

# CAREER NEWSFLASH



## MMEA-64

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## E8/E9 BOARD ROLL-UP



The FY04 E8/E9 Selection Board has recently released and even though the years change, the same trends seem to be evident as in previous years. We are still seeing a large number of Marines who are not completing their Professional Military Education. Unfortunately, this year there was nearly a 3% drop for First Sergeant and a 5% drop for Master Sergeant showing that there were less Marines completing their PME compared to the previous year. (The same type of trend was also identified in the Staff Sergeant Selection Board earlier this year).

Another issue that should be addressed is the use of the Resident PME Equivalency Code. When ALMAR 156/96 was released, it announced the option to use an equivalency code in place of attending the resident course for those Marines who have completed either Drill Instructor, Recruiting or Marine Security Guard schools. The Boards noticed a trend of these codes being used like a 'get out of jail free card.' When someone has been off of a Special Duty Assignment (SDA) for over 18 months, there should have been enough time to complete the resident course. If operational commitments do not allow for

someone to attend the resident course, a letter to the board might serve to justify the continued use of the code. When in competition for promotion, those who continue to rely on the equivalency code long after they left their SDA may not present the best picture. These codes were intended to be used by those Marines currently serving on SDA billets who are unable to attend. The message also encourages Marines to attend the appropriate resident course once they have completed their SDA billet.

The FY04 Board saw a significant rise in the Above Zone selection rates, particularly to the rank of Sergeant Major. During the CY03 Board the percentage of Marines selected from the Above Zone was 22.8%. That percentage rose to 42.8% this year. With the Time-in-Grade being approximately three years, there is no room for 'Welcome Aboard' or 'New Kid on the Block' type reports. This is clearly expressed in the Performance Evaluation System, MCO P1610.7E. It is impossible to say what caused the increase, but it is clear that those Marines in the Above Zone had at least one more year of reports - they had one more year of observed time to bring valuable information to the selection board.

The lack of photograph

FY 2004	MSGT	1STSGT	MGYSGT	SGTMAJ
IZ/AZ PME Completion Rate	72.2%	71.9%	N/A	N/A
IZ/AZ Photo Submission Rate	81.2%	80.2%	93.5%	95.2%
IZ Selection Rate	54.2%	16.6%	51.8%	55.4%

due in part to some Marines not submitting a photo because their MOS was closed when the board first convened but opened later. The selection board took this into consideration, but aside from those cases, there were less than 2% selected who did not submit a photo.

The Selection Board is committed to selecting the 'Best and Fully Qualified', and most Marines are doing an outstanding job. We still need to push to ensure that records are maintained and all required

submissions is another ongoing problem. Across the board, there was a decrease in photo submission rates from those in zone for Master Sergeant through Sergeant Major. An interesting note is that 100% of those Marines selected to Sergeant Major and First Sergeant had submitted a photo. This was not the case for Master Gunnery Sergeant and Master Sergeant,

information is provided to those who make decisions about careers.



**By GySgt Payne**  
**Enlisted Career Counselor, HQMC**

## THE 'BEST AND FULLY QUALIFIED'

The phrase 'best and fully qualified' is one that most of us are familiar with and is what each of us strives to become. In our pursuit to fulfill our individual career aspirations, each of us has developed different methods, taken different actions, and taken on different attitudes towards this end. With some, we have had tremendous success, in others we have had little or no success. Contrary to what most of us choose to believe, the essentials to becoming the 'best and fully qualified' lie in a few fundamental concepts, principles, and the execution of certain responsibilities.

The Performance Evaluation System provides for the periodic reporting, recording, and analysis of our performance and professional character. Its fundamental concepts are accuracy, accountability, simplicity, and consistency of policy and evaluation methods. This requires standardization of the evaluation chain,

supervision throughout the system, and the education of all participants in the system.



