

SO, NO ONE'S SAT DOWN WITH YOU TO TALK  
ABOUT YOUR AIR FORCE CAREER?

"Too often, people spend most of their time trying to blend in with the crowd, until promotion time rolls around when they try to stand out from it"



## Preface

Not to age myself, but back in the days when we had several million people in the military, I remember when each Air Force unit actually had a bonafide enlisted career advisor. Their whole job encompassed talking with enlisted members about those things needed to achieve a successful Air Force career. With subsequent drawdowns, the career counselor's AFSC went the way of the dinosaur and, in too many instances, career NCOs and SNCOs failed to fill the void left by its extinction. I suspect this happened through no ones fault in particular, there were just fewer of us to accomplish the same if not growing missions we've always performed, and mentorship fell to the wayside in the wake of incredibly busy days.

I've written and compiled the following information in a mentorship effort to pass on guidance, advice, and counseling on how to experience a successful Air Force career. Much of the information I'm trying to pass on has been taken in whole or part from a wide variety of sources and, where possible, I've tried to identify them so credit's given where credit's due. For those I've missed, I apologize. Obviously, there are many, many factors involved in career counseling and mentorship efforts, and I can't hope to hit them all. But hopefully, this can be used as a basic source of information that can be updated, expanded on, and better defined as time moves on.

Obviously, mentoring requires a great deal of insight, reflection, and personal opinion. For that reason, please don't feel obligated to agree with everything that's said. In fact, I would encourage you to extract what you find useful, and disregard those areas you disagree with. To keep things as simple as possible, I've decided to break down the following discussion into the three major enlisted career paths of the airman, NCO, and SNCO.

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"In today's competitive market, why in the world would anyone want to be average in appearance, behavior, or performance?"





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“A successful Air Force career doesn’t just happen; it takes a lot of hard work, self-sacrifice, and a good supervisor to help lead the way”

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## AIRMAN

**When your path begins.** A successful Air Force career can be measured in many ways, depending on the goals of the individual. At a previous assignment, three of the base CMSgts would form a board to informally meet with the airmen of each Airman Leadership School class. One of the Chiefs had a basic question he liked to ask each class, and it went something like this, “How many of you want to become Chiefs?” Typically about half the class raised their hands. This was a real eye-opener for me because I thought becoming a CMSgt was the goal of all enlisted members. It taught me a valuable lesson about personal values, and that there’s more to life than reaching the top of the enlisted food chain. Still, if you’re making the Air Force a career, I would hope you’d want to get promoted on a fairly regular basis, so there are some things you really need to know to get on the right track.

Ultimately, your career path starts right now, whether you’re fresh out of basic training or testing for SSgt—it’s simply never too early to start doing things that’ll pay off for you later down the road. At worst, if you do the things I’m about to talk about, and you decide to get out after your first or second enlistment, I bet you’ll be a better person for it anyway and probably be more competitive in the civilian job market.

As you start out at your first (or new) duty assignment, never forget you only get one chance to make a good first impression. When you report in for duty, look sharp. Don’t be like some people I’ve run into who stop by the work place for the first time still on leave, looking all scraggly and unkempt. You may also want to look extra sharp when you know VIPs are going to be around your work area, or when you visit offices of high visibility. You may not know me, but I always wear my blue uniform, and I always wear a tie. When asked how come, I simply answer it’s because I never know who I’ll run into whom I need to make a good impression with. I realize some people need to wear a utility uniform due to the nature of their work, but they can still be clean and ironed, and you can still look awfully sharp wearing them. What’s that Chinese proverb – a picture’s worth a thousand words?

Earn the reputation for being honest. Once people develop trust in your word and deeds, you’ll be surprised how much they’ll start depending on you, shepherding you on to bigger and better things. The only problem with being honest is, it only takes one incident where you’re not, and all the good will and trust you previously established will have been for naught. At best you’ll have to start from scratch again, and it’ll be a pretty

big uphill battle to get your reputation back where it was if you can at all. Don't be average either. Promotions have become, and will continue to be, extremely competitive. Make yourself stand out from the crowd daily by volunteering to help out where you can, look sharp, join the honor guard, be an active member of the unit booster's club, volunteer to help put on unit events, maintain situational awareness around you so you can lend a hand when and where needed, etc. Opportunities to make yourself useful abound in the military, it's just a matter of being willing to make the commitment. Commit yourself to doing the absolute best job that you can do.

From a professional standpoint, always treat others with respect and human dignity. Keep an even temperament, particularly in the work place. Lost tempers and angry outbursts have no place in a professional working environment, and you want to develop the reputation for being calm under pressure; a person someone's not afraid to come to for advice and guidance. You can always tell the professionals from the wannabees by the way they react to stressful situations. Along these same lines, you really need to keep jokes, comments, and discussions regarding sex, race, and religion totally out of the work place. No matter how innocent a comment on any of these topics might seem to you, I absolutely guarantee you someone in your unit would be offended by them. The goal we're trying to reach here is to provide a working environment that is free of hostility and any other negative influence that might make a person feel uncomfortable at work.

Anyway, start your career off right and, though this probably seems self evident, you really need to "keep your nose clean", stay out of trouble, and do the absolute best job that you can so you can achieve those high EPR marks you'll need when you actually start testing for promotion. You may not have thought about it before, but the EPR marks you get now will be used for the next 10 years or so to establish points toward your promotion—points you'll sorely need to get promoted!

One of the biggest traps you'll need to avoid, and perhaps the easiest one to fall into, is financial irresponsibility; particularly with the new American Express card that's being issued to everyone. Many of you are entering the service out of high school, or otherwise without a credit history. Consequently, you may not be aware that you're going to be the target of local merchants offering easy credit and extended borrowing limits (even AAFES and the Enlisted Club cards which can now be used as credit cards off base as well) since you're now locked into a tour in the Air Force (and subsequent steady income). If you haven't already, you really need to practice self-control when it comes to using credit cards or other forms of indebtedness. If you're not sure how much you can obligate out of your paycheck and still have a cushion to make ends meet, make an appointment with the financial counselor that works out of the Family Support Centers on every Air Force base. They'll be glad to set down with you and work out a budget. With respect to use of the American Express card that'll be issued to you, the rules are many

and **serious!** In the least you need to know you're forbidden to use it unless you're on a TDY, and even then there are restrictions. Check with your unit Resource Advisor to get the complete rundown on the proper use of these cards.

I guess I'd like to end this first section with a pretty neat informational sheet I received via email (no author listed) describing how successful people get that way:

1. **They have DRIVE!**

They work persistently toward their objectives.

2. **They accept responsibility cheerfully.**

They not only welcome it, but also seek it as a way to prove their values.

3. **They look, listen, and learn.**

They know the difference between seeing and observing, between hearing and understanding.

4. **They find out if they're not sure.**

"I didn't know" is a lame alibi. If you don't know, find out.

5. **They set the example to others.**

In striving to do a better job yourself, you inspire and encourage those around you to follow your example.

6. **They know that the grass in the next pasture only LOOKS greener.**

The person who thinks it's impossible to succeed in the present job has failed to discover the opportunities for becoming more valuable by digging just beneath the surface.

7. **They profit from their mistakes.**

It is just as important to know what NOT to do, as what to do.

**8. They cooperate.**

Instead of playing it alone, they realize that what is best for the team is best for them.

**9. They know “the world” doesn’t owe them a living.**

Instead, they feel they owe “the world” the best of which they are capable, and that “the world” will reward them accordingly.

**10. They are willing to go that “extra mile”.**

They are members of the exclusive “extra milers club” - gladly doing more than just what it takes to “get by”.

**11. They set goals for themselves.**

They know where they want to go and are willing to study and work in order to get there.

**12. They know that everything worth having has a price tag.**

There’s a price tag on success. It has to be paid for in personal effort. Nothing is free—not even failure—for the price of failure is success itself.

**13. They know the value of enthusiasm.**

Enthusiasm is contagious. It breeds confidence in everyone within its radius.

**14. They make others feel important.**

Every job is important. Never belittle a fellow worker or the job.

**15. They never “pass the buck”.**

If they make a mistake - forget instructions, exercise poor judgment, are late to work, etc. - they admit it and learn from it.

**16. They control their tempers.**

A quick temper, a sarcastic tongue, an argumentative, fault-finding nature have closed the door to success for many otherwise capable employees.

**17. They consider work a privilege, not a chore.**

Most people complain when they are unemployed, but many complain at having to work. Work is a privilege; it justifies our right to exist.

**18. They are their own critics.**

Be sure that everything you do measures up to your own standards and that your own standards are HIGH.

**19. They never forget to do the best they can.**

“Good enough” is not enough and that only our BEST will pass the test.

**20. They realize that their future is their own responsibility.**

YOU and you alone determine how far up the ladder you will climb. YOU control your own destiny.

**Attitude.** Be enthusiastic! You’d be amazed how enthusiasm is catching. Recently I had the opportunity to return to Lackland to see my daughter graduate from basic training. During the course of my stay I was able to attend Lackland’s extraordinary BMT retreat ceremony, loiter around the drill pad for several cold hours watching the training instructors work their magic, spend an afternoon inside the barracks area following a ceremonial “swearing in”, and witness the finest display of military esprit de corps imaginable during the subsequent graduation parade the following day. By the time my visit was through I became convinced that anyone making the military a career should return to Lackland for a reminder of what true enthusiasm is all about. My daughter was incredibly excited about being in the military, and living the military life. Now I’m not saying we all need to stand at attention at curbside, look both ways curtly and march across the road with our vinyl binders glued on our elbows like the basic trainees do. But it sure won’t hurt you to throw in a few “sirs” or “ma’ams” when talking to superiors, wear sharp looking uniforms, stand up when approached by an officer, and carry yourself with pride and enthusiasm that can be displayed in so many intangible ways.

Still on “enthusiasm”, I’m also reminded of a story told us by one of the retired CMSAF (I forgot which one), who’d visited two bases where he encountered food service

airmen responsible for maintaining the salad bar. At the first base, the airman he encountered obviously didn't like his job and the CMSAF couldn't shake him; following the Chief all over the dining facility to tell him how bad things were. The salad maker first complained about his job, then he complained about the bus schedule on base, the housing was awful, the terrible movie theater conditions, cruddy gym facilities, and so on. He was finally able to shake this person only by leaving the dining facility to go to the next stop on his schedule. At the next base he visited, the airman responsible for maintaining the salad bar ran up, grabbed him by the arm, and insisted he try the great salad bar, which he also emphasized was the best in the Air Force. He went on with great enthusiasm about how super his assignment was and how much he enjoyed his job. As the Chief said at the end of his speech to us, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to see who was going to have a successful Air Force career and who wasn't. I guess the moral to this story is this; there's always going to be negative things around you if you choose to dwell on them, but there's also always a lot of positive things around you as well; why not focus on the latter?

I think I also need to pass on a story about this individual named Jerry ("Attitude is Everything" an article by Francie Baltazar-Schwartz, received over the email):

Jerry was the kind of guy you loved to hate. He was always in a good mood and always had something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "If I were any better, I would be twins!"

He was a unique manager because he had several waiters who had followed him around from restaurant to restaurant. The reason the waiters followed Jerry was because of his attitude. He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Jerry was there telling the employee how to look on the positive side of the situation.

Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Jerry and asked him, "I don't get it! You can't be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?"

Jerry replied, "Each morning I wake up and say to myself, Jerry, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life."

"Yeah, right, it's not so easy," I protested.

"Yes it is," Jerry said. "Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how



people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or a bad mood. The bottom line: It's your choice how you live life."

I reflected on what Jerry said. Soon thereafter, I left the restaurant industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but I often thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it.

Several years later I heard that Jerry did something you are never supposed to do in a restaurant business: he left the back door open one morning and was held up at gunpoint by three armed robbers. While trying to open the safe, his hand, shaking from nervousness, slipped off the combination. The robbers panicked and shot him. Luckily, Jerry was found relatively quickly and rushed to the local trauma center. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Jerry was released from the hospital with fragments of the bullets still in his body.

I saw Jerry about six months after the robbery. When I asked him how he was, he replied, "If I were any better, I'd be twins. Wanna see my scars?"

I declined to see his wounds, but did ask him what had gone through his mind as the robbery took place. "The first thing that went through my mind was that I should have locked the back door," Jerry replied. "Then, as I lay on the floor, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live, or I could choose to die. I chose to live."

"Weren't you scared? Did you lose consciousness?" I asked.

Jerry continued, "The paramedics were great. They kept telling me I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the emergency room and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes, I read, 'He's a deadman.'" "I knew I needed to take action."

"What did you do?" I asked.

"Well, there was a big, burly nurse shouting questions at me," said Jerry. "She asked if I was allergic to anything. Yes, I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply... I took a deep breath and yelled, 'Bullets!' Over their laughter, I told them, 'I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I'm alive, not dead.'"

Jerry lived thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything.

**About promotions.** As you head off down your career path, you also need to know if you perform average for most of the year, and only come on hard the last month or so of your reporting period because you know your report's due, you'll probably receive a mediocre EPR. Likewise, if you start establishing a track record of off-duty shenanigans, your EPR scores will also suffer (i.e., don't forget there's a "Conduct On and Off Duty" block on your EPR form). Contrary to popular belief, there are no "quotas" set on the percentage of enlisted people who can receive "5" (or top) ratings on their EPRs. However, there are enough good people out there who don't get into trouble, that any resemblance of a problem trend will probably get you a reduced rating. At any rate, it won't take too many of these lowered EPRs to significantly impact your chance for promotion in the foreseeable future.

Another important thing to remember about your EPRs is that the "Job Description" block on the front should change as you get promoted to reflect more responsibility, and broadened scope of experience. Each time you get promoted, from AB, to A1C, to SrA, and beyond, this often overlooked feature can play an important role in your career aspirations. This will become more important as you transition to the career force and are boarded for promotion, but updated job descriptions will still come in handy if you attempt to cross-train into a special duty, PCA to another unit on base, or try to do anything else where your records are going to be reviewed.

While I'm at it, if you're smart you'll also keep track of when your performance feedback is due. Performance feedback is critical to how well your job performance is viewed in the eyes of your superiors, and subsequently directly impacts how well you're rated in your EPR. Performance feedback is mandatory, it's not optional, and if you don't receive your feedback session when it's due it's up to you to remind your supervisor (PFW sessions are required about twice a year; depending on when you change jobs or supervisors; check with your Orderly Room to get the specific dates if you're not sure). Also, don't be too defensive if your supervisor raises some negative points during the performance feedback sessions you'll be getting. This may be hard for you to believe, but many first line supervisors aren't real comfortable, or particularly trained, in providing honest and candid performance feedback. Try and look at any negative feedback as constructive criticism, and areas to improve in the future. If you have a good supervisor, you'll have enough time to improve your weak areas before EPR time rolls around. If you don't remember anything else here, remember it's up to you to watch over your own career. Always, always stay on top of those things which affect your career.

