

FY 2014 RESERVE STAFF NCO SELECTION BOARD **COMPILED DEBRIEF**

The Reserve Continuation and Transition (RCT) Branch provided a survey to every board member of the Fiscal Year 14 Reserve Staff Noncommissioned Officer (SNCO) Selection Board. This process allows RCT to receive feedback from every board member to ensure that detailed information regarding the board's climate may be assessed and debriefed. The information presented in this debrief was compiled by examining board member's Likert scale and narrative responses to an 18 item questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed by RCT in an effort to gather actionable data to improve the ability of career counselors to provide Marines with good board preparation information. RCT Branch requests that this debrief be given wide dissemination among those Marines preparing for the FY 2014 SNCO Selection Board.

This debrief was compiled by GySgt Steven Pierce, Reserve Career Counselor and edited by Major Edward S. McDonough, Retention Officer, RCT Branch.

FY 2014 RESERVE SNCO SELECTION BOARD SURVEY ANSWERS PART 1:

The following 13 questions asked the board members to rank how important each topic was in considering a Marine's competitiveness. The questions were asked in a Likert scale format from 1 to 5; with 1 being not important and 5 being very important. The board member's responses are presented below in a positive or negative percentage format (i.e.: 80% of board members felt that a high PFT was important to a Marine's competitiveness).

1. *A letter to the board from the candidate should be included with every promotion package.*

Approximately 56% of board members felt that every candidate should submit a letter to the board. RCT advises Marines that sending a letter to the board is a personal choice, and Marines should only do so to explain substantial inconsistencies in their record (FitRep date gaps, lack of current PFT/CFT, etc.). RCT also notes that letters should be concise and explanatory in nature vice self-promoting or complaining.

2. *Time spent in the IRR should be explained in a letter to the board.*

69% of board members responded that Marines should explain time in the IRR in a letter to the board. The board member's response to this question supports RCT's opinion that letters to the board should only be to explain an inconsistency in a Marine's record. The board members' responses also validate the findings from question one, in that only Marines who have something to explain should write a letter to the board.

3. *MOS credibility is necessary to be considered competitive.*

80% of board members responded that having MOS credibility is necessary for a Marine to be considered competitive. RCT has always, and will continue to counsel Marines that being an expert in their MOS is critical to be considered competitive for promotion.

4. *Having performed well in the Marine's MOS is necessary to be considered competitive.*

85% of board members responded that in addition to having MOS proficiency, a Marine must also always try to perform well when in an MOS specific billet. That is not to say that Marines should not grow where they are planted, but that when the opportunity to hold a billet in a Marine's particular MOS presents itself, a Marine should strive to perform at a very high level.

5. *Current, first class PFT is necessary to be considered competitive.*

78% of board members responded that a first-class PFT/CFT is required for a Marine to be considered competitive for promotion. This was no surprise, as maintaining a high level of physical fitness and readiness is absolutely essential for a SNCO of Marines.

6. *Current expert rifle and pistol qualifications are necessary to be considered competitive.*

A majority, approximately 68%, of board members felt that current expert rifle and/or pistol qualifications are necessary to be considered competitive. However, understanding that not every Marine can qualify as an expert on the rifle, the pistol, or both, is important, RCT's position is that all Marines should work on achieving an expert qualification through snapping-in, asking for coaching, and firing as often as possible. This being the case, while Marines should strive to qualify as an expert on their TO weapon, only a little over half of the board members considered this to be "very important" to be considered competitive for promotion.

7. *An OMPF that is missing information or contains inaccurate information decreases competitiveness.*

82% of board members responded that it is "very important" for a Marine to have a complete and accurate OMPF to be considered competitive. Again, RCT always has counseled Marine's that their record should be free of inaccurate or misleading information, and should always be complete prior to going before a promotion board. It is also important for Marines to remember that making sure an OMPF is complete, and/or updating an OMPF takes time. This is why a Marine preparing for a board should always request career counseling and begin to correct or complete their record at least six months prior to a board convening.

8. *Having completed a combat tour improves competitiveness.*

Marines run to the sound of the guns, and 82% of board members responded that Marines who successfully served in combat are more competitive than those who have not. The board member's felt that Marines who could successfully complete a tour, in any billet, in combat were better prepared to assume the leadership responsibilities associated with being a SNCO of Marines.