*To be the best you have to get off the sidelines and into the game.*

At the beginning of the reporting period, and at the start of a new reporting relationship, the Marine Reported On (MRO) and the Reporting Senior (RS) will meet to establish and formalize a billet description that focuses on the essential elements of the MRO's billet in specific and concise terms. Prior to the end of the reporting period, as well as those occasions during the reporting period, the MRO should seek performance counseling from their

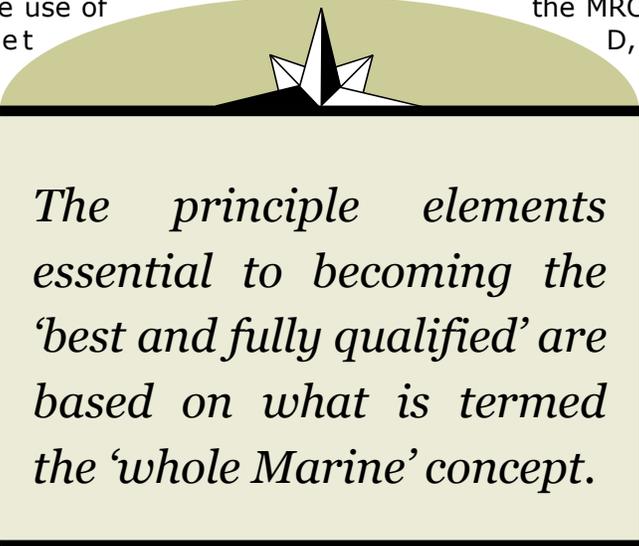
reporting officials. At the close of the reporting period, the MRO should provide a summary of

accomplishments, by use of the MRO Worksheet, to the RS. This worksheet is the counseling tool incorporated in the Performance Evaluation System. It allows the MRO an opportunity to highlight significant events, awards, and Professional Military Education (PME) accomplishments of which the RS may not be aware. The CMC directs the use of the MRO Worksheet (Appendix D of the PES) for billet description and summary of accomplishments documentation. The MRO is the subject of the fitness report. Therefore, he or she should submit a summary of accomplishments to the RS prior to the end of the reporting period. The MRO must possess a clear understanding of the concepts of the PES, his or her role in accomplishing the unit's mission, and the expectations of the RS. The RS may include the MRO's immediate supervisor in the evaluation and review process. Inclusion of the unit's senior enlisted leadership (i.e. the First Sergeant, Sergeant Major, or SNCOIC) in the review process will help ensure uniform and accurate reporting.

The selection boards, in examining the qualifications of Marines for the purpose of recommending them for promotion, consider demonstrated performance/achievement, leadership, professional and technical knowledge, experience, growth potential,

motivation, military proficiency, physical fitness, conduct, moral character, and maturity. Simply stated, the principle elements essential to becoming the 'best and fully qualified' are based on what is termed the 'whole Marine' concept. The fitness report describes the 'whole Marine' both on and off duty. This picture goes beyond the MRO's assigned duties. Sections D, E, F, and G are comprised of 13 attributes that give the RS a broad cross section of areas to evaluate the MRO on that the Marine Corps deems most important. The report divides the 13 attributes into four sections: Mission Accomplishment, Individual Character, Leadership, and Intellect. Collectively, these attributes provide a clear picture of the Marine's demonstrated capacities, abilities, and character.

All Marines grow personally and professionally, but each does so within the bounds of their personal ability. The Marine, by individual performance over the course of a career, develops a record of his or her own merits. In a follow-on article, we will address some specifics that selection boards look at in terms of qualifications and eligibility requirements.



*The principle elements essential to becoming the 'best and fully qualified' are based on what is termed the 'whole Marine' concept.*



**By GySgt Perkins**  
**Enlisted Career Counselor, HQMC**

## 2 YEARS OUT FOR CAREER COUNSELING

As Career Counselors, we provide a valuable service to individual Marines, Commanders and the Marine Corps. Our mission is to support the future of our Corps by assisting enlisted Career Marines in improving their performance for retention and their competitiveness for promotion through performance evaluations and career counseling. We counsel active duty Sergeants and above. While the Career Counselors provide an evaluation of

performance, we cannot provide reasons for failure of selection to the next higher grade. Requesting a career counseling session after failing selection is not the optimal time to receive advice or recommendations to increase one's competitiveness. Career Counselors provide Career Briefs to the SNCO Academies, during MMEA command visits and when requested by Commanders. In each Career Brief the Counselor strongly recommendation that

individual Marines consider a career counseling two years before coming in zone for promotion.

The current statistics for career counseling show that there is an increase in post-board and a decrease in pre-board counseling. This shows that Marines are becoming more reactive instead of proactive. Career counseling is an invaluable tool used by Marines to identify strengths and weaknesses. The Counselors have access to individual records upon request and can evaluate the level of competitiveness amongst peers where timing is an important factor. This tool is used by individuals to let them know where they stand, what the competition is doing, how the selection board members view individual records, and to seek guidance to achieve future objectives in one's Career. For Sergeants, career counseling should start 1 year from the promotion date, since billets held as a Sergeant can assist in achieving long-term goals.