You also need to quickly get smart about how your promotion system works, and make sure you don't fall through the cracks when it's time for career impacting actions like EPRs or BTZ consideration. With respect to the airman promotion cycle, AB are eligible to promotion to Amn at 6 months TIG, with a recommendation of the immediate commander. Airman are eligible for promotion to A1C with 10 months TIG, and the recommendation of the immediate commander. Promotion to SrA occurs at 36 months' TIS and 20 months' TIG, or 28 months' TIG, whichever occurs first. The member must also meet skill level requirements and be recommended by the immediate supervisor and commander. Promotion to SrA BTZ occurs six months earlier than the fully-qualified point. Airmen must meet skill level requirements and be recommended by their immediate supervisor and commander. Boards are held four times per year (December, March, June, and September) to consider eligibles. Up to 15% of those eligible may be promoted each cycle. To be competitive for BTZ promotions, individuals must have distinguished themselves from their peers. This will usually be evident through rapid completion of upgrade training, attaining distinguished or honor graduate status at technical school training, participating in unit, base, and community activities, completing off-duty education, and, most importantly, performing at a level that far exceeds standards as evidenced by an effective, enthusiastic performance report. (SOURCE: Enlisted Promotion Guide, Mar 97)

**How to meet a board.** If you're any good at what you do, and you have a good supervisor, you'll occasionally be nominated for airman of the quarter, or perhaps even airman of the year competition. Most bases have adopted a two part selection process to select a winner. The first involves evaluation of the nomination package itself, usually comprised of a cover letter and 1-page AF Form 1206. Just for your information, and to let you know what categories are scored and the things you need to focus on, the specific categories normally required on the AF Form 1206 (as mirrored in the Air Force's 12 Outstanding Airman of the Year format) are: 1) Leadership and Job Performance; 2) Significant Self-Improvement (i.e., PME, college courses, etc.); 3) Leadership (in terms of social, cultural, and religious accomplishments-not job related leadership); 4) Other Accomplishments; and 5) Articulate and Positive Spokesperson for the Air Force.

While there's not much you can do on the "paper-side" of the selection process once the packages have been submitted, there are some things you can do to help prepare yourself in meeting the actual board. The following is an email article I recently received of unknown authorship; still some very valuable advice.

All boards allow points for dress, appearance, and military bearing. If you study and master the tips listed below, you will greatly increase your chances for success.

**Preparation**

1. **STUDY:** AFP 36-2241, Chapters from Volume I, Time Newsweek, Airman Magazine, and Air Force Times. Current events are a must. Current event questions are usually compiled four to five days before the board meets. Gather your information during that time frame.
2. **WRITE DOWN YOUR GOALS, ASPIRATIONS, AND EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES** (and practice expressing them verbally). Example, "I have just finished my career development course and am awaiting my 5-skill level. I am enrolled in the Community College of the Air Force and currently possess 24 credit hours. My goal is to receive my Associate's Degree within two years." Board members are judging (and scoring) how you express yourself.
3. **WRITE DOWN YOUR HOBBIES** (and remember them). This is often an icebreaker question and gives you a chance to talk about yourself.
4. Obtain, and memorize, your current chain of command.
5. Females: Wear your pant suit, if you have one (the board will not have to check your skirt length). Also, take an extra pair of hose, just in case you develop a run.
6. Practice facing movements in the same shoes you will be wearing when you meet the board. Determine the location of the board and practice on the same type floor covering (i.e., carpet, linoleum, etc.). Lastly, do a pre-visit to the area/room where the board will be held to familiarize yourself with your surroundings.
7. Invest in new shoes. If it is raining the day that your board meets, carry your shoes in a plastic bag and change when you get there. Ensure the soles of your shoes are free of dirt and dust. Use polish and/or edge dressing. Take a small piece of cloth or old nylon hose to wipe the dust off your shoes.
8. If the weather is bad, carry your uniform in a plastic bag and change when you get there.
9. Do not mix trousers and coat weights (summer weight and double knit). Another tip to remember is to always get your service dress dry cleaned as a set – never do your trousers and coat separately. This will prevent uneven fading.
10. Buy new collar brass and ribbons. Ensure your buttons are straight. Ensure ribbons are in the proper order and any you wear are updated in the Personnel Data System.

11. Use masking tape to remove lint from your service dress coat.
12. Men should wear shirt garters. Droopy socks do not convey the image of a winner.
13. Do not have anything in your pockets except your ID card – no keys, change, etc.
14. If meeting the board in short sleeve shirt, clean your name tag with wax to remove scratches. Obtain a new one if necessary.
15. Men should get a haircut the day before meeting the board. Women should ensure bangs are off their eyebrows and hair does not extend below the bottom of their collar.

### **Meeting the Board**

1. Be early, Stand while you wait – do not sit down. If possible, carry your uniform to the board and change just before you meet the board.
2. When you arrive, there will be an official greeter – probably standing outside the meeting room. He/she should inform you of who is on the board and any other special instructions – if not, ask!
3. Do not take your hat or purse into the room.
4. If you are instructed to knock before entering, knock only once, but firmly.
5. When you open the door, take a good look at the room. Look for the chair you will be sitting in. March by the most direct route to position yourself in front of the chair facing the board (Do not stop and conduct facing movements when entering the room, only when leaving). There will usually be an odd number of people sitting on the board. The chairperson will be sitting in the middle. Look directly at the chairperson, salute (if it's an officer, DO NOT salute if it's an enlisted chairperson), and say, "Sir/Ma'am, Airman \_\_\_\_\_ reports to the Airman of the Quarter (Year) board as ordered." The chairperson will return your salute (if officer) and instruct you to be seated.
6. Back up until you feel the calves of your legs touch the chair. Do not look back or down—do not turn your back to the board members until you are prepared to depart.
7. Sit in the middle of the chair—not on the edge, nor all the way back (this will wrinkle your uniform).

8. Sit at attention and place your hands on your thighs. The idea is to be erect and alert, but not rigid. NEVER slouch or recline, even though the chairperson may tell you to relax.
9. When answering questions, do not turn your body—turn your head and face the person asking the question and then pan the board members when giving your answer. Good eye contact with all the board members is very important.
10. Do not cross your legs. Place one foot slightly in front of the other.
11. Smile and establish rapport with the board.
12. The first questions are usually relaxing icebreakers, such as where are you from and where do you work.
13. After being asked a question, repeat the question and preface your answer with “Sir/Ma’am.” Try to give more than the basic answer and use the full name and rank in your answer. Example: “Who is the Air Force Chief of Staff?” “Sir, the Air Force Chief of Staff is General Ronald W. Fogleman, former Commander of Air Mobility Command and US Transportation Command.”
14. If you do not understand a question, ask the board member to repeat it. If you do not know the answer at that point, ask to return to the question later. If you know part of the answer, give it—partial credit is better than none at all. Lastly, if you flat don’t know, imply tell the board you are unable to answer the question at this time.
15. If the board asks you if you have any comments, thank them for their time and add any other comments that may be appropriate.
16. When answering opinion type questions, give the Air Force opinion. If your opinion differs, say so and why, but don’t be a crusader. Be tactful.
17. When you are finished, the chairperson will say “Airman \_\_\_\_\_, you are dismissed.”
  - a. Answer, “Thank you Sir/Ma’am”.
  - b. Push down on your thighs with your hands, stand up, and look directly at the chairperson.
  - c. Give the chairperson a salute (if officer) and wait for the salute to be returned.
  - d. Step to the side of the chair and do the appropriate facing movement to put you in direct line with the door. Exit the room smartly with coordinated arm swing.

### Summary.

Be yourself. The board wants to know you. You must believe you are worthy of the award being presented and that you are a WINNER. Someone else did, or otherwise they would not have taken the time to nominate you. GOOD LUCK!!!!!!!!!!

**M**aking yourself invaluable to your organization. I think one of the best things you can do to succeed in the Air Force, and still reach your personal goals, is to make yourself invaluable to your organization. At my last assignment, there was this MSgt in our squadron who seemed to do everything that needed to be done without ever having to be asked. He did everything from emptying out everyone's waste baskets at the end of the day to washing unit vehicles on his own time, at night or during the weekend. He constantly looked around for extra things that he could do to make everyone's life a little better. We almost didn't have to have a cleanup detail in the building with this MSgt around. He was truly the consummate volunteer. When it came time for his extension paperwork to be signed at the end of his tour (it was overseas, and he actually went through several 12-month extensions during my tour there), the unit commander couldn't wait to sign it, and personally intervene with the personnel system so the unit wouldn't lose him.

I have to tell you this person had a motive for making himself invaluable to the unit; his personal goal was to be able to stay at Yokota AB, I mistakenly thought because his parents had retired in the local area. In fact, amazingly, of his 23-years in the service all but three or four were spent at Yokota; he'd even graduated from the High School there before entering the service when his father was in the Air Force. Anyway, being perhaps the sharpest MSgt I'd ever met in my life, it was maddening trying to get him to sign up for PME so he could receive a Senior Rater indorsement on his EPR and hopefully, a subsequent promotion. He simply didn't want to do it, and actually refused to sign up for the SNCO academy by correspondence course—the only flaw in an otherwise impeccable person. It wasn't until after he retired out of Yokota AB that I learned, as Paul Harvey says, “the rest of the story”. This MSgt came in to talk with me as he processed out of the Air Force. As it turns out, he didn't want to do the PME because he didn't want to get promoted, because then he would get reassigned (the slot he filled was actually for a TSgt). He didn't want to get reassigned, not because his parents lived at Yokota AB, but because all those years there he'd been banking his COLA (which was rather substantial for the Tokyo area), and he used the money to buy a condominium in Hawaii, where he subsequently retired to and, as far as I know, has a life of relative ease on a retired MSgt pay.

I guess what I'm trying to say is, it's not all that uncommon to have personal goals that are compatible with Air Force goals. Obviously, where conflict exists between the two, Air Force needs have to have priority. But, by and large, it's not all that difficult to have the best of both worlds; particularly if you make yourself invaluable to your organization. Work at being involved in as many unit activities that you can and strive to reach a point where people start asking for you by name. Try and reach the point where those around you will earnestly and eagerly try to help you when you need it. Success will truly breed success.

**Things you need to do to invest in your future.** In addition to making yourself invaluable to your organization, there are a number of other things you can do to invest in your future. The first that comes to mind is starting (or continuing) with your off-duty education. Almost all good things that'll happen to you in the Air Force will be tied into your self-improvement efforts. Whether it's cross-training into a special duty, PCA-ing to another unit on base, receiving award recognition, or BTZ consideration, people will be looking at your records to see what kind of person you are. The one constant that really sticks out in your records is a college degree of some sort; hopefully related to the career field you're in. The Air Force offers an excellent opportunity for you to continue your formal education—take advantage of it!

You also need to keep your nose to the grindstone completing your Career Development Course (CDC) volumes and upgrade training. Lagging behind, or not completing these actions on time can have a terrible impact on your career progression, and may very well result in your not being promoted, loss of an assignment, involuntarily cross training, or even removal from the Air Force altogether. With all the neat programs on TV and limitless things to do in your off time, it's easy to put these things off—but don't do it!

Another thing that's worked well for me through my career is the fact I set down at my computer each Friday, and maintain a running list of things I've accomplished during the week. Over the course of time, this list comes in handy when it's time for my EPR and my boss asks me for inputs. Trust me, your supervisor will greatly appreciate getting a number of printed pages on what you've accomplished over the past year rather than a brief, last-minute chicken-scratch list that probably won't list all the things you've done the previous 12 months. I remember one of my TSgts who even forgot to mention in his input to me he'd been the Distinguished Graduate at the previous spring's NCO Academy graduation. It's just not reasonable to expect to recall everything you've done over the past year in a moment's notice, right before your EPR's due. Likewise, if you provide a prepared listing once a quarter to your supervisor, not only will it show him/her what



you've been up to, but it provides excellent fodder (and a reminder) for a potential airman of the quarter nomination. Such a comprehensive list also provides excellent material for enhanced end-of-tour decorations (again, points toward your future promotions).

**Keeping communications open.** Perhaps one of the worst things you can do for your career, and the one thing that'll get you frustrated faster than anything else, is to allow communications to break down between yourself and other people; particularly with your peers and supervisory chain. Only an idiot would expect everyone to get along hunky dory in the karma of life, and you have to expect to run into situations where personalities clash or there's other interpersonal problems.

As you evolve into the professional that I know you're capable of being, you'll quickly find out you'll have to deal with people from all walks of life with all types of personalities. When you become frustrated or upset in dealing with someone you don't particularly get along with, it's easy to withdraw, hold things inside, and just stop dealing with what's going on altogether. If you do that, in effect you're going to make yourself and those around you miserable. Instead, pick a good time to talk (when neither of you are busy) and in a **nonconfrontational** manner, and **nonthreatening** environment, speak **privately** with the person you're having problems with. Tactfully explain what's bothering you and see if you can work things out. At the same time, be ready for some feedback yourself because you may be doing some things that upset the other person. If this doesn't work, you also have other options as well. For example, if you're having a problem with your roommate in the dormitory, you can approach the dorm manager or First Sergeant, to see if you can transfer to another room. If it's someone at work and you're really having difficulty, you can always ask to be reassigned to another work section, or perhaps even another unit on base. There's almost always a way to get around these type situations before you get too frustrated if you really stop and think about it. Honestly, I can't think of any situation where you can't get some form of help!

Sometimes, just being imaginative comes in handy working out these kinds of problems. I'm reminded of the time when I was a historian at Minot AFB, and there was this officer in a key position that thought historians were absolutely worthless and a waste of taxpayer's money. This was a major problem for me because he was instrumental in running a major branch of the operations division, and I needed his help to ensure I wrote an accurate, complete history of the unit. I'd put up with this hostility for several years when I decided to try and do something about it. I'd just finished writing a special monograph on an operational topic, and decided this would be a good opportunity to try and gain this officer's support. I went down to his office, explained that I needed his

expert assistance in writing this monograph, advised him how critical his input would be because he was the “smartest person” in the unit, and that I couldn’t hope to write a meaningful product without his support. Over the course of the next month, though I’d already written the monograph, I sent down a chapter at a time in draft form for his review. I’d done a pretty good job researching this project, so the officer didn’t really provide any feedback that changed what I’d already written. Still, in short order, I was able to establish rapport with this person to the point that he actually wrote another monograph for me altogether, on another operational topic, that was well-received at higher headquarters. Believe it or not, by the time I left Minot he’d decided to cross-train into the historian career field, from which he recently retired after many years of outstanding work. The long and short of it here is, the power of “an ounce of sugar” over a “pound of salt” is too often forgotten.