9. *Remaining in one SELRES/IMA unit over a career decreases competitiveness.*

60% of board members responded that remaining in one SELRES/IMA unit substantially decreased a Marine's competitiveness for promotion. The board members felt that Marines should always seek out new opportunities and experiences to "round" their careers out, and gain experience in other parts and missions of the Marine Corps.

10. *Serving with the same SELRES/IMA unit for more than 3 years- all at once or by returning to the unit multiple times-is looked upon negatively.*

50% of board members responded that serving in one SELRES/IMA unit for more than three years decreases a Marine's competitiveness. The board members were split on this question. Since SELRES and IMA opportunities have both availability (MFR is at end strength) and geographic location limitations, some Marines must serve beyond three years in a single unit. RCT feels it is important to share this information with potential board members so that this current trend does not decrease a Marine's competitiveness.

11. *Not submitting a Reserve Qualification Summary (RQS) will decrease a Marine's competitiveness.*

A little over half (54%) of board members felt that not submitting an RQS decreased a Marine's competitiveness for promotion. The board members were almost evenly split on the usefulness of the RQS, specifically because all of the information available in the RQS is now available through MCTFS and the electronic OMPF. RCT continues to advise Marines to submit an RQS, as it is required in the board announcement MARADMIN; however, RCT also believes that the RQS is antiquated and could easily be replaced by any one of several electronic records available to the board members.

12. *An outdated promotion photo or the absence of a photo will decrease a Marine's competitiveness.*

91% of board members responded that an outdated or absent promotion photo will substantially decrease a Marine's competitiveness. The board member's answer to this question does not require any explanation, as every Marine understands the importance of maintaining height/weight and military appearance standards.

13. *A letter of recommendation should not be from someone who already reports on the Marine in a fitness report.*

93% of board members responded that any letters of recommendations to the board should not be written by a person who has reported on that Marine in a fitness report. The board members felt that if a person has had the opportunity to report on a Marine, and write about that Marine's performance, potential for future service and promotion, then it is unnecessary to rewrite such matters in another format. Because of this, board members, instead, responded that Marines should only submit letters of recommendation from personnel outside of their reporting chain.

FY 2014 RESERVE SNCO SELECTION BOARD SURVEY ANSWERS PART 2:

The following 5 questions asked the board members to answer, in narrative form, how they felt about commonly discussed promotion board topics.

QUESTION: *What do you look for in a promotion photo?*

ANSWER: Board members generally responded that the top four things they look for in a promotion photo are proper fit and appearance, proper awards and decorations, accurate and verified height and weight, and haircut and general appearance of the Marine.

QUESTION: If a Marine has adversity in his/her record, is it possible for him/her to still be promoted, and if so, what does it take for him/her to recover from the adversity?

ANSWER: Board members all responded that it is possible for a Marine to overcome adversity in their record; however, it depends on the severity of the adversity, the amount of time that has passed since the adversity, and how the Marine performed after the adversity. All the board members recognized that Marines make mistakes. A majority of board members felt that even if a Marine has made a mistake, strong performance after an adverse event proves that a Marine has learned, corrected, and continued to perform at a high level. The board members also cautioned that some adversity is more difficult to overcome than others. For example, a Marine who was awarded NJP for missing drills could, most likely, recover by attending drills regularly and demonstrating strong performance after receiving NJP. However, a Marine who was awarded NJP for falsifying a travel claim intentionally, would have a much more difficult time demonstrating that they are qualified for promotion, even if performing well after receiving NJP.

QUESTION: How much weight do you place on fitness report averages (RS relative values, and RO comparative assessment marks) in judging overall competitiveness?

ANSWER: A majority of board members responded that while middle and top third RS and RO marks are generally considered competitive, examining how many Marines the RS and RO have reported on, is also important. Board members agreed that RS and RO averages with large profiles were more heavily weighted than RS and RO averages with small profiles.

QUESTION: How did you view Marines assigned to staff billets or billets within supporting commands, to include HQMC, in comparison to Marines serving in operating units?

ANSWER: The board members were split on answering this question with half responding that staff or supporting billets were not considered as competitive as operating billets. Even though split, the board members all agreed that any negativity associated with serving in staff or supporting billets could be mitigated by demonstrating strong performance in those billets; in other words, grow well, where you are planted.

QUESTION: What are your top three recommendations for Marines preparing themselves for boards?

ANSWER: The majority of board members responded that the top three recommendations for Marines preparing for boards are by number of occurrences:

- 1) Make sure your OMPF is current and accurate;
- 2) Make sure your promotion photo is to standard;
- 3) Make sure you are PME complete.