Today's Marine Corps has made great progress towards promotion tempos. The average time in grade between grades is approximately 4.5 years, according to MARADMIN 440/03. This is a significant decrease from previous years. What does this mean to Marines and their careers? A Marine has less time to show they are the best suited for promotion or key assignments. Time is needed to establish a solid career reputation as well as to make improvements in performance or recover from an adverse occurrence on your record. Every reporting period counts. Understand that there may only be one observed report that will allow the Marine to show improvement once the Marine has failed

selection – and that may not be enough.

Career Counselors are aware of the peer competition, have received insight from selection board debriefs, and maintain records of promotion opportunity and selection rates of previous years. During a career counseling session, the Counselor reviews the information in Marine Corps Total Force System (MCTFS), the Master Brief Sheet (MBS), and the Marine's Official Personnel File (OMPF). This process is necessary to analyze the individual's record to identify trends that show the Marine's strengths and weaknesses in the areas of training, performance, leadership and potential. Once a record analysis is complete, the counselor provides recommendations for improving areas that appear to be weaker than other areas. In the case of adverse material, the Counselor will view the Marines level of performance and make recommendations on how to demonstrate recovery from that adversity.

Just like professional athletes have coaches to help them improve their skill and increase their chances of winning, Marines should be coached to improve their chances of selection for that key billet or promotion. Marines must realize that they would benefit more from career counseling if it is done early. Just like any other tool, if used correctly, counseling can be a vital tool for success. However, Marines must be proactive. The benefit of establishing a relationship with a Career Counselor is that, when done early, the Marine will have the opportunity to take action on those recommendations. As stated, career counseling should occur at a minimum 2 years before coming in zone.



*It is going to take time to reach your objective. Planning is a must.*

Regardless if it is performance or recovery, it all takes time. The amount of time available to a Marine who has been passed once for promotion is about 9 months. This may not be enough. During this time, the Marine will receive at least one more annual fitness report and have the opportunity to take a PFT, finish an MCI, or improve marksmanship. If the Marine pursues a career counseling 2 years out, then he or she will have more time to improve all areas of training, performance, leadership, potential and,

if needed, focus on showing recovery from adversity. You never know when your record is being viewed whether it be for promotion or assignment to that special billet. PROACTIVE OR REACTIVE, you choose!



**By GySgt Cabral**  
**Enlisted Career Counselor, HQMC**

## CORRESPONDENCE TO SNCO SELECTION BOARDS

After every SNCO Selection Board debrief, there are a few things the selection board asks us to pass to the fleet. A major topic which is always mentioned is correspondence to the selection board. The primary purpose of any correspondence to a board should be to explain what might not be clear in your record and send only the needed documents to supplement your explanation, if necessary. It should not be used as a complaint process. All information must be received no later than the convening date of the scheduled selection board - any correspondence after that will not be forwarded.

If you have an issue that cannot be explained in your record via your official records, send a brief letter of explanation to the board. For example, if you sustained an injury and your PFT score suffered and you are currently in the process of improving, send a brief explanation of the facts with supporting documents to the selection board. This way the board knows why this happened and it lets them know you should be back to normal soon.

Missing fitness reports are a concern for every selection board. It is imperative that the Marine audits his/her record once a year to ensure they have no date gaps. The earlier the problem is identified, the easier it is to correct. Fitness

reports cannot be sent directly to the selection board. They must be sent to CMC (MMSB-32) in an envelope clearly marked 'CONTAINS FITNESS REPORT FOR THE SELECTION BOARD'. This will expedite the processing and MMSB will ensure it is delivered to the selection board. If a date gap is identified and it is in the process of being corrected, let the President of the Board know. This will also let those who are making decisions on your career know that you are taking the necessary steps to maintain your record and career.

*These letters should be short, concise, and provide the facts only. 'Explain, don't complain!'*

Letters of recommendation can be beneficial, especially if a Marine has an unusual amount of non-observed reports or has conducted a lateral move to a new field and does not have much observed time in the new MOS. These letters need to be endorsed and sent in by the Marine being considered. The selection boards have stated to us repeatedly that no more than two or three are necessary. If you desire to send letters of recommendation to the selection board, get all you can, review them and send

only the best two or three.