Ultimately, there are various viewpoints you may also want to keep in the back of your mind to help you cope with occasional unpleasant interpersonal situations. Perhaps one of the neat things about being in the service is that relationships are extremely transitory as people PCS in/out; if there’s a person out there you **occasionally** have to deal with whom you don’t particularly get along, the relationship won’t be long term as he/she will eventually be reassigned. Another neat thing about being in the service is that one person on a base usually doesn’t exclusively hold the key to getting something done, and there’s usually a way to go around a specific individual to avoid confrontational situations and still complete the mission. Just remember, if a person is being unpleasant toward you, he or she is being unpleasant toward everyone else so don’t take it personal, and don’t go around talking about that person to everyone else; they already know what’s going on and doing so just diminishes your own professionalism. On the other hand, if you’re having problems dealing with everyone around you, you may want to reevaluate what you’re doing to ensure you’re not part of the problem too.

**Enjoy coming to work.** The bottom line in most of the things I’ve talked about is, you need to be happy about getting up in the morning and going to work. If you are, your attitude, enthusiasm, dedication, and professionalism will be readily apparent. If you’re not, you need to ask yourself why and do something about it.

Sometimes day-to-day, work-related frustrations can be pinned down to something simple and easily resolved; maybe something as easy as setting down and talking with your supervisor. Other times, unhappiness and frustrations can be more deeply rooted and perhaps even tied to Air Force requirements themselves. For example, one of the more common complaints I hear about is the increased opstempo/perstempo in TDY rates

away from home. What many people fail to see is, since the last round of drawdowns began in the mid '80s, the Air Force lost about 40 percent of its force, but at the same time there's been a corresponding 400-percent increase in TDY requirements as bases closed both at home and overseas. Our continued requirement to support Southwest Asia manning isn't helping our TDY rates either. While the Air Force is trying to do things to help compensate people for, and offset, today's high TDY rates, there's no end in sight based on today's Air Force requirements. At present, the Air Force goal is to keep people under 120-days TDY per year; however, that's still three of twelve months you could be gone from home. Realistically then, if this is the problem that's driving someone's frustration, then they need to reevaluate their position, to include their compatibility with the Air Force, when it's time to reenlist. Let's face it, if someone's constantly unhappy and frustrated, they're not doing themselves any good, their families any good, or the Air Force any good. In the end, too, not everyone's cut out for an Air Force career, and there's nothing to be ashamed of if you want to leave the service to try something different with your life.

**Have realistic career expectations.** I think people should have realistic career expectations as they progress through their Air Force career. No one should be discouraged from striving to achieve the highest rank possible, but at the same time, they should broaden their perspective as to how a successful Air Force career can be defined. Recently I received an informative message on this topic (HQ USAF/DP, 281913Z Feb 97, by Lt Gen Mike McGinty) and I thought it sufficiently important to pass appropriate sections on to you:

There are many milestones in an enlisted member's career. The best way to review these milestones is to follow a typical enlisted member's career. In FY 96, our notional airman, Tim Jones, could have been one of 30,700 non-prior service enlistees or one of our 200 people with prior military service who joined the Air Force. Tim joined for four years, as did 95 percent of all new members. About five percent of the new recruits enlisted for six years.

In FY 96, the Air Force paid enlistment bonuses in only four career fields, encouraging 162 people to enlist in critically needed Air Force specialties for six years, versus four years. The amount paid to each member varied according to specialties: explosive ordnance disposal-\$1,000, linguistics-\$4,000, combat controller-\$6,000, and pararescue-\$6,000.

Upon arriving at basic military training school at Lackland AFB, every airman begins a six-week basic military training (BMT) course. Not everyone makes it through. In the

last five years, BMT attrition has varied between six percent in FY 92 to a high of 11 percent in FY 95—it averaged nine percent.

After BMT, some airman (E-1) basics are given credit for education or other military “experience” (civil air patrol, junior ROTC, etc.) and promoted immediately to airman (E-2) or airman first class (A1C or E-3). Eight percent of all enlisted accessions receive this credit and are promoted to airman after MBT and 13 percent are promoted to airman first class. As a typical airman, Airman Jones did not receive this credit and departed BMT in the rank of airman basic.

Following BMT, Airman Jones, along with all his contemporaries, report to formal technical training. All airmen attend formal technical training. These courses range from two weeks to one year, but most attend for approximately six weeks. Ninety-four percent of the airmen will successfully complete technical school. Of the six percent who fail to complete technical training, three percent are sent to another specialty course and three percent are separated from the Air Force. Upon graduation, airmen are awarded their three-skill level and become an “apprentice.”

After graduating from technical school, Airman Jones reports to his first duty station—chances are it will be stateside. Only 15 percent of a representative BMT flight will likely be assigned overseas with 13 percent a long tour locations, and two percent going to short tour areas. Certain specialties have more opportunities overseas (e.g., linguists or tactical air command and control specialists). A complete list of these specialties can be found on the CONUS/overseas imbalanced AFSC list located at your local Military Personnel Flight.

The first priority for Airman Jones is learning his job through dual-channel training (On-The-Job Training (OJT) and Career Development Courses (CDCs)).

At the 36-month point, if qualified and recommended by his commander, Airman Jones will be promoted to Senior Airman (SrA). A select number of airman, 15 percent, can be promoted to senior airman Below-The-Zone (BTZ), six months early. After completing their CDCs and at least one year of OJT, Airman Jones will be awarded the five-skill level, and will become a “journeyman”.

At 48 months of service (or upon his first reenlistment or selection to E-5, staff sergeant (SSgt)), Senior Airman Jones is introduced to the first level of Professional Military Education (PME) offered to the enlisted force—the 30-day, in-residence Airman Leadership School located at most bases. This is a requirement before he can be promoted to SSgt. Before SrA Jones reaches the end of his first enlistment, 26 percent of his original graduating BMT flight-mates have left the Air Force for one of many different

reasons (medical disqualification, Palace Chase to the guard or reserves, hardship, separation for cause, etc.).

Having completed his first four (or six) years of service, SrA Jones would have the opportunity to reenlist for the first time. To reenlist, every airman must apply for and receive a Career Job Reservation (CJR). CJRs allow the Air Force to manage the numbers of people that move into higher levels of a particular Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC). Approximately 13,000 people apply for a CJR each year. Eighty-two percent ask for and receive a CJR to reenlist in their current AFSC. Only three percent (370 people) did not receive a CJR in their requested AFSC in FY 96, and chose to separate. Airmen in this situation had the option of requesting a CJR in another AFSC where the Air Force had a requirement. Approximately 59 percent of all those eligible to reenlist after their initial enlistment, do so (first term enlistment).

In Jun 74, the Air Force began paying members to reenlist in certain selected military specialties using a Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB). The SRB is the primary monetary incentive to attain the number of reenlistments necessary to support specific career fields. In FY 96, 3,604 people in 55 different AFSCs reenlisted with an SRB. Payment of the bonus money varies by skill. The amount is determined using a formula based on monthly base pay, the number of years the member reenlists for, and an Air Force determined multiplier that can be raised or lowered to meet the needs of the service. Reenlistment bonuses range from \$2,300 (e.g., an A1C with three years of service, reenlisting for four years as an in-flight refueling specialist—boom operator—or an airborne warning and control radar operator, using the current .5 multiplier) to \$32,000 (e.g., a TSgt with eight years of service, reenlisting for six years as a Slavic crypto linguist or pararescue, using the current multiplier of three—you will notice this TSgt reached the rank of TSgt much earlier than the Air Force average of 13 years which is listed later in this article). The SRB is not a guaranteed entitlement because the Air Force reviews and revises, if necessary, the SRB skills list every six months. Airmen should not make financial plans or commitments before reenlisting and receiving the bonus.

Commanders have an opportunity to promote airmen using a unique and highly selective program, Stripes for Exceptional Performers (STEP). STEP gives commanders a tool to promote exceptional performers who have not been selected under the Weighted Airman Promotion System (WAPS). The goal is to promote deserving hard chargers who are behind their peers when comparing years of service to the number of stripes on their arms. Annually, the Air Force allocates two percent of the SSgt, TSgt, and MSgt promotions for this program (approximately 400 out of 20,000). Senior commanders, using their quotas, may promote airmen they consider exceptionally well qualified to immediately advance to the next grade. In FY 96, 120 SrA were STEP-promoted to

SSgt, 200 SSgts were STEP-promoted to Technical Sergeant (TSgt), and 100 TSgts were promoted to Master Sergeant (MSgt).

Most airmen currently sew on SSgt around the seven and one-half year point, after competing in about four promotion cycles (four chances to test). Over the past five years, the promotion opportunity to SSgt has averaged 16.6 percent. Last year, the opportunity to SSgt was 16.6 percent, and in FY 97 it's projected to be 17.6 percent. Only 48 out of every 100 individuals who attend BMT with SrA Jones can expect to make SSgt because many people decide to leave the Air Force before this point. An actuality, 93 percent of those who stay will eventually make SSgt. Once promoted to SSgt and after 12 months of upgrade training, SSgt Jones can attend 7-level technical school. He attains his 7-skill level after graduation and 18 months of upgrade training. This 7-level, called "craftsman", holds many key jobs in the enlisted force and allows him to test and compete for TSgt.

Most members (assuming four year enlistment) must reenlist again at approximately the eight year point. Seventy-six percent of all those eligible to reenlist at this point, do so (second term reenlistment).

The average airman sews on TSgt at almost 13 years of service after five promotion cycles (five chances to test). Over the past five years, the promotion opportunity to TSgt has averaged 11.9 percent. Last year, the opportunity to TSgt was 11.2 percent and in FY 97, it's projected to be 14.7 percent. Twenty-five out of every 100 airman who entered the Air Force with Tim Jones can expect to join him at the rank of TSgt. Once again, of those SSgts who stay in, 76 percent will eventually make TSgt. Somewhere between the ninth and 14<sup>th</sup> year of service, all TSgts will have the opportunity to go to the six-week long NCO Academy. Various NCO Academies are run by Major Commands throughout the Air Force. This school is a requirement to attend before advancing to MSgt.

While acquiring an academic degree from an institution of higher learning is not required for enlisted members, it is a goal many set for themselves. The Air Force offers many different opportunities to pursue this goal. Whether it is an associate degree from the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) or a bachelor degree from a civilian institution, attain this goal will enhance duty performance and better prepare someone for the future. Today, 51 percent of all MSgts have an associate degree or higher.

If TSgt Jones is promoted to MSgt on the Air Force average, he would sew on the new stripe at approximately 16 years of service after three promotion cycles (three chances to test). Over the past five years, the promotion opportunity to MSgt has averaged 19.7 percent. Last year, the opportunity to MSgt was 19.5 percent, and in FY 97, it will be 21.2 percent. Only 17 out of every 100 people who join the Air Force usually make MSgt,

however, of those TSgts who stay with the Air Force, 61 percent will eventually make MSgt.

Very few enlisted members progress past the rank of MSgt. Only two percent of the total enlisted force are SMSgts and another one percent Chiefs. Promotion to SMSgt and CMSgt are different from the lower grades. Unlike previous ranks, prospective SMSgts and CMSgts only take one test, the USAF Supervisory Exam, which measures their leadership and managerial ability. For promotion to SMSgt and CMSgt, the member's records meet an evaluation board and receive a score. The board uses the whole person concept to evaluate someone's potential to serve in a higher grade. This score is added to their WAPS factors to develop a rank order within each AFSC.

The average sew-on time for SMSgt is approximately 19 years of service and those members who make SMSgt usually do so after four promotion cycles (four chances to test and meet the board). Over the past five years, the promotion opportunity to SMSgt has averaged six and one-half percent. Last year, the opportunity to SMSgt was seven percent. Approximately six of every 100 new accessions can expect to make SMSgt, but 49 percent of the MSgts who stay in long enough will achieve the rank of SMSgt.

Throughout the above, average sew on times for each rank have been provided. The times are averages; by definition, some people make their grade earlier than stated and others make it later. It is important to note—if you examine the average sew on times for those who eventually reach SMSgt and CMSgt, they will most often have made SSgt, TSgt, and MSgt earlier than the averages listed.

All SMSgts, and a small number of MSgts, have an opportunity to attend the Air Force Senior NCO Academy (SNCOA). Attending SNCOA is a requirement before a member can advance to CMSgt. Some members will have the unique opportunity to attend sister service school PME. This is an opportunity that should not be overlooked; especially for specialties that routinely work closely with other services.

Reaching the highest rank in the enlisted corps, CMSgt, is achieved by only two out of 100 accessions. Of those SMSgts who stay to compete for CMSgt, 64 percent will eventually reach this mark. The percentage making CMSgt is higher than the percentage making SMSgt because many people chose to retire prior to this point in their career. The average sew on time for CMSgt is approximately 21 years of service and those members who make CMSgt, usually do so after three promotion cycles (three chances to test and meet the board). Over the past five years, the promotion opportunity to CMSgt has averaged 13.3 percent. Last year, the opportunity to CMSgt was 19.4 percent.

To provide consistently predictable career opportunities to all Air Force members over time, the Air Force establishes High Year of Tenure (HYT) dates that vary per grade. In 1986, prior to the drawdown, HYT was 20 years for SrA through SSgt, 23 years for TSgt, 26 years for MSgt, 28 years for SMSgt, and 30 for CMSgt. A very small number of CMSgts were allowed to stay until 33 years of service. In 1990, to provide a mid-course correction and help manage the enlisted force structure during the drawdown, HYTs were adjusted to 10 years for SrA, 20 years for SSgt and TSgt, 24 years for MSgt, and 26 years for SMSgt. CMSgt HYT remained at 30 years, however the 33-year option was eliminated in 1989. Once end strength stabilizes, the adjusted HYT points for TSgt, MSgt, and SMSgt will again be reviewed in light of Air Force requirements to determine the most appropriate HYT for the enlisted force structure.

Annually, approximately 600 SrA are required to separate at 10 years of service because they have not reached the grade of SSgt. SSgts and TSgts who retire must do so at their HYT (20 years). In 1996, 556 SSgts and 1,958 TSgts retired at 20 years of service. Another 1,007 MSgts were also required to retire at their HYT (24 years) in 1996. In terms of realistic career expectations, most NCOs retire at 20 years of service as a MSgt.

Between two and three percent of the Air Force enlisted corps will change specialties, or retrain, annually. Last year, 7,789 members changed AFSCs for a variety of reasons. Six percent of the retraining resulted from members being disqualified from their current specialty. Twenty-four percent of the people who retrained (1,897) did so under the Career Airman Reenlistment Reservation System (CAREERS) retraining program. This program allows first term airmen to voluntarily change specialties. The bulk of retrainees (62 percent—4,828 people in FY 96) were retrained under the NCO retraining program that occurs after the member's initial enlistment. Of those 4,828 members, 93 percent voluntarily retrained to meet Air Force requirements. Only seven percent were involuntarily retrained.

