thorough article on the NCO-ER*

*to publish in an upcoming edition. All command sergeants major and sergeants major who sat on a DA centralized promotion board are qualified to write such an article. Any volunteers? Ed.]*

### Acronym error corrected

This letter is in reference to SFC Munoz's article (Fall 94) in which he writes on training a junior soldier for a Soldier of the Month Board.

His main point was the soldier's lack of knowledge about acronyms. In the first place, it's understandable that the soldier would have problems since there are so many acronyms used in the Army. Secondly, Munoz improperly stated the acronym for PAC. If HE took a minute to look this acronym up in AR 310-50, **Authority for Abbreviations, Brevity Codes and Acronyms**, he would know that PAC is **Personnel and Administration Center** (not **Personnel Activity Center**).

I quickly saw his error because I was previously assigned to a PAC. I thought it was amusing that he erred on the very subject he was writing about.

CPL Iffit Rodd  
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*[While SFC Munoz had an error in fact in his original article, I take some responsibility for that mistake. As the editor, I should have caught this error. Thanks for keeping us accurate. Ed.]*

### Disgruntled with promotion system

I'd like to comment on the way the Army promotes soldiers to the NCO ranks. I read too much about how important education is for promotion. I think this is biased and unfair for several reasons.

One, I read SFC Fishburn's letter (Spring 94) that I am in total disagreement with. He refers to placing (optionally) an NCO's degree status (abbreviated) in the signature block of official correspondence. He's dead wrong.

Two, the point system is totally unfair and biased because some MOSes have a lower point system for promotion than

others. It makes it even harder to get promoted when they merge other similar MOSes. Soldiers who have been in the Army longer and know their jobs are not in charge. However, those NCOs with less time in service and have degrees are put in charge. This is only because they were promoted to an NCO rank because they had more civilian education.

Education doesn't make a leader, nor does it make a better mechanic, clerk, gunner, tankner, etc. Furthering one's civilian education is good, but experience and knowledge (MOS) makes a motor run smoothly.

In my opinion, a soldier should be looked at for time in service, time in grade, MOS knowledge, necessary NCOES course completion, no disciplinary actions (within a certain period of time) and recommendations from chain of command.

Will we ever wake up and reevaluate the Army promotion system?

*CPL Ronnie Thompson*

*1/4 Aviation Reg, Ft. Carson, CO*

### **An essay-letter on leadership**

Leadership starts with me. When I became an NCO, I became a leader. And, as a leader, I must have a solid foundation for my leadership. My foundation is the commitment to the professional Army ethic.

A prime example of this deep commitment occurred during Task Force Ranger in Somalia (last October). Two NCOs from the elite "Delta Force" were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor (posthumously) for their actions above and beyond the call of duty. Both men were credited with saving the life of a downed Blackhawk pilot, CWO Mike Durant. Although they fought fiercely to the final round, both were eventually killed by an overwhelming enemy force.

This is an example of heroism at its paramount, but all leaders must be an example of the professional Army ethic every day. I'd like to explain what each element means to me.

Loyalty—I show loyalty to my nation when I promise to give my life to support and defend the Constitution of the

United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. I express loyalty to the Army and my unit by supporting my chain of command and remaining loyal to those I serve ...seniors, peers and subordinates alike.

Duty—My sense of duty tells me I must do everything I do to the best of my ability. In every sense, I must "be all I can be."

Integrity—As an NCO my word is my bond, and those I give it to can expect me to live by it. The trust and confidence among Army members is integrity.

Selfless Service—MSG Gordon and SFC Shugart both made the supreme sacrifice in defending their comrades, but all leaders can show selfless service as well, by dedicating themselves to mission accomplishment and having a genuine concern for their soldiers. Selfless service is putting the needs of the unit and soldiers before your own.

As I stated earlier, leadership starts with me. But the leadership circle also ends with me. If I'm a prime example of these individual values, this loyalty, duty, integrity and selfless service will be returned to me by all those with whom I come in contact.

The professional Army ethic is the heart of Army leadership and that leadership is invaluable. GEN Omar Bradley once said, "Leadership is intangible, therefore no weapon ever designed can replace it."

I find that a well-disciplined leader, armed with knowledge and skill, guided by the professional Army ethic, is the most lethal and effective weapon in today's modern Army arsenal.

*SGT Thane C. St. Clair*  
*Schofield Barracks, HI*

[St. Clair's "letter" was actually the three-minute dissertation he gave before the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command board, which selected him as NCO of the Year. Ed.]

### **Journal useful tool for officers and NCOs**

I recently had the opportunity to read every copy of *The NCO Journal*, and I think that it contains very valuable

material useful to soldiers of all ranks. From the officer perspective, reading the *Journal*:

- gives insight into the NCO viewpoint, their concerns, what affects their ability to train and operate and solutions to problems.

- can strengthen all NCO/Officer relationships, especially for young officers. Cadets and instructors involved with officer accession programs could also benefit from reading the *Journals*. Copying and making a reading packet of the articles would be most helpful to young officers.

- can make unit training more effective by applying lessons learned on training before training.

- can provide topics for professional development discussion and for unit professional development reading programs.

I would recommend keeping several sets of *Journals* in a unit, with one being a reference copy. It would also help if the *Journal* editors would periodically index the articles.

I would like to see more articles on the NCO perspective on current operations world-wide, with lessons learned from them. The *Journal* is the medium to record and share those lessons.

*MAJ M. M. Yamamoto*

*Information Management Support Ctr.*  
*Pentagon, Washington, DC*

### **Line unit soldier wants civilian education opportunities**

The Army encourages soldiers to get as much civilian education as possible while on active duty. Soldiers in line units find that hard to do. It seems soldiers in staff positions enjoy this education luxury more than the rest of us who are constantly being deployed, doing gunnery, NTC rotations and ARTEPs.

Why don't we rotate soldiers between line unit assignments and staff position assignments? This would help eliminate burnout and give line soldiers a chance to get the same education—and promotions—as staff position soldiers.

*SFC Delos Q. Howard*  
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