When you are in zone for selection is not the optimum time to update your OMPF; it should be done at least once a year. In addition, it should be updated at least six months prior to the

convening date of the selection board. Often Marines send in their entire record as a back up. This is not necessary. The selection board has 30 to 45 minutes to review and prepare your record for the brief. Duplicating information already contained in your official file could conceivably take time away from other key information within your record (i.e. fitness reports). Do you want your briefer to waste time reviewing the same documents? If there is anything missing from your record that is being sent to the board, it should also be sent to MMSB-20 to be included in your OMPF. Documents sent to the selection board are used for that board only and are destroyed once it adjourns. If you do not send a copy to MMSB, your records will remain

incomplete and the same documents will have to be sent the next time you are in zone for selection.

The MCBUL 1430 that is released about sixty days prior to the convening date of the selection board provides the instructions for sending correspondence to the selection board. For any additional information refer to MCBUL 1430.



**By MSgt Coon**  
**Head, Enlisted Career Counseling**  
**Unit**

## RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Personnel Management Support Branch (MMSB) is the keeper of Marines' records. During the past twenty years, the Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) has migrated from paper to optical imagery, and the changes show where MMSB has come from and where it is going in the future. Career Counselors are often asked what needs to be put in a Marine's record and how to get it done. This article will cover some of that information.

MMSB maintains about 450,000 OMPFs in digital storage at Quantico, VA. There are approximately 4.5 million Marines' OMPFs that were stored, upon the individuals' retirement or separation, to the National Personnel Records Centers on paper from 1775 until 1980, when the Marine Corps went to microfiche. The microfiche was maintained until the mid 1990's, when the microfiche-based OMPF was converted to the digital OMPF. The new digital format has made it much easier to maintain and distribute OMPFs to individual Marines and authorized users. The digital OMPF also made it easier to electronically provide the OMPFs to selection boardrooms, which became a digital process in 1998. Normally, an OMPF is retired to the National Personnel Records Center in St Louis, MO once the military contractual obligation of a Marine has expired. It becomes a permanent historical record owned by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) for approximately 62 years after it is retired to the

Federal Records Centers. However, because the National Archives and Records Administration is not yet capable of accepting an electronically stored OMPF, the Marine Corps and other military services are temporarily holding onto the electronically stored OMPFs until capabilities to accept, retrieve, and maintain digital records at the Federal Records Centers are operational. We anticipate that we will hold the current population of digital records until the 2009-2010 timeframe.

One of the primary documents used during a Marine's active career is the fitness report. Within the next few months, the fitness report process will be automated, from inception to filing in the OMPF, without the need to ever go to paper. This will allow the Marine Reported On (MRO) or the Reporting Senior (RS) to initiate a MRO Worksheet, allow the RS to forward the report to the Reviewing Officer (RO), then on to MMSB online, or as applicable back down the chain for comments by the MRO and/or corrections by the RS, and back up the reporting chain. This automated process will also allow MMSB to return a report to the reporting officials for corrections online and allow the MRO to retrieve a completed copy of his/her fitness report from the Automated PES website for 60 days after the report has been processed and filed in the OMPF at HQMC. Initial operational capability for this program was demonstrated in Camp LeJeune in October 2003, and is scheduled

for Okinawa in January 2004. Full operational capability across the Marine Corps is planned for the summer of 2004 in concert with the rollout of Marine-on-Line (MOL) 'Bundled Capabilities Package-1' (BCP-1). Another initiative MMSB is working on is to provide Marines with the capability to view their OMPF on-line. The actual development of this project will begin in January 2004, with expected fielding in the summer of 2004.

MMSB has made tremendous improvements since the last paper OMPF. These improvements help to create a customer service environment of trust with all Marines so that when Marines embark to hostile shores, they can be confident that the staff at MMSB is safeguarding their records for the next assignment or selection for promotion board.

Here is a brief description of what each Section within MMSB is responsible for:

**Records Correspondence Section (MMSB-10):** This Section takes care of all OMPF/MBS requests that are mailed, telefaxed to DSN 278-5792, emailed to MMSBOMPF@manpower.usmc.mil, or addressed via the website at <https://www.mmsb.usmc.mil>. MMSB-10 also handles all corrections to the OMPF that are directed by PERB/BCNR. In addition, locator services, diary searches, review of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) claims, and maintaining Temporary Disability Retired List (TDRL) health records are all handled in the Records Correspondence Section.