For many, retirement offers closure to a long and successful career in the United States Air Force. Those who choose to retire should have a deep sense of pride in a successful career. As mentioned earlier, success is different for everyone as each person will have his or her individual goals and aspirations. Historically, almost half the enlisted retirements (47.2 percent) occur at MSgt. By comparison, another 13 percent of all retirements occur in the rank of SMSgts and seven percent of the retirements are in the rank of CMSgt. The largest number of enlisted retirements occur at 20 years of service (56 percent), while another seven percent retire at 21 years, and eight percent retire at 22 years. Five percent retire at 23 years, 12 percent retire at 24 years, and only 12 percent of all enlisted retirements occur between 25 and 30 years of service. Remember MSgt Jones? He will most likely retire as a MSgt with 20 years of service, along with the



largest percentage of enlisted members. During his 20-year career, he will typically be assigned to one long tour location and one short tour location; however, the total number of assignments varies greatly according to AFSC and volunteer status.

The term success is often—but mistakenly—discussed in terms of promotion. For example, despite our very competitive and selective promotion processes, some people conclude nothing short of promotion to Colonel or CMSgt is a successful career. From the institutional viewpoint, success is when an individual we recruit and train, honorably serves our nation and is a contributing member on the Air Force team. Length of service or highest grade held is not the primary determinant of a successful Air Force tour or career. Defining success in terms of achieving a senior grade has several serious drawbacks: among them careerists thinking and a mindset that not attaining Colonel or Chief means you have failed or did not have a successful career. Instead, success in the Air Force can mean many things. Success is different for everyone, as each will have individual goals and aspirations. Some may define success as honorably serving through their initial commitment, separating after completing four or six years and transitioning to the civilian sector as productive citizens. Others may follow this same route and continue to serve as a civil servant or in the guard or reserve. Still others may define success as progressing from enlistment to commissioning. Others may set retirement as their measure of success. And, some may label success as promotion to a specific grade. All these are examples of what individuals view as their measure of a successful career or tour in the Air Force.

As we counsel, mentor, and develop our people, we should distinguish between institutional requirements and individual career goals, and then attempt to strike a balance between a person's aspirations and realistic expectations. There is nothing wrong with lofty goals (and a genuine desire to serve the nation, grow as an Air Force team member, and progress up the military structure). We should, however, temper career expectations with a dose of reality. First and foremost is keeping our people focused on our institutional needs: we must develop people who are skilled in the employment and support of Air and Space power, who understand operations, and how they are part of the Air Force's contribution to national defense. Given this foundation, there are numerous paths to meet individual career and success goals. We owe it to our people to ensure they realize how attainable—or how ambitious—their goals may be. Through training, mentoring, and coaching we can help them chart a course that simultaneously serves the Air Force and helps them reach their professional and personal goals, while advising them how attainable (or lofty) their goals might be.

## NCOs

**Setting the example.** A remarkable thing happened at the County Fair the other day. There's probably a lesson in it for all of us. Not to bore you, but my daughter had just turned five, so as part of her birthday celebration my wife and I took her to the County Fair. I was dumb enough to get a "ride all day" hand stamp for my daughter and I (with what appeared to be permanent enamel that'll probably never come off). Needless to say, I spent the next five hours or so waiting in long lines at every kiddy ride in the park; you know, the standard miniature car, miniature boat, and tiny twirly elephant ride areas they set aside for those kids 48-inches and shorter. Being 6 feet 3 inches tall, this was no mean feat for a person of my age and disposition. I'll never do that again.

Anyway, as we meandered around to all the kiddy rides I always thanked the person running it as we got off, wishing them a good day, but no one ever responded. I started noticing a pattern here. It was almost like every one of these roustabouts were in a trance; zombies trapped in performing countless repetitions of the most mundane, boring job in the world. So I thought to myself, who could blame them? After all, they don't get any days off in the summer season, they tear down and put up the equipment themselves, and then they have to spend all day and night running the stuff, putting up with snotty kids and grumpy parents. Soon I just concentrated on having fun with my wife and daughter, and we rode the rides for the remainder of the afternoon, well into the early evening.

All day I'd escaped having to go on any of the major adult rides. Being the chicken that I am, I thought I was "home free" as we headed for the exit. Unfortunately, just as we stopped to buy some cotton candy to take home with us, my daughter spotted a major midway ride she wanted to go on. It was one of those octopus-looking, gosh-awful, gut-wrenching, centrifugal-force contraptions that spin around and fling you from one extreme corner of the fenced off area to another. I reluctantly agreed to take my daughter on the ride. Not too long after the ride started, I noticed other people on the ride laughing and carrying on. About the time I started wondering what the heck was going on, I felt something brush the top of my head. Knowing it was unnatural for anything to be touching my head at this particular point in my life, I looked back to see what it was as the G-forces swept me in the other direction. Low and behold, there's the carnival roustabout taking the baseball hat off another rider as the car momentarily hesitated

before flinging itself off in the other direction (eventually putting the hat back on the rider later during the ride). It was obvious this roustabout was having an absolute ball and, by interfacing and bantering back and forth with the riders, provided us with a truly enjoyable experience as well. I really couldn't believe it. Here's this skinny old unshaven, tattooed, toothless, food-gumming, minimum wage-paid roustabout, who's probably put in at least a 12-hour day performing the most monotonous, redundant job on the planet, appearing to be having the time of his life. What's even better, in just a matter of minutes he was able to get a group of grumpy old tired strangers (us) to smile and actually have a great time at the end of a long day as well.

After I got home, I reflected a bit on what I'd just experienced and how it might relate to those of us in the Air Force. After all here we are, professionals in arguably the most exciting job in the world, doing truly great things for our country, yet more and more I encounter "sourpuss" people during the course of my day-to-day duties. What was it that this old roustabout had that too many of us are lacking, and what kind of magic did he possess to be able to transform a bunch of grouchy old strangers into people having a great time in only a few minutes? Anyway I looked at it, after thinking about all the hardships he'd gone through to be in the position he was, the answer boiled down to his having a positive outlook on life. I'm convinced that no matter what this gentleman does in his life, he's determined to have a good time doing it. That doesn't mean he won't take his job seriously, or that he won't be professional in what he does; I simply believe he'll be determined to make the best out of whatever situation he finds himself in.

I guess my point is, just as "enthusiasm" is catching, so is a positive outlook. For supervisors it's absolutely critical you project a positive approach. It really doesn't matter what you do for a living, if you project a positive outlook, even in working through tough problems, your subordinates will pick up on it too. Conversely, if you convey sarcasm, pessimism, or other negative traits, these will surely be reflected in your subordinate's behavior; not only toward you but those outside your workcenter as well (which directly reflects on you and perceptions on your abilities as a supervisor). For you to be successful in your career, however you define success, you surely need positive, enthusiastic subordinates to help you get the job done. You can't do it alone, and you won't be able to manifest this support without taking a positive approach yourself. Set the example for behavior standards in your unit!

As you transition from airmen to NCOs, you'll also be expected to set the example in appearance as well. You may not be aware of it, but you're being watched and evaluated by your subordinates every day. Not to harp on the subject, but you really do need to pay close attention in conforming with uniform and hair guidelines. Likewise, the thing that'll probably get you in a compromising position faster than anything as a supervisor is to exceed weight/body fat standards. Think about it. If you, the supervisor, are out of

physical condition, how can you counsel any of your subordinates who are overweight/exceed body fat standards? Technically, you probably could based on your rank, but in reality you won't be effective. In reality, you've lost the moral right to counsel anyone else if you exceed the standards yourself. At best, no one will take you seriously and, at worst, other Air Force standards will start slipping in your work section as well. Also related to weight management, perhaps the most common complaint I've heard regarding the dreaded "weigh-ins" is that airmen usually are the ones weighing in/tape measuring higher-ranked enlisted members and officers. The thought being that, somehow, this was inappropriate. I can only answer this concern with something a previous commander said when I raised this issue on behalf of one of his subordinate officers. He said, "Chief, in all my years as a squadron commander I haven't met one physically fit person who complained about being weighed in by an airman; the only ones who do are those exceeding standards and they only have themselves to blame." With the exception of bonafide medical cases, I really couldn't argue with his point and the bottom line was we continued to run everyone through the same airman, in the same Orderly Room, regardless of rank. Please do yourself a favor and don't put yourself in these embarrassing situations; for health's sake if nothing else, stay physically fit. In any event, we just can't "pick and choose" what Air Force standards we want to comply with and those we don't; it doesn't work that way.

You also need to set the example in your approach to Air Force core values. Again, I don't want to insult your intelligence, but you always need to try to do the right thing (even when you think no one else is watching). You need to set the standard for work ethics in your work section, and be willing to put the needs of your unit and subordinates before yourself when required. The bottom line here is, if your personal values conflict with being an honest person, dedicating yourself to the mission at the occasional expense of your personal desires, and doing the best job that you can, you probably need to find another line of work outside the Air Force. These values are the "price of admission" to the Air Force, and we all need to be aware of that. 'Nuff said.

**What you need to do to get promoted.** If you don't know by now, you hold the key for your next promotion. First and foremost, as simple as this sounds, you need to study. I can't count the times people have come to me to complain about not being promoted. The first question out of my mouth is, "Where's your post-test score notification rip." When they bring it to me, there's almost invariably low PFE and SKT scores; usually in the low 60s, 50s, and even 40s—in the history of the Air Force I don't think anyone's been promoted with these kinds of scores unless they're the only ones testing in their particular career field. Promotions are just too competitive. Don't get me wrong, we have some really super people who score in the 70s and 80s and still don't get promoted, but I found them to be the exception rather than the rule. You need to study,

study, and when you're tired of studying, study some more. If you can't study at work or during your lunch time, study at home. If you can't study at home, study at the Library or some other quiet place removed from distractions, but you need to study. Every one has their own routine for studying. I remember I'd been the #1 nonselectee in my career field for three years in a row testing for SMSgt; missing each time by just a few points. The fourth year I took 30-days leave for the sole purpose of studying my PFE manuals, and that's all I did-study. I scored 87 points on my PFE that year and got promoted to SMSgt. I'm not saying you need to do what I did, and I don't really care what routine you use. But, if you haven't been promoted in a while and you're getting low scores, you may want to think about changing your study routines.

In addition to studying your PFE and SKT material, you obviously have to perform well on the job to earn those firewall EPR markings, and to hopefully be put in for mid-tour and PCS decorations (points toward your promotion as well). I covered some of the things you can do to improve your chances for enhanced EPR and decoration submissions in the "Airman" section of this guide, and the same information applies to you so I won't repeat myself. But on top of that, it's been my experience that some people have exciting jobs resulting in easily written, "hard hitting, mission-impact" EPR bullets, while others of us have more mundane, yet equally important, support roles where a lot of the EPR/decoration material is pretty dry.

Hopefully, the latter will have good supervisors with the ability to tie support accomplishments in with the more exciting stuff the unit does. But you can help yourself here as well. Everyone needs to look outside their immediate work sections to see what they can do to help others. But if you know you're in a work situation where your supervisor is going to have to fight to come up with effective work-related bullets for your EPR, you can help him or her flesh it out by volunteering to assist in projects outside your immediate work area, pursuing a civilian education, completing your PME as soon as you can, etc. As I said in the "Airman" section of this guide, there's always an endless list of projects you can volunteer for, both in and outside your unit, and if you work hard at it you'll certainly be able to put some "pizzazz" in your EPR that'll catch the eye of anyone reading it (whether it be for a board once you start testing for SMSgt, for a special duty application, or any other career-enhancing reason).

Last, I would like to tell you about a situation I found myself in regarding promotions, or lack thereof. No one in our unit for this particular cycle was promoted despite a fairly high Air Force promotion rate; at least compared to recent years. I felt absolutely terrible, wondering if the unit was doing something wrong that cut down on our people's chances at promotions. Then, one day I walked into the break area and overheard a conversation between two of the affected enlisted members. One said to the other, "Yea, I haven't opened a PFE book in three years", and the other replied "I haven't studied

mine in four years either". You may find this conversation ludicrous for two enlisted members who'd just tested for promotion, but they'd been "guessing", based on previous years' scores, that they had no chance for promotion even if they maxed out on their written tests. I'm sure many of you are playing the same guessing game. But each year the cutoff scores change; what if you're wrong? I can tell you in the promotion cycle I just talked about, I checked the cutoff scores versus test scores of everyone in our unit who tested and there would've been people promoted if they'd just scored a little higher on their tests. Please study as if you'd missed promotion by only a few points the previous year; the only thing it'll cost you is a little time and effort. You hold the key to your future promotions.

**Writing EPRs on your subordinates.** If you want your subordinates to "take care of you" by performing well and reflecting positive on your leadership abilities, you need to do a good job taking care of them. One of the best ways to do that is to write effective and timely EPRs on their behalf. The "dos" and "don'ts" on the mechanics of writing EPRs are pretty well covered in the AFPAM 36-2241 PFE manual (pages 101 through 112). Still, there are some other things you need to be aware of regarding the EPR process.

I guess before you start writing effective EPRs, you need to understand a little of the philosophy behind them. Many people argue the "front" and "back" of the EPR are unrelated, while others insist they are. In a way, I believe they're both right. The front of the EPR reflects a member's past behavior and performance for the reporting period in question (i.e., evaluation of "performance"), whereas the block markings on the back portray the member's future "potential" for serving in the next higher grade (i.e., "promotion recommendation"). Still, the narrative on the back has to relate to the front markings. For example, you wouldn't want to have anyone marked in a substandard block on the front, and shown as "walking on water" with an overall "5" on the back. Perhaps one of the more common "marking conflicts" I've seen is where someone has been given an overall "5" on the back of the EPR (indicating "immediate promotion" over others), yet they're marked down in the first two blocks on the front of the EPR. With the exception of cross-trainees, these top two blocks are arguably the most important ones on the front of the EPR. I think you have to ask yourself, if someone isn't the exception at what they do in terms of job performance, and they don't excel in the knowledge of their primary duties, how in the world can they be recommended for "immediate promotion" with a "5" over others in the same rank and AFSC? With the high caliber people we now have in the Air Force, it just doesn't make sense.

Also, we need to keep integrity in the system. Not too long ago an EPR came across my desk with a firewall “5” marking, but I remembered this individual had gotten an Article 15 in the reporting period. Again, this person was an excellent worker, but there are just too many good people out there who don’t get Article 15s when comparing this person to his peers.

Still talking about the front of the EPR, as your airmen progress in rank (and you can take this advice for yourselves), ensure their job descriptions change year-to-year to reflect growing responsibility. This may not seem too important now, but we need to get in the habit of updating job descriptions to reflect professional growth. This will always come in handy for such things as PCAs, requests for special duties, and other personnel actions. However, updating job descriptions will become critically important when promotion boards start looking at someone’s records (remember, the last 10-year’s worth). It really comes off bad when a board sees you performing the same job year in and year out, as you get promoted up through the ranks, with no commensurate growth in responsibility.

