PLU

 01 Oct 12

INFORMATION PAPER

Subj: FITNESS REPORT (FITREP) PME

1. Purpose. To share lessons learned from the perspective of a board member.

2. Reference

(a) MCO P1610.7F Performance Evaluation System (PES Manual)

(b) FY12 and FY13 Commandants Company Level Education Board (CCLEB)

(c) CNA Study: An Evaluation of the Fitness Report System for Marine Officers. July 2012

3. Background

 The experience of being a board member, and developing an appreciation for the significance of the fitness reporting process, was invaluable. Few Marines get the privilege; almost all feel compelled to provide PME to Marines back home.

 Each MOS community has particular writing styles and grading patterns that become immediately noticeable to board members who sift through 2,100 OMPFs in rapid succession.

 The intent of this info paper is to highlight positive, neutral, and negative trends, and provide recent examples of effective breakout comments.

4. Discussion

 a. OMPF

 Do not assume your Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) is accurate. Errors we saw include erroneous and missing AMOS and special skills designations, missing PME completion, inaccurate rifle/pistol, PFT/CFT scores, and MCMAP belt indicators. These details get briefed. MOL now provides Marines an opportunity to see their Master Brief Sheet. It’s the responsibility of each Marine to verify their information. Contact MMSB-20 to correct errors.

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 b. Photo

 An official photo is the first thing board members see, or in many cases don’t see, when a Marine is briefed. It becomes frustrating for board members to see old photos of Captains wearing Sgt chevrons, or a blank grey space where a photo should be. Do yourself a favor and get a photo into your OMPF. It improves your chances of being considered a professional.

 c. Documents

 Awards (to include summaries of action), PME completion certificates, Bachelors and Masters diplomas, and meaningful documents should be scanned and inserted in your record. This can be done by email, fax, or in person. Board-members cannot verify PME completion or explain what actions merited listed awards without documentation in your record. Erroneous and duplicate documentation should be removed. Check your OMPF to see what it looks like.

 d. Profiles

 As reference (a) states, “the fitness report provides the primary means for evaluating a Marine’s performance to support the Commandant’s efforts to select the best qualified personnel for promotion, augmentation, retention, resident schooling, command, and duty assignments.” Reporting Seniors (RS) can be as junior as 1stLts, or as senior as Commanding Generals. There is always room for improvement in fitrep writing technique. “Profile” has two connotations to board members: the number of fitreps written on Marines of each relevant grade, and a numerical figure between 80 and 100 where each Marine reported on (MRO) falls out. By definition, 90 represents average performance.

 (1) Numbers

 Marines who have written few fitreps on Marines of any specific grade (3) have immature profiles. Small grading differences result in large “relative value” (RV) jumps from 80 to 90 to 100. Marines who have written more fitreps on Marines of any specific grade, have mature profiles, and the comparative jumps become smaller but more meaningful.

 (2) Figures

 Pay attention to your RV profiles when writing fitreps! Reference (a) directs Marines to evaluate performance in grade during each individual reporting period. Marines who consistently perform well will percolate to the top. Reference (c) highlights several trends such as “welcome aboard” fitreps; “room to grow” fitreps; systematic lower marks for lower ranks coupled against corresponding higher marks for higher ranks; and different marking trends of senior ranking RS’s and RO’s as opposed to conservative markings of junior RS’s and RO’s. Board members have to interpret meaning in the data presented when weighing fitrep markings and word pictures across a career’s worth of fitreps. There is as much art as science in the process. As a board member, I had to assume that RV and RO marks were deliberate, as assessed against all MRO’s of same grade. A technique worth considering is putting a "profile line" together, with 80 at the far left, 90 in the middle, and 100 at the far right. Insert names where you think each Marine should fall out along that line. Make it personal. Put a picture of each Marine you write on in there if it helps. If one Marine is a little better or worse than another, make the grades reflect. That's what board-members ASSUME you did when we look at RS & RO relative values & profiles.

 e. Grade change

 For Grade Change reports, ensure section A reflects the grade being promoted from, not the grade promoted to (per 3004 PES manual). Mistakes here affect which officers a Marine is compared against in the RS & RO profiles.

Board members have a limited amount of time to make sense of each Marines performance, and assess who the best and most qualified Marines are. Trends become important, and the numbers are a simple tool to measure performance against. Drops or increases in performance are interpreted to be deliberate.

 f. Combat

 Combat fitreps often carry additional significance to board members, and should be easy to spot with the “C” in the fitrep occasion box. Several combat fitreps were mislabeled “N” in Section A, and blended into normal reporting occasions.

 g. Deployments

 MEU and other deployments can be hard to pick out in fitreps unless specific reference is made in Section A, I or K. Clarifying deployment experience is important, and was most effective when “24MEU”, “Black Sea Rotational Force deployment”, Horn of Africa deployment”, “SPMAGTF-12.2”, or similar reference was included in unit description. It increases the chances that a briefer will catch significant deployment details and improve each Marines chances in the brief.

 h. Section I (RS) and K (RO) comments

 Effective fitreps will comment on five things:

 (a) Rate the Marine. Top 50% of Marines observed. Top

 25%. Middle 1/3 of Marines observed. Lower 1/3.

 Your grades are doing this anyways; so it’s

 important for word picture to match the marks;

 particularly if you want to break out a top

 performing Marine. An 80% Relative Value is not

 your top 10% Marine, according to the math.

 (b) Address performance and MOS credibility (as

 applicable). Progressing with peers? Ahead of

 peers? Room to grow? Performing well outside of

 PMOS? Reputation in MOS community?

 (c) Address potential. Future company commander? OpsO?

 Dept head? Future leader? Command?

 (d) Promotion recommendation. With peers? Ahead of

 peers?

 (e) Recommend future assignment. School, special

 assignment (TBS instructor, OSO, HMX-1, FAC tour,

 MOI, SEP, FAO, lat-move, recruiter, stay in PMOS…)

 See guidance in ref a, chapter 2:

<http://www.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/MCO%20P1610.7F%20W%20CH%201.pdf>

 e. Breakout comments

 A Marines performance can be measured by many things, to include profile trends, progression of positions held, flight qualifications, combat or MEU deployments. Section I and K comments provide an opportunity to put the story in context. Word picture should match the grades. “Top 25% Marine” on a report with 80% relative value and/or bottom block RO markings clearly don’t match, and increase the odds that a briefer will misrepresent the performance of a Marine. There is no prize for filling all white space with words either. More is not always better here. Succinct commentary on a Marine’s performance, and some context are most helpful to briefers in their task to assess each Marine against their peers. Depending on which board is in progress, “peers” may include all Company Grade officers, pitting junior First Lieutenants against mid-grade Captains.

 f. Board Room

 Board members take all of the information available to them, and assign a score for each Marine. There are six possible votes:

 6 = water walker

 5 = recommend with enthusiasm

 4 = recommend with confidence

 3 = recommend with reservation

 2 = do not recommend

 1 = show cause

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