**Records Management Section (MMSB-20):** This Section maintains the digital OMPF operation. The operation entails scanning, indexing, quality control and filing of millions of images into the OMPFs each year. MMSB-20 also operates the Customer Service window for Marines who desire to walk in to get a copy of their OMPF/MBS. Lastly, MMSB-20 manages a Records Audit and Review Unit to assist Marines

who desire to clean up information in the OMPF, replace illegible images in their OMPF, add authorized documents that are missing, and help the individual Marine do an overall review of his/her OMPF to ensure it is the best possible résumé going before selection boards, assignment personnel, and those making decisions regarding retention in the Marine Corps.

**Performance Evaluation Section (MMSB-30):** The Performance Evaluation Section provides all functions and policies necessary to manage the Performance Evaluation System (PES). The Policy and Research Unit (MMSB-31) does all corrections to the PES database for fitness report corrections, such as date gaps, PERB/BCNR directed changes of information on fitness reports, and responses to policy questions regarding preparation

and content of fitness reports. The Reserve Matters Unit (MMSB-34) handles the Reserve fitness reporting responsibilities, corrections and questions. The Fitness Report Processing Unit (MMSB-32) receives all fitness reports (Reserve and active duty) for processing into the PES database. MMSB-32 is the office that must receive fitness reports from reporting officials before the fitness reports can be filed into the OMPF, given to selection boards, or provide data to populate Master Brief Sheets (MBS) and reporting official profiles.

### **Personnel Management Support Branch (MMSB)**

#### **Records Correspondence Section (MMSB-10)**

Toll free 1-800-268-3710

DSN 278-5792 (Telefax)

#### **Records Management Section (MMSB-20)**

Customer Service Window DSN 278-3623/5640

DSN 267-5682 (Telefax)

#### **Records Audit & Review Unit (MMSB-21)**

DSN 278-3907

#### **Performance Evaluation Section (MMSB-30)**

DSN 278-3993

#### **Fitrep Policy & Corrections Unit (MMSB-31)**

DSN 278-3905 Toll free 1-877-301-9953

DSN 278-5688 (Telefax)

#### **Fitrep Processing Unit (MMSB-32)**

DSN 278-5690

DSN 278-3783 (Telefax)

#### **Reserve Matters Fitrep Unit (MMSB-34)**

DSN 278-3991



**By GySgt Fuller**  
**Enlisted Career Counselor, HQMC**  
**& MMSB**



## MMEA-64

### Enlisted Career Counseling Unit (MMEA-64)

#### Toll Free Phone

800.833.2320

#### Commercial Phone

703.784.9241

#### DSN Phone

278.9241

WE ARE ON THE WEB,

GO TO...

WWW.USMC.MIL

THEN TO THE

CAREER LINK

THEN TO

ENLISTED CAREER

COUNSELING

*We have not decided all the topics for the next newsletter and would like to hear from you regarding what you want to know more about. Please send us your suggestions by email.*

## EFFECTS OF COMBAT FITNESS REPORTS

Now that the initial deployments to Iraq are over, many Marines have questions about how the fitness reports they received will impact their career. With the adjournment of the recent FY04 E8 and E9 Selection Board, the Career Counselors had the opportunity to ask the board members questions about how this type of report affected the individual Marine's record.

First, it is important to understand that not all Marines were able to go to Iraq. Not even half of our forces were sent in country, so to hold that against those that could not be there would be unfair. Though there is no doubt that a combat report adds to a record, those who make decisions about careers must consider and evaluate the entire record. There is no such thing as a quick fix or 'silver bullet' - it is the total Marine concept that makes an individual competitive.

We often talk to Marines who feel that since they have a combat report they are guaranteed for promotion and forget that they are always in competition with other Marines for limited allocations. There are duties in the Marine Corps that rate the precept of 'highly qualified for promotion' (i.e. Recruiting Duty, Drill Instructor

Duty, Marine Security Guard, Marine Security Forces and Combat Instructor); however, we have not currently seen anything that would indicate that a combat fitness report would rate that same type of consideration.

What the combat fitness report does is provide those Marines who deployed in support of OIF and OEF with the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to perform on another level. Marines are taught to train as they fight, but it can never come close to the real thing. How the individual handled a combat situation says a lot about them, particularly if they excelled in that environment.

However, this is only the case if the action is documented properly in accordance with MARADMIN 612/01 (Combat Fitness Reports) and the Performance Evaluation System, MCO P1610.7E, change 3, para 6003.5.

Although we are extremely proud of those Marines who deployed to OIF and OEF, it cannot be stressed enough that one or two reports do not make an entire record. It is imperative that Marines be diligent in maintaining their competitive edge as they are always in competition with their peers.