With regards to the “text” portion of the EPR sections on the back of the form, I recommend you use a “two-clause” writing style for each bullet and sub-bullet. In the first clause of the bullet, say what the person did (act or accomplishment) using hard hitting, eye catching action verbs (no fluff). Follow this first clause with a comma (or if your style differs a little use a semi colon or “...”) and add a second clause describing the “impact” this accomplishment had on your unit or mission. To come up with an effective “impact” clause, simply ask yourself “So what?” in relation to the first portion of the bullet. The answer should be self-evident. If you can adhere to this simple rule of thumb you’ll become a very effective EPR writer.

Much has been said about “white space” in the “text” blocks on the back of the EPR form. Some people say it doesn’t matter how much “white space” remains in the blocks at the bottom of the bullets within each section. Others argue not only should there not be any white space left in the bottom of the blocks, there shouldn’t be much “white space” between the end of each line of text and the margin on the right-hand side of the form (i.e., not much white space anywhere on the form in the sections where bullets are used.) As someone in their infinite wisdom once said, “Let me say this about that.” It’s my opinion each EPR bullet only needs to be as long as required to be effective using the “two-clause” approach. However, if someone has “white space” at the bottom of a given section (i.e., room for more bullets), the ratee probably needs to be out doing things to flesh it out. My thought is this, the fact that people even have different opinions on this tells me we need to push for the maximum amount of bullets for our people versus the minimum.

You never know who's going to be setting on a promotion or personnel action board, and the more substantive stuff our people do that can be reflected in EPRs, the more favorably it reflects that they're willing to do more than the minimum required for a hard-hitting, top performer-type EPR. In short, it can't hurt.

Before writing an EPR on someone, you should always ask the person for inputs instead of just trying to come up with things yourself. Mentioned in the "Airman" section, I had a TSgt working for me one time who, when I asked for his EPR inputs, replied that he "trusted me" to come up with my own bullets. I'm here to tell you, you need to ensure your subordinates are tracking what they do throughout the year, and you need to be doing the same for the sake of yourselves and your own supervisors. As for the above TSgt, I struggled for several days trying to come up with effective EPR material and I just couldn't do the person justice. When I pressed him for inputs, and he finally gave them to me, I was able to write a decent EPR but even then we'd both forgotten he'd been selected Distinguished Graduate at the NCO Academy eight months earlier and it wasn't included. Even the "Amazing Kreskin" wouldn't be able to recall all his accomplishments the past year off the top of his head. Always take responsibility for your own careers, including keeping track of what you do on a monthly, if not weekly basis. These inputs will come in handy not only for EPRs, but for quarterly/annual awards, end-of-tour/mid-tour decorations, and other career enhancing actions as well.

If you think about it, an EPR is just another form of performance feedback. If you've given PFW sessions to your subordinates as you should, EPR verbiage/markings should come as no surprise to the ratee when EPR time rolls around. In fact, if you're a good supervisor, you'll have given PFW sessions to your people with sufficient lead time to allow them to improve in those areas where they've come up a little short. Too, if you haven't experienced this already, at some point in time you're probably also going to be asked by your subordinates, "What can I do to earn a "5" on my EPR". This is sort of a trick question, and a trap many supervisors fall into. The fact is, since you're comparing each ratee against others in a similar rank and AFSC at any given point in time, you should never promise anyone a "5" if they improve in certain areas. Even if they improve as requested, they still may not be up to the standards and accomplishments of their peers. At best, you should emphasize these are the areas they need to improve in to "be in the best position to earn a "5".

The last piece of advice I'd like to pass on regarding EPRs is that they need to be timely. Treat each EPR like it's your own; you'd like your EPR to be on time, and so would others. The funny thing about EPRs is, their timing comes as no surprise. Unless someone PCSs or changes reporting officials, a person's EPR is due every 12 months. If we're all just a little proactive, it won't be that hard to "plot out" when our folks' EPRs are due and get a little ahead of the power curve.



Trust me, if there's anything you can procrastinate over, it's writing an EPR—don't do it because we owe our people more than that. Too, most of us tend to forget our peoples' EPRs once they leave our hands.

Unfortunately, between the coordination process, sporadically checked in-boxes, and people on leave or TDY, all too often EPRs become late because no one's really tracking where these things are. Again, I encourage you to become a little more proactive and arrange some kind of internal suspense system where you're told when your peoples' EPRs have been finalized and forwarded.

**Performing performance feedback.** You may not know it yet, but conducting effective PFW sessions with your subordinates is probably one of the hardest things you'll ever have to do as a supervisor. Let's face it, no one (or at least not many of us) enjoy entering what could be a confrontational situation. Still, PFW sessions are critical in letting your people know how they're doing in your eyes, what they need to do to improve, and these sessions can be extremely beneficial, if not crucial, in improving peoples' job performance.

Again, the AFPAM 36-2241 PFE manual (pages 98 through 104) and AFI 36-2403 "The Enlisted Evaluation System" covers the basic concepts and mechanics of administering an effective PFW program. However, I just want to pass on a few personal thoughts on this topic as well.

You need to be honest with your people during PFW sessions, but it doesn't have to be "brutally" honest. With a little pre-thought, you can couch your terms in a way to clearly identify areas requiring improvement without totally offending someone. You need to be clear enough that there's no doubt in your subordinate's mind on what needs to be done to improve work performance, but you don't have to set there and tell them what a rotten, stinking job they're doing. Try and be positive in your expectations with your people, and don't forget PFW sessions are also designed to let people know what they're doing right, so focus on these areas and pat them on the back for doing good as well.

Last, though you may not have given it much thought, in addition to providing feedback on someone's work performance, PFW sessions are also tailor made to provide mentoring counseling as well. In fact, it's now a mandatory part of PFW in many commands. Before your feedback sessions, do a little research on any mentoring material available and be able to provide a little career counseling.

**Stay informed.** One of the ways you'll be an effective mentor is to stay as informed as you can on current Air Force issues, programs, and other areas which might affect the career choices and/or morale of your subordinates. The following is an excellent article published in the "Shaw Spirit" base paper, written by CMSgt Johnny Neal, on the importance of keeping up with what's going on:

"In my duties as a First Sergeant, I'm always amazed by the number of Air Force members who don't know what's going on in the Air Force, or world for that matter. It's no secret that the Air Force is changing at an incredible rate; new uniforms, organizational structures, attitudes about diversity, management philosophies, and the list goes on. All of us can relate to being "out of touch" with changes in the Air Force at one time or another. Simply go on leave for a week and, chances are, something will have changed by the time you get back. The rate of change is dazzling. Unfortunately, there are many of us who remain "asleep" to all the changes. It reminds me of "Rip Van Winkle". If you remember your fairy tales, Rip Van Winkle was a guy who fell asleep under a tree for 20 or so years. When he awakened to the new world, he was amazed by all the changes and was totally out of his element. Interestingly, if you went looking for a real life Rip Van Winkle in the Air Force today, he or she might even be an insomniac. That is to say, change is so great and varied that you don't have to fall asleep at all to get behind the times. All you have to do is doze off or stop paying attention for a few minutes and the Air Force will leave you in its vapor trail."

"I get tired of hearing the Van Winkles say, "things were better back when" and "why do we have to change?" I agree, it would be easier if nothing changed, but the truth is, the Air Force itself is a product of change. It started changing with its birth in 1947 and has never stopped. Face it. Just as technology, politics, declining budgets, and world events continue to redefine our aerospace mission, the Air Force will continue to change accordingly. Yes, it is always important to look where you have been before you decide where you are going. However, you can't live in the past either. Keep your sights on the horizon and learn to embrace the change and become part of it. It may be something as simple as uniform board changes or something as complex as United Nations policy decisions and its effect on Air Force units—we all have a responsibility to stay informed and educate ourselves as much as possible. You might ask, "How can I possibly stay on top of it all?" Well, quite frankly, you can't. It is not humanly possible to read every instruction, regulation, periodical, email or, attend every conference, watch every newscast, go on every TDY, etc. I am not saying that we all need to be experts on all developments throughout the Air Force. What I am saying is that the one thing that won't ever change about the Air Force is that we are always changing. Now, perhaps more than ever, we must remain alert and "awake" to all that is changing and do the best we can to remain in tight formation with our leaders."

“Being “awake” involves self education and adaptability to change. These are not new concepts to Air Force personnel. To a large extent, we reward achievement in these areas. Current events and wear of the uniform are always criteria used during formal boards. For instance, if Sergeant Van Winkle reports to a formal board out of dress and appearance (AFI 36-2903) standards, and doesn’t know who the Secretary of the Air Force is, then that is a good indicator this sergeant has been “asleep under a tree.” On the other hand, our board winners are usually aware of these things and they receive the recognition accordingly. The flying community calls this trait SA or situational awareness, but it can be applied broadly to everything we do. Whether you realize it or not, people judge you by our SA and attention to detail. Individuals who are “awake” ordinarily will exhibit high levels of SA. Conversely, some people wear their pajamas to work and they don’t even realize it. In closing, I offer a few suggestions to prevent the “Van Winkle” scenario. Read everything you can get your hands on. Go to commander’s call. Study your SKT, PFE, and strive for excellence in both PME and off-duty education. Educate yourself on your current job and become the person with the answers. Try to always be part of the solution and never the problem. And finally, be careful when, and if, you decide to take a nap.”

**Be a good mentor.** Alluded to above, mentorship starts with you. As you transition to the career force, you become a “salesperson” for the Air Force. The Air Force isn’t perfect; never has been, never will be. Still, for whatever reason, you chose the Air Force for your career and there’s a certain loyalty you owe to it. Let’s face it, if you worked for a private corporation downtown, your career wouldn’t get very far if all you did was gripe about the company, its policies, and its officers; in fact you’d probably get fired in pretty short order. Why would you think working for the Air Force should be any different? We all face problems every day, and to be a good mentor to your people you really do need to approach problems from a positive perspective. We all have our bad days, but if you continually project a negative approach to problems in the workplace, or the Air Force in general, so will your people. They watch and learn from you every day; “how goes you, goes your people.” Again, I’m not saying you have to run around telling people everything is hunky-dory, and that we haven’t lost any benefits over the years. What I’m saying is we all need to focus on the positive things happening around us, and try to earnestly resolve those problems we have some control or influence over in our daily lives. Focusing on anything else is just “sour grapes”, and probably will result in a really miserable working environment for both you and your people. I would venture to say if anyone is that negative about Air Force life, they’re probably not doing themselves any good, their family any good, or the Air Force much good and probably need to find another line of work.

Beyond a positive outlook on things, being a good mentor also means setting the example in performance, behavior, and appearance. You should strive to ensure your working environment is free of any hostility and other negative influences that might make someone uncomfortable working there. Besides maintaining a positive outlook, perhaps you can best accomplish this by keeping conversations about sex, race, and religion totally out of the work place. If you joke around about these topics, in effect you're saying it's OK for subordinates to do so too. It's not.

With regards to mentoring and advice on Air Force programs, I found that specific questions can probably best be answered by referring our people to the experts. That is, Air Force policies and procedures literally change daily and it's impossible to keep up on everything that's going on. If your people ask you specific questions on Air Force programs or policies, particularly those which might affect their careers, I suggest you refer them to the appropriate POC whether it be the MPF, finance, legal office, etc. to get the latest guidance. Never try and bluff your way through something if you don't know the answer. Also, with the drawdown in recent years, it's been my experience that we've lost an awful lot of experts in various areas, and even I've been the victim of bad advice after having visited various base agencies for help. Accordingly, I also ask my people not to be bashful about asking to see the governing AFI if they don't feel they've been given the right information by whatever base POC they've talked with. I remember one case in point when a MSgt talked with me about her EPR, which reflected she wasn't eligible for Senior Rater indorsement but she felt she was. After looking over the rather confusing AFI guidance on Senior Rater eligibility, I called the MPF's EPR section to obtain their view. They said she wasn't eligible for Senior Rater based on the AFI requirements. This rather sharp SNCO still wasn't satisfied with the answer so we talked with the NCOIC of the MPF's EPR section, who also indicated she wasn't eligible. Still not satisfied with their interpretation of the AFI, she personally went and talked with the MPF's CMSgt superintendent, who backed up her viewpoint and we were able to get her a Senior Rater indorsement.

This brings me to another point worth mentioning. Being a good mentor doesn't mean you have to go around doing everything for your people. You need to allow them to grow professionally. You can do this by encouraging them to deal with the various base agencies themselves when they come to you with problems. At least initially, just point them in the right direction. This will give your younger folks a chance to work on developing their interpersonal skills, and experience they'll need later in their careers to successfully resolve their problems. Just be sure to let them know you're willing and able to go to bat for them if needed, and that they should come to you before they get too frustrated should things not go their way. Along these same lines, always remember honesty's the best policy, especially when dealing with your subordinates. Don't just stick up for them because they're your people; they have to be right too! If they're not, simply explain the situation to them in straight, honest terms the way things really are.

They may not appreciate it at the time, but eventually they'll realize the truth is better than giving someone false hopes or misinformation. At any rate, the following highlights some of the base agencies available to help your people if you feel you need to refer them, and what they're all about. This information was gleaned from the Shaw AFB First Sergeant's continuity guide, but the same or similar programs are available at all Air Force bases. Please understand some of these referrals may require First Sergeant intervention, and I'm including them just so you're aware of the help that's available to your people. Remember, you're not a professional family counselor or mental health professional, and some people's problems may be well beyond your ability to help resolve. If you're not sure how to go about referring people on certain topics (i.e., applying for an Air Force Aid Society loan), please get with your First Sergeant for details or other assistance:

#### **A. FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER**

**The Family Support Center offers many programs to assist families in need and those that just require information. This one agency exists solely to benefit military members and their dependents in a one-stop shopping type of atmosphere.**

##### **- PERSONAL FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

- **Financial counseling is available to all active duty personnel, and their dependents, and civilians employed by the base**
- **Counselors provides assistance in the following areas:**
  - **Personal and family budgets**
  - **Consumer protection**
  - **Debt liquidation**
  - **Estate planning**
  - **Tax strategies**
  - **Insurance options**
  - **Investment basics**

##### **- TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

- **All separating/retiring members and their spouses are invited to attend one of these seminars**
  - **There is usually one three-day seminar scheduled each month**
  - **Preferably attend six months prior to separation or retirement**
  - **Transition benefits briefing is mandatory and must be accomplished 90 days prior to separation/retirement**

- There are many available resources:
  - America's Job Bank
  - Transition Bulletin Board
  - Worldwide federal job listings
  - Scholarship Search (CASHE)
  - Resume review
  - Career counseling
  - Defense Outplacement Referral System/Public and Community Service (DORS/PAC)

#### **- RELOCATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

- Will help with planning your next move
- Check out base brochures and videos for the location you are going to
- Borrow items from the loan closet when PCS'ing in to or out of Shaw AFB for up to 30 days
  - Futons                      --- Cribs                      --- Infant car seats                      --- Dishes
  - Card tables                      --- High chairs                      --- Coffee pots                      --- Pots & pans
- Layette program is available to families E-4 and below

#### **- CAREER FOCUS PROGRAM**

- Developed to serve the military spouse with employment information, resources, and referrals
- Assistance with career planning
- Job bank of employers (*Not an employment placement agency*)
- Workshops and seminars
  - Skills assessment                      --- Dressing for success
  - Job search techniques                      --- Resume writing
  - Employment applications                      --- Interviewing skills
  - Starting a small business                      --- Job fairs
  - State employment information
- Information about educational and volunteer opportunities
- Individual guidance
- Available for military spouses, dependent teens, active duty, and retirees

## **- FAMILY LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION**

- Offers the following programs and seminars:
  - Parenting      --- Positive discipline      --- Mega skills program
  - Raising children in troubled times      --- Personal Growth
  - Couples communication      --- Assertiveness training
  - Citizenship preparation classes      --- Single parents support group
- Individual consultations
  - Needs assessment      --- Information and referral
  - Crisis assistance
- Deployment and reunion issues
  - Separation and reunion awareness briefings
  - Predeployment packages
  - Waiting spouses support group
  - Unit briefings
- Morale call program
  - Family members of deployed personnel are authorized two ten-minute calls per month
  - Site must have DSN capability
  - Calls must be made between 1800 - 0600
- Available to all active duty personnel, dependents, and DOD civilian employees

## **B. AIR FORCE AID SOCIETY**

- Offers assistance to active duty and their dependents, retirees, and dependents of deceased Air Force personnel
- Emergency assistance can be given in the form of a grant, an interest free loan, or a combination of both
  - Grants are reserved for basic needs; food, rent, utilities, emergency travel, medical or dental expenses, and funeral expenses for a spouse or dependent children
- Each case is evaluated on its own merits
  - Assistance can be provided for expenses related to travel on a personal emergency
  - Generally requires you be on emergency leave or have a letter from the unit commander
  - Assistance can be provided on a vehicle that is essential for everyday functioning of the family
  - Assistance can be provided for short-term pay crisis

- Assistance to supplement Red Cross assistance can be provided for disasters
- Assistance can be provided to surviving dependents at the time of death of an Air Force member
  - Air Force Aid will not provide assistance in the following situations:
    - To pay for non-essentials such as second automobiles, TV, VCR, etc
    - For essentials that cost more than the average standard
    - To provide basic needs on a continuing basis or to finance vacations or activities on normal leave
    - To finance business ventures, to purchase a home, or similar investments
    - To pay credit card debt including government issued travel cards
    - To cover bad checks, provide bail, pay fines, pay DPP bills, or replace funds due to garnishment
    - To pay taxes, legal expenses, or to make charitable contributions
    - To assist in maintaining a standard of living inconsistent with pay and allowances
    - To fund non-CHAMPUS approved medical procedures such as abortions
      - All requests for Air Force Aid assistance require a letter from the commander or First Sergeant

### **C. FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAM**

The goal of Family Advocacy is to promote family readiness by enhancing the health, welfare, and morale of the Air Force family. It is Air Force policy to minimize the negative impact of, and where possible, prevent childhood handicaps and family maltreatment and to identify, report, assess, and treat families having exceptional medical and educational needs, children who are at risk for injury, and families experiencing domestic violence.

#### **- EXCEPTIONAL FAMILY MEMBER PROGRAM**

- Family members with physical, emotional, or educational needs are eligible for enrollment
- Provide counseling as well as information/referral services to enable families to obtain appropriate care
- Processes overseas clearance forms and incoming and outgoing facility determinations

#### **- FAMILY MALTREATMENT PROGRAM**

- Address child abuse/neglect issues in cooperation with the Department of Social Services
- Tasked to identify and monitor all military families in which neglect/abuse has occurred



- Provide individual, marital, family, and group therapy services
- **OUTREACH PROGRAM**
  - Family oriented and is proactive and educational in nature
  - Aims to prevent the occurrence, reoccurrence, and severity of domestic violence as well as to help minimize the effects of exceptional medical/educational conditions of Air Force dependents
  - Provides primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention services
  - Primary prevention is directed to all families and utilizes community organization and education
  - Secondary prevention is targeted to at-risk families
    - Includes group work, risk reduction, and information referral services
  - Tertiary prevention is geared toward identified families
  - All programs are conducted in an informal, supportive atmosphere and designed to help strengthen the family
- **FIRST-TIME PARENTS PROGRAM**
  - Provides community and hospital based nursing services from prenatal through the first 24 months
    - Designed to help the family cope with a broad range of stressors
    - Primary services include client education, counseling, and advocacy focused on family oriented pre and post natal care
- **HOMES PROGRAM**
  - Multidisciplinary home-based prevention program targeting high-risk families to reduce maltreatment and strengthen family functioning
    - Assists families who could benefit from Family Advocacy but not identified through maltreatment
  - Promotes family skills in areas such as emotional well-being, communication, parenting, and social interactions
    - Consists of a Family Action Treatment Manager and a Family Advocacy Nurse Specialist
    - Involves assessment, intervention, and referrals as appropriate
    - Involves health assessment of the family, child, and mother and referrals as appropriate

#### **D. MENTAL HEALTH**

Contrary to popular belief, the Mental Health Clinic is not the place where only crazy people are sent. Yes, the commander may refer personnel, but only after there is a clear indication that an evaluation is warranted. This office does offer some important services to personnel who go of their own volition. This is the office primarily responsible for suicide prevention among Air Force members and their dependents.

**- STRESS MANAGEMENT**

- Allows participants to recognize stress and acquire healthy coping skills
  - Covers indicators and symptoms of stress, relaxation techniques, and assertiveness training
  - One session per week, for four weeks, approximately 1 and 1/2 hours each session
- Open to all active duty, dependents, and retirees

**- MARITAL ENRICHMENT**

- Allows couples to develop skills that enable them to enrich their marriage relationship
- Discuss common marital difficulties and discover alternate ways of approaching problems and stressors
- One session per week, for ten weeks, approximately 2 hours each session

**- PARENTING, CONFLICT MANAGEMENT, AND SURVIVORS GROUP**

- Parenting classes are offered for all different age groups
  - Open to anyone on base and are offered as waiting lists fill up
- Conflict management is offered in three sessions at the end of stress management
- For victims of childhood trauma
  - Ongoing group, meets on Thursday afternoons

**E. CHAPLAIN**

The chaplain is a tremendous resource that is often overlooked by supervisors and personnel with difficulties. Unlike most other referral agencies, there is always a chaplain on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The chaplain is available to discuss virtually any issue that you can conceive of. The chaplain is a trained counselor and excels in dealing with marital problems, as well as spiritual matters. During a counseling session you will not be preached to. Chaplains are the only people that carry complete confidentiality. Everything you say will be held in the strictest confidence.

**F. AREA DEFENSE COUNSEL**

If you or your subordinates are experiencing any type of administrative action, then the first person you need to see is the ADC. The ADC acts as the defense attorney in all Article 15 actions and Court Martials. The ADC is also available to answer questions concerning LOCs, LORs, UIFs, Control Rosters, and other legal

matters. He is the sole defense attorney for the entire base, so sometimes it takes a while to get in to see him.

#### **G. BASE LEGAL OFFICE**

The legal office is available to answer a myriad of questions concerning state or federal law. They have prepared brochures to answer some of the most common questions, and they are freely available to all who come seeking answers. The claims office is part of the legal office and can assist you with filing claims for damages to household goods or other property. Although they can answer most of your questions, they are not allowed to represent you in any capacity. Nor are they permitted to make referrals to civilian attorneys. They do have a listing of some of the local attorneys, but they will not recommend one over another. Military Justice is also located here. This section reviews offenses and makes recommendations to the commanders on type of punishment that should be imposed.

#### **H. SOCIAL ACTIONS OFFICE**

The Social Actions office has primary responsibility for education on human relations, race relations, and sexual harassment. They have primary responsibility for equal opportunity and treatment training. Their mission is to ensure equal opportunity for all personnel at both on base and off base establishments. They are also the primary investigation office for discrimination and sexual harassment complaints. They have an obligation to investigate all complaints and determine if they are founded or unfounded. If founded, they are responsible for providing recommendations to prevent further recurrence and for correction of the offense after legal review.

#### **- SUBSTANCE ABUSE CLINIC**

This is everyone's favorite clinic. Yes, this is the office that sends out the dreaded urinalysis rosters that we all know and love. Their mission is to identify and treat alcohol and drug abusers and return them to productive service. They conduct evaluations, in conjunction with Mental Health, to determine the appropriate level of treatment required, if any.

- There are six methods of referral into the Substance Abuse Reorientation and Treatment (SART) Program
  - (1) Self identification, avoids a lot of administrative restrictions

- (2) Arrest, Apprehension, and Investigation, anyone involved in an alcohol related incident must be referred
- (3) Traffic related arrest, DUI, must be referred
- (4) Commander/Supervisor referral, as supervisors we try to protect our people but please make the referral and let the professionals make the call
- (5) Incident to medical treatment, referred by a medical practitioner
- (6) Urinalysis testing
- SART consists of five tracks for treatment
  - 1. Returned to duty, evaluation indicates member does not require further assistance
  - 2. Awareness education, at least 6 hours long, included in all tracks, except 1
  - 3. Reorientation, short term counseling and skills development
    - Appropriate for members who have demonstrated improper use of substances but do not require treatment
    - At least 12 contact hours of required skills development training, in addition to 6 hour awareness
    - Consists of effective communication, time management, family interaction, and goal setting
  - 4. Treatment, for members diagnosed with substance abuse or substance dependence
    - 4a. Nonresidential treatment, develops and provides structured treatment and aftercare program
      - Commander may modify or adjust the course of treatment, if deemed best for the member
      - Treatment phase will not exceed 30 days and aftercare phase will not exceed 11 months
    - 4b. Residential treatment, for members diagnosed with chemical dependency
      - On average a person can expect to stay at least 28 days
      - After discharge the aftercare portion will not exceed 11 months
  - 5. Transition Counseling, for members being discharged for substance abuse, not intended to prevent swift discharge
    - Individuals identified for separation remain in this track until separated
- Available to active duty, dependents, retirees, DOD civilians, and NAF employees
- Administrative restrictions

- Can't reenlist while in SART, except track 1, may extend only for the purpose of completing the program
- Can't be promoted, if in the drug program, and line number will be red-lined, UIF will be established
- Can be promoted, if in the alcohol program, upon progression to aftercare, UIF may be established
- There are assignment limitations

## **I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

- Air Force Aid Vo-tech Loan Program is available to active duty spouses and college aged dependents
  - Must be enrolled in vocational - technical program within 50 miles of the base
  - Must enroll in a program which prepares them for gainful employment in a recognized occupation
- Airman's Attic provides free furniture and such, donated by other military members, to those in need
- American Red Cross provides emergency notification and financial assistance for verified emergencies
  - Will provide assistance only for spouse, children, parents, siblings, or other person that raised you for at least five years
  - Important that your family members know to contact the Red Cross in the event of an emergency or death
    - Saves valuable time in getting you on your way under emergency leave
- Food Locker provides free food staples for families experiencing financial difficulties
  - Donations are always welcome
- Give Parents a Break is available for active duty families and provides free child care so the parent(s) can get a much needed break from the children
  - Referral certificate is required and can be obtained from your First Sergeant
- Respite care uses Society funds to periodically hire someone and give the primary caregiver a break
  - Provides a few hours a week or month to active duty families who have the responsibility of 24-hour a day care for a seriously ill or disabled family member
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is available to those families with demonstrated financial need

**Benefit of the doubt.** You'll get egg on your face faster than anything if you don't look at all the angles of a particular issue before taking sides, or forming an opinion on something. Worse, nothing will make you lose credibility with your subordinates faster than if you jump to conclusions before finding out all the facts. Trust me on this, after 25 years in the service I've discovered there's invariably two sides to every story, or at least mitigating circumstances when problems crop up, and I've learned to give people the benefit of the doubt until proven wrong.

I'm reminded of an embarrassing incident that happened to me in my pre-service years, when I was hired as a supervisor at a brass polishing plant in Newark, New Jersey. I had only been on the job a day or two when the manager of the plant noted he thought employees were playing poker during their breaks, and he wanted me to put a stop to it. I immediately began thinking the worst of my people, and started snooping around looking for clues and evidence that poker games were going on at the plant. Then one day, during the lunch hour, I heard poker chips being tossed around, and the voices of the players. The noise emanated from behind one of the rather huge automatic brass polishing machines in the rear of the plant. We had about a half dozen of these machines, each the height and size of a normal living room so it was rather easy to get a game going behind one of them. Anyway, I sneaked up to the machine they were behind, climbed up on it, and crawled my way around so I could jump down and catch them red-handed. Well, no sooner had I jumped down off the machine and yelled "Gotcha", that I noticed they were playing checkers, not poker. The sound of checker board movements is what I'd mistakenly assumed were poker chips. Needless to say, when I explained what I was doing, the 10 or so people I startled laughed so hard tears came out of their eyes. I never did recover from this embarrassment, and only lasted at the job a few more weeks. I was so self conscious afterwards that I.....well, never mind, that's a story for another day.

I guess my point is, you really need to think the best of your people, do a little research when conflicting stories crop up, and try and look at all sides of a given issue before taking a stand. You'll be a better supervisor because of it.

Below is some pretty good advice taken from the Shaw AFB First Sergeant's continuity guide. It involves "How to Get More Mileage With Personnel Maintenance":

## **HOW TO GET MORE MILEAGE WITH PERSONNEL MAINTENANCE**

**ANTI-KNOCK COMPOUNDS:** Nobody likes a knocker. When you run a subordinate down, you degrade both yourself and your shop. Accentuate the

positive patter and eliminate the negative nonsense. If you disregard this principle of people maintenance, you may soon face a big rebuilding job. People react whichever way they're treated - - like jewels or like jerks.

**LUBRICATION AND OIL CHANGE:** There is something complimentary you can say to each person in your shop. Compliments are the lubricants and oils that mix your people into an efficient and well- functioning unit interested in furthering your objectives. More than anything else, people like to be complimented on their good works and efforts.

**STEERING MECHANISM:** Solicit your worker's help in setting goals you want to achieve. Make them feel they have something to do with making decisions. Make them active in charting passages to success.

**REGULAR OR PREMIUM:** Be profoundly interested in each person and convey the feeling to him or her that you care for them as individuals. Your concern is the finest fuel - - it will accelerate the growth of your ship. This is one place where premium fuel costs no more than regular but takes you a lot further.

**MOTOR OVERHAUL:** Don't ask a willing person to do too much or he or she will soon suffer from piston "poop out." Distribute the tasks among as many people as possible. This way each person's motor will give greater service and is less likely to misfire when needed most.

**IDLING:** Give willing and hard working people an occasional respite from shop projects and they will bounce back, rejuvenated and full of new ideas. With this tune-up they will be ready and able when a burst of speed is needed.

**QUICK BATTERY CHARGE:** Give people frequent jolts of enthusiasm to spark them during projects. Arouse their spirits, inspire their hearts, and capture their energies for your goals.

**SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION:** Warmly and often . . . it cuts down on depreciation. Service your people fully and faithfully, then watch them operate for your shop on an open throttle.

*Unknown*

*Author*

**Discipline.** Despite the best of efforts, there are times when you'll need to administer some form of counseling or discipline due to misbehavior. If you don't remember anything else in this guide, remember it's incredibly important to write an MFR (even if only to yourself) on any counseling session that you do for misbehavior or poor performance. You'll never know which situations are going to develop into more serious cases that'll end up in the commander's office for UIF, Control Roster, Article 15, or even discharge action. To effectively deal with someone displaying a continuing negative trend, you'll need to provide a "paper trail" of past attempts at corrective action to substantiate whatever punitive actions that'll be taken. One of the worst things you can do as a supervisor is to ask for an adverse personnel action on one of your people without having the documentation to back it up. Document, document, document. Should nothing come of it, then nothing's lost, but at least you were ready to press ahead with whatever action that would've been required, and you wouldn't have had to depend on your memory to try and "piece things together."

When you have to take disciplinary action always start at the lowest level, then work yourself up the disciplinary chain if you have to. It's true that the First Sergeant or Commander are the one's who administer official Letters of Counseling (LOC) or Letters of Reprimand (LOR) used to open up UIFs, place someone on the Control Roster, or cause an official adverse personnel action. Still, as supervisors, you can use these tools internally to try and correct unacceptable behavior.

As a general rule of thumb, for a first incident involving a subordinate you should administer a verbal counseling. As is the case in any counseling session, do some research to see if there's any extenuating circumstances that may have caused the inappropriate behavior (i.e., death in the family, money problems, family problems, etc.) I think you'll find in some cases that there's mitigating circumstances involved in an adverse incident, and a person really needs help rather than an adverse counseling session. After checking for extenuating circumstances, go ahead and talk to the person about the inappropriate behavior. After the counseling session draft up an MFR on the incident, to include what was covered in the counseling session with the individual. Depending on the severity of the incident, either just file it in your office for possible future reference, provide a copy to the individual, or if severe enough, pass it on to the commander or First Sergeant.

Should a second incident occur with your subordinate, particularly for the same misbehavior, give the person a letter of counseling. During this counseling session make sure the individual knows that they're starting to get into some serious trouble and highlight, in writing, the problem and potential consequences of their actions. Actually, for any counseling session, you should always be specific as to the unacceptable



behavior, the damage or impact it could cause, and then conclude by stating the corrective action required and your positive expectations that the individual will do what's expected. It's really important you convey to the person that you have high expectations of them, and that you don't expect to see a repeat of the inappropriate action. Again, depending on the severity of the infraction, either just provide a copy to the individual, or pass on a copy to the commander or First Sergeant. At this point in time, you probably want to advise people in your chain of command what's going on (i.e., NCOIC, OIC, etc.)

If a third incident occurs, and it happens to be for the same reason, let your chain of command know what you're doing but, barring unforeseen circumstances, draft up an LOR, take it to the Orderly Room along with the previous two MFRs, request that it be signed by the unit commander, and perhaps even ask that a UIF be established on the person. At this point, either the First Sergeant or commander will officially administer a counseling session with the individual.

Perhaps one of the more common non-work problems people get themselves into is not paying their bills. Many supervisors don't understand that we can't order people to pay a debt. What we can do is tell them to contact the creditor to discuss the problem, and advise them that failure to pay a lawful debt is punishable under Article 134 of the UCMJ. The following is an extract, once again taken from the Shaw AFB First Sergeant's continuity guide, regarding how to handle money problem situations. Though First Sergeants generally handle the severe cases, this information may come in handy should you get a call on one of your people:

### MONEY PROBLEMS

1. You cannot order an individual to pay a debt!
2. You can order an individual to contact a creditor to discuss a debt problem.
3. Failure to pay a lawful debt is punishable under Art 134 of the UCMJ.
4. When you receive notification of a debt - unpaid, bounced check, whatever - by either phone or letter:
  - a. Get this information:
    - 1) Name of company/creditor
    - 2) Amount owed/delinquent - total, including fees for processing
    - 3) How long overdue
    - 4) Where payment should be taken/sent
    - 5) Name & phone number of POC
  - b. (If on the phone) Tell the creditor:
    - 1) You cannot order the individual to pay a debt.

- 2) You can and will order the individual to call them about the debt by a certain day and time.
  - c. Ask the creditor to call you back and let you know if the individual does not call them back by the specified day and time.
5. Contact the individual (the flight chief needs to know about the problem, some supervisors want to be involved to help resolve the problem - judgment call sometimes) and have them come see you about the problem.
6. When the individual comes in to see you, get their side of the story. Keep notes for future reference!
  - a. Explain items 1-3 above.
  - b. If the individual says they have paid the debt, ask them to bring in a receipt or canceled check so you can make a copy of it for future reference. Tell them to make a copy of the receipt for the creditor - but do not give anyone the original!
  - c. If they have not paid the debt, tell them they need to consider their future as regards this type of incident - explain about LOA/LOR/Art 15/CMs/separations. It touches their civilian life too, especially by way of credit reports.
  - d. Give the individual a direct order to call the POC about the problem by the specified time. Make sure they understand it is a direct order. Tell them the POC will call you and tell you if they do not make the call. Explain that will constitute a violation of Art 92 of the UCMJ, failure to obey a lawful order.
  - e. Tell the individual to call you back and let you know what the results of the conversations are. Document what they tell you.

**Take care of the family members.** When our people deploy we need to do all we can to ensure they stay focused on the mission, and not be distracted by other concerns. You can go a long way in this regard by letting your subordinates know their family members will be taken care of while they're gone. All military family members need to know how to contact their spouse's/parent's supervisor at any given time, whether the person's deployed or not. However, this issue is particularly critical during longer deployments or those TDYs far away from the duty station where they can't be easily contacted by their family members.

The following is an example of a letter included in the Shaw AFB Chief's Group continuity guide (authored by SMSgt Donald A. Quigley) which they recommend be sent to the families of deploying members. If you're not sending something like this out, I highly recommend you do so. Also, you may want to establish some kind of program

where spouses of deployed service members are contacted by someone in the unit weekly. However, if you do that make sure they know you'll be calling because you don't want to scare them to death (i.e., as you know, many times, unit notifications are the result of "bad news")

Dear Mrs Sally Doe (Remember, this letter can be to a husband as well)

I'm \_\_\_\_\_, your husband's supervisor (Flight Superintendent, NCOIC, etc.). As you know, John is scheduled to deploy on a temporary duty assignment (TDY), to Nellis AFB, NV. First of all, you should be extremely proud of John; he is doing an outstanding job representing the 609<sup>th</sup> AIG and the United States Air Force. I know this is going to be a challenging time for you and your family, and I'd like to make some recommendations that just might make it easier to get through this period of family separation.

Prior to deployment:

- Let relatives know the importance of Red Cross notification in family emergencies
- Member should go to the base Legal Office and get a Power of Attorney for the spouse
- Consider setting up a separate checking account for the deployed member
- Make sure military member supplies you with a current squadron phone listing
- Consider contacting the Squadron Support Group at 668-XXXX

During deployment:

- Take advantage of morale calls through the Family Support Center
- If you call commercial, check all the long distance companies for enhanced rates and programs
- Try to write letters at least once a week
- Keep the deployed member as informed as possible on family activities

After the deployment:

- Try to plan some time alone for you and the spouse during the first week back
- If child care is a problem, contact me
- There'll be readjustment challenges; be patient with each other
- Try to remember, listening can be the most important skill you can use at this time

- If you need help readjusting, there's family counseling available at the Chapel, Family Advocacy Office, and downtown through CHAMPUS/Tri-Care

If you should need any help at all during this period of family separation, please don't hesitate to call me at 668-XXXX (work) or 481-XXXX (home), or Col Jones, the unit commander at 668-XXXX (work) or 481-XXXX (home).

I hope this information has been helpful. Remember, you are an important part of the Air Force family, and we're glad you're part of the team!

Sincerely,

Signature Block

**Professional relationships and you.** We all need to get to know our subordinates well enough that both they and their family members feel comfortable about coming to us with their problems. However, as supervisors, this is an incredibly fine line that we walk. If we become "too familiar" with our people, it can be devastating to the workcenter, and ultimately the mission.

I remember at my last assignment where a MSgt and one of her subordinates lived in the same 72-family apartment tower on base. On the surface, their relationship began as an innocent one. Their children became friends and played together frequently, and they ran into each other in the hallway. However, apparently it wasn't too long before the spouses became friends, the two families started visiting each other for dinner, and they began doing things together pretty regularly. The word got out among the shop as to what was going on. As the squadron superintendent, I was brought into the picture when the young airmen got a firewall "5", and was also put in for a quarterly award nomination. It seems some of the other people in the shop, who didn't receive firewall EPRs, and who weren't put in for award nominations, felt this young airman wasn't doing half the things they were and cried "foul". Needless to say I put a stop to their off duty relationship (which was incredibly complicated given the family member dynamics involved), but due to unique mission requirements I couldn't move them to different shops. The problems this caused spilled over into other areas as well. People in the workshop began taking sides with the people involved, and it became a real nightmare.

Until the affected airman was reassigned about six months later, I spent an inordinate amount of time over in their building dealing with perceptions of favoritism and other interpersonal problems between the workers and family members. I guess the point I'm trying to make is, regardless of how innocent you feel a relationship is between you and one or more of your subordinates, if an outsider to that organization can look at that relationship and perceive the possibility or potential for favoritism, then it's inappropriate. Whether it's going out for a drink with selected members of your duty section after work, or having them over to your house for a party, it's simply unacceptable. As you get promoted and working relationships change, so too should your personal relationships with your co-workers; an easy trap to fall into for supervisors.

In another example of what can happen when relationships become too familiar, Lt Gen Jumper, the 9 AF Commander, talked to the Shaw AFB Chief's Group about an incident that occurred in Vietnam. Apparently, his heavy-lift flight crew had been together for quite some time, and had begun addressing each other on a first name basis. One day, the field they had landed on began taking hostile fire shortly after they pulled onto the parking apron. The aircraft commander, then "Capt" Jumper, ordered his crew members to exit from the front of the aircraft. The airman in the group panicked and headed toward the rear of the plane. Capt Jumper called to the airmen several times, using his first name, telling him to get back toward the front of the aircraft and the airman ignored him. Finally, as the shell pattern continued to "walk" toward the aircraft, Capt Jumper yelled out "Airman so-and-so", and the airman snapped out of his panic and did what he was told. The point here is, in the profession of arms, we need to keep our military bearing (and our military "distance") at all times, whether on or off duty.

At any rate, the Air Force has really helped us out in this regard by publishing very specific guidance on professional and unprofessional relationships in the military (AFI 36-2909). For those of you who've read it, and didn't pick up on what I feel is the most important addition to past guidance, the new AFI now addresses potential adverse "perceptions" versus actual "acts" of misconduct. This AFI cites some very specific examples of inappropriate behavior and unprofessional relationships. I encourage you to read the entire AFI, but I'll highlight some of the areas discussed:

- "Sharing...off-duty interests on a frequent or recurring basis can be, or can reasonably be perceived to be, unprofessional"
- "While an occasional round of golf, game of racquetball, or similar activity between a supervisor and subordinate could remain professional, daily or weekly activities could result in at least the perception of an unprofessional relationship"
- "Relationships are unprofessional, whether pursued on or off-duty, when they detract...or reasonably create the appearance of favoritism, misuse of office or position, or the abandonment of organizational goals for personal interests"

- “Unprofessional relationships can exist between officers, between enlisted members, between officers and enlisted members, and between military personnel and members of the civilian work force”
- “The ability of the senior member to influence, directly or indirectly, assignments, promotion recommendations, duties, awards, and other privileges and benefits, places both the senior member and the junior member in a vulnerable position”
- “Air Force members are expected to avoid these relationships that negatively affect morale and discipline”

**NCO expectations.** I guess I would like to close this section by highlighting some of the general language reflected in AFI 36-2618, “The Enlisted Force Structure”, on what’s expected of the NCO (also taken from the Shaw AFB First Sergeant’s Group continuity guide). It sums everything up pretty nicely:

“All NCOs must maintain exemplary standards of behavior, including personal conduct, courtesy, loyalty, and personal appearance.”

“All NCOs must accept and execute duties, instructions, responsibilities, and orders on a timely basis, with a minimum of supervision.”

“NCOs, by virtue of their grade and the authority vested in that grade, carry out the orders of their superiors. This is done by effectively employing the people, materials, equipment, and other resources under their control.”

“NCOs represent the Air Force NCO corps to all with whom they come into contact. Personal integrity, loyalty, dedication, and devotion to duty must remain above reproach at all times.”

“As an Air Force leader, the NCO must uphold Air Force policies and traditions.”

“NCOs give orders in the exercise of their duties. A deliberate failure to obey these orders is a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), Article 91. NCOs have apprehension authority under UCMJ, Article 92, and have apprehension authority under UCMJ, Article 7 (duty status determines ANG and AFRES authority).

## SNCOs

**SNCO-ship.** If you haven't read the first two portions of this guide (Airman and NCO) then you probably should; much of what's covered applies to you as well. That's to say, if you want to have a successful career, whether its through promotion, job satisfaction, or other professional reasons, you'll need to be doing the same kinds of things outlined in the first two sections. Still, there are other things you need to know from a SNCO standpoint, and additional ideas you may want to consider.

Over the years I've learned a number of intangible things, usually the hard way, about being an effective SNCO. For example, much like school teachers or doctors, SNCOs are never expected to have a "bad day". All it takes is to have one bad day when one of our people really needs our help, and we've lost their trust and support forever because we responded too gruffly or otherwise inappropriately. Easy to say, hard to do, but the fact is we as senior managers can't afford to have "bad days". Our people need to know where "we're coming from" at all times, without having to guess what kind of mood we're going to be in on any given day. Without this stability, our subordinates will lose confidence in us, and create significant confusion and miscommunication as we go about carrying out the mission. I sort of relate this to what I call the "Darth Vader syndrome". You never know what kind of mood he's going to be in on any given day. That is, if you've seen the "Star Wars" trilogy, you'll know that not too many people want to work for Vader because they don't seem to hang around long before ol' Darth puts the heeby jeebies on them. For those that do, they're either so afraid to ask the master of disaster anything that they end up doing stuff because they "think" that's what he wants (and they invariably screw things up), or they're so petrified they do only the minimum required to get by. Like I said, our people need to feel comfortable coming to us about anything and everything; I believe one of the best ways to manifest that interaction is to try and never have a "bad day".

Also over the years, I've developed the habit of focusing on things I could do something about and pretty much ignore those I couldn't. I really didn't put a handle on this management style until I met up with Col Beatty, my boss at the 609 AIG. He operates out of the basic premise that people need to spend most of their time focusing on those things they have control over, pay a limited amount of attention to those things they have at least some influence over, and pretty much ignore those things they have no control or no influence over. A simple but effective three-step management style for

focusing your limited resources; 1) **control**, 2) **influence**, and 3) **everything else**. You really can't go wrong in your "time management" if you adhere to these three basic principles. Worrying about things you have no control and no influence over is simply nonproductive and a waste of your time. As the old saying goes, "if you're given a lemon and there's nothing you can do about it, make lemonade" and press on.

Another important lesson I've learned is that we have "smart pills" for people entering the Top 3 grades, or at least that's what many people seem to think. I'm being facetious of course. But, it seems that the day you put on MSgt, SMSgt, or even CMSgt, you're all of a sudden supposed to be that all-knowing font of wisdom for anything and everything. I only mention this because enlisted members will truly expect more of you as a SNCO, they start looking up to you with your new-gained rank, and you really need to start carrying yourself in a different way.

I think this is particularly true for TSgts putting on MSgt. As you become a SNCO, you need to get out of the mindset of being a "technician", and transition to becoming more of a manager and leader. You can no longer afford to be "one of the gang" who goes along with the crowd. Your relationships with your co-workers will have to change as well; no mean feat if you have long standing relationships with those in your work sections. Remember, with each new promotion comes the increased possibility of perceived favoritism and, ultimately, the potential for unprofessional relationships. You have to face the fact that, at times, it can be very lonely at the top.

Anyway, perhaps the best way to illustrate what is expected of the newly appointed SNCO is to cite the SNCO swearing in ceremony. Unfortunately, many TSgts don't volunteer to attend the MSgt "pin on/swearing in" ceremonies conducted at most bases, and they're oblivious to their new-found responsibilities. This particular text is used for ceremonies at Shaw AFB, but I'm sure similar ones, with equivalent meanings, are administered at other bases as well:

**"In the United States Air Force, a Master Sergeant joins an elite group. Sergeant is an ancient, honorable term that denotes a person possessing special skills, trust, and integrity. You are now a Master Sergeant which means you have mastered the techniques and abilities required of noncommissioned officers. As you progress to Senior Master Sergeant and Chief Master Sergeant, your title will change but not the designation "Master" Sergeant."**

**"You are afforded privileges not awarded others, and you have freely accepted responsibility beyond the normal call of duty. You have, by your actions and performance, earned the respect of your seniors, as well as your juniors. By experience, by performance, and by testing, you have been, this day, advanced to**



**Master Sergeant. You are now a Senior Noncommissioned Officer. It is now required that you be the font of wisdom, the ambassador of good will, and the authority in personal relations and technical applications. Your entire way of life has now been changed."**

**"More will be expected of you, more will be demanded of you - not because you are an E-7, but because you are now a Master Sergeant. You have not merely been promoted one pay grade; you have joined an exclusive fraternity. And, as in all fraternities, you have a responsibility to your members, even as they have responsibility to you. This vital and highly regarded position you have now reached exists because of the attitude and performance of the top three noncommissioned officers before you. It shall exist only so long as you and your fellow top three noncommissioned officers maintain these standards."**

**"We take a deep, sincere pleasure in clasping your hand and welcoming you into the Senior Noncommissioned Officer fraternity."**

**SNCO responsibilities.** Included below are some highlights from AFI 36-2618, "The Enlisted Force Structure", regarding SNCO responsibilities. I think you might find them useful to refer to when talking with your subordinates, peers, and superiors. I encourage each of you to get a copy of your own and read it over. The AFI covers the basic philosophy of the enlisted force structure, its purpose, the NCOs' source of authority, general NCO responsibilities, and a section on even more specific responsibilities for airman, NCOs, and SNCOs:

- "SNCOs are assigned duties commensurate with their skill level and rank. Their primary leadership duties are superintendent, supervisor, or manager (depending on the unit and their rank) of a flight, function, or activity"
- "Proper use of SNCOs is necessary to allow them to exercise leadership and manage resources under their control
- "SNCOs must be alert to detect adverse morale trends and provide feedback to commanders, immediate supervisors, officers, and staff chiefs. They must devote total effort in resolving the causes of any problem before it becomes a major issue"
- "SNCOs must establish and maintain rapport and communication with subordinates to remain attuned to their needs. By personal example and leadership, they encourage and motivate both on and off duty involvement in unit, base, and community activities."

- “SNCOs must ensure that enlisted members are treated fairly by all on-and-off duty agencies and activities. The SNCO must also ensure that the appropriate agencies are informed whenever such principles are violated, and uncorrected deficiencies are reported to the appropriate officials”
- “The SNCO must take the lead in achieving, maintaining, and enforcing Air Force Standards, as well as good order and discipline”

**You and promotions.** The following is some feedback provided by CMSgt Schmidt, HQ ACC/SCBN, who sat on the 97E8 promotion board. I believe his comments provide a unique insight into the promotion board process itself, as well as what the board viewed as shortcomings in many of the packages. I’m a bit hesitant to include this material simply because boards change year-to-year, and what may be true for one board may not be the opinion of the next one. Still, I think this information is important enough to go ahead and pass on, with the aforementioned qualifier that boards change each year:

“I found the board process to be as honest and as straight forward as possible. There were no “secret handshakes”, no special interest items like “let’s promote fast burners or look for reasons not to promote those approaching High Year of Tenure”. We all brought to the promotion board our own integrity, our own values, and knowledge. I was teamed up with another E9 and one full Colonel (O-6); a three-member board with two CMSgts and a Colonel. The board members “normally” reviewed records from their own AFSC but in some cases where the AFSCs were small, you might have reviewed the records of 4 or 5 AFSCs.”

“There was no time restrictions on how long you had to review a record.....BUT, we only had a set amount of time (two weeks) to grade all the records. So you could take as long as you needed. But believe me, when your full attention and purpose in life is reviewing records, you become an expert at separating the standouts from the rest of the pack. I know it will be hard to comprehend, but you can completely review an individual’s record in 2 or 3 minutes and do complete justice to the individual in the process.”

“The maximum board score is 450 points. The scoring ranges from the low of 6 points (in half point increments) up to the maximum of 10 points. Each board member scores separately from the others and “he/she does not know” how the other board members scored on an individual record. Between the three board members, the individual scores cannot have more than a 1 point spread. In other words, if I gave an

individual a score of 8, then other board member scores could not total more than one full point above or below my score. (Example: Both could have 7s or both 9s with my score of 8). If we did not exceed the one point spread, then we met the criteria. If there was a greater than a 1 point spread, then a “split” occurred. Those members whose scores were outside the one point window would have to review the record for a second time. They would have to decide to either bring the score up or down in order to be in compliance with the scoring criteria. It was only during these “splits” that the board members got an idea of how the other members were scoring on a particular record.”

“NOTE: People might ask, if you review a “friends” record, couldn’t you get him/her promoted by scoring high, or prevent promotion by scoring low. The answer to that is a flat NO! The review process is very tight with three very experienced professionals doing the scoring. It was the exception rather than the rule for one member to see something in a persons record that the others missed. So yes, I could give a friend’s record a score of 10 points, but if the other two members were scoring 7.5s or 8.5s, it becomes evident very fast that one person is seeing “something” in an individual’s record that the other two are not. When that occurs, a split is identified and you are tasked with showing why you scored so high (or so low). There were times when scores did increase by one member catching something the others might have missed, or overlooked in their review of the facts. Then the facts speak for themselves and the scores were raised or lowered accordingly. Board integrity was and is always our first order of business.”

“Before I go on to write a book, let me tell you my hard fast facts. Now remember, these are “MY PERSONAL VIEWS”; another board member might view these a little different from me.”

“The most important item for a board member was how to recognize what was an “Average Record”. An Average Record being reviewed was one with:”

1. Senior Rater on top/no mark downs on front of EPR/All 5’s or 9’s throughout
2. Some college completed/enrollment in CCAF
3. Some decorations/demonstrated superior performance
4. Filling a MSgt or above on-duty position

“96% of all EPRs reviewed were rated at 5’s”

“The key to the board process is understanding just what an “Average Record” is. All board members go through “Practice Scoring on Records” to get an idea just how we were scoring both individually and as a panel. Remember, the three board members are responsible for all the people in several AFSCs which usually numbered in excess of 1,100 people per panel. The time it takes to review 1,100 records or more is a very long, very

close, and yes stressful procedure. We have peoples' careers in our hands and we took that responsibility very seriously. Our individual and panel scoring was very important because if we were not "in sync" with each other, we would be forever resolving split scores. But with the practice sessions and the knowledge each board member brings to the panel, the number of split-records became fewer and fewer as the days progressed."

"The above shows an "Average Record" or a 7.5 (337.5 board score). You do not get promoted with an Average Board Score. We are looking for those exceptional performers who are taking chances, taking those tough jobs, and excelling at them. The promotees are the trend setters and the people whose accomplishments separate their records from the rest."

#### "ITEMS THAT INCREASED BOARD SCORES"

- Senior Rater on top (and consistent throughout record) but words must say something substantial!)
- Senior Rater's comments must contain the most important facts of the EPR and the endorsement must show that this individual is my #1 or #2 out of so many people!
- Should have an MSM and some other decorations, write-ups should be fact and result based
- Must have a CCAF in related AFSC/CCAF and above in related studies added points
- Winning Awards: Professionalism Awards C4 very big player
- PME Award Winners; Distinguished Graduates, Levitow Award Winners, Commandants Awards were all important (in both Leadership School and NCO academies)
- Quarterly/Annual Squadron/Base Airman/NCO Awards also big players, again this represents continued excellence and rounds out the individual
- Moving around with PCSs/breadth of experience/a person who moves regularly and still performs in an outstanding manner takes on more risk than a person sitting at a base for periods beyond 4 years
- Increased responsibility and authority in duty positions. Does he work at Command, Numbered AF, base level, etc.? But a person at base level was not penalized for being at base level vice being at command level; it all boiled down to what that person accomplished in his/her jobs
- Off-duty activity: member of any associations/elected official or just member? Community involvement
- Letters of appreciation from VIPs for projects worked
- EPRs must represent a continued performance of excellence and growth.....showing POTENTIAL to serve in the next grade

- EPR facts should be prioritized from Senior Rater saying the most important, Endorsing official saying the next most important, to the rater saying the rest, but they all should be well written to show facts and results!

#### “ITEMS THAT WERE NEGATIVES”

- NO Senior Rater on top.....NO PROMOTION! The fact that you do not have a Senior Rater on top places your record into the “below average” category. You can recover from this situation with future EPRs that show a trend of outstanding and consistent performance. But no Senior Rater on top is a definite show stopper for that promotion cycle.
- No CCAF was a detractor
- No MSM was a detractor
- “Did Graduate” from Leadership Schools or the NCO academies (without awards) did not lose you points, but it did not add points to your score
- No Professionalism Awards were not detractors, but without them no additional points
- No Quarterly/Annual Squadron/Base Awards, again did not add to scores
- Staying at one base too long doing the same job, was a detractor, but tended not to lose points, but definitely did not add points to scores
- No outside interest in community or professional organization, once again a lost opportunity to gain points on the board score
- Poorly written EPRs that are all fluff and no hard hitting facts. I had a 3-star Senior Rater endorsement talk to “the fantastic job his MSgt did at their last Christmas Party”, well if that is all a 3-star can remember about his MSgt’s accomplishments, then he certainly is not E8 material
- EPRs should be reviewed by a Chief in your unit who can write! There are many well intended civilian supervisors that although they have worked for a long time supervising military senior NCOs it is obvious that many of them don’t have a clue on what should be said to get their person promoted. They should either attend some writing classes or get some Chiefs into the review process for help
- There are many commanders sending the promotion board “mixed signals”. Example, MSgt with all 5s, front side of EPR all the way to the right, NCO of the Year for the Base and the individual gets the Deputy Rater’s endorsement.....Why? There is nothing in the record to say why the markdown, but he just killed his MSgt chances for promotion for several years to come.....Why?

“CONCLUSION:”

“The opportunity to sit on a Promotion Board will be remembered as a highlight of my career. My recommendations to all you “wannabees” are these: For the E8 board, we reviewed records that went back 10-years. That means from the grade of E-5 forward, what you accomplish (even at those early grades) will have a positive or negative affect on your promotion board scores when competing for E8 or E9. So take advantage of every opportunity given to you.”

“Excel at PME, don’t just set your goals at graduating. Graduate with honors and start separating your records from the rest of the pack.”

“Base and squadron award competitions; seek them out and win them, they will pay dividends again and again. Challenge yourself to succeed, with frequent PCS moves and a constantly changing duty description. Again, a board is very aware of what you have and “have not” done.”

“Join a professional organization, and become an elected official of it. That demonstrates leadership and separates you from your peers.”

“Also, ensure your duty descriptions are well written and quantify facts and figures when/where applicable.”

“Ensure that you have completed or are close to completing your CCAF degree in your AFSC.....anything above that (in related studies) can help add to your score, but having that CCAF degree is a major player.”

“Here’s hoping you have a successful and challenging Air Force Career!”

Chief Schmidt, HQ ACC/SCBN, DSN 574-2880

As a side issue regarding testing for promotion, a letter from CMSgt Amos, HQ ACC/IG, 19 Jun 97, reminds folks that when we get promoted to the rank of MSgt, copies of our decoration certificates and the original copies of our performance reports are sent to AFPC. These copies are kept in the promotion brief used by the central evaluation board to measure your potential for promotion to the next grade. He points out that this is where it’s your responsibility to ensure the data is accurate and complete before it goes to the board for promotion consideration. He advises you all to take the time to contact AFPC and do a telephonic records review prior to each promotion board. You can call them any time of the year to verify that the latest EPR or a copy of an award citation is correctly located in your promotion brief. However, he strongly recommends you contact them immediately after you receive your annual data verification record (DVR) rip to

ensure the board is looking at the most current data. If you'd like to take his advice, the following is the address/phone number for the AFPC "Promotion Folder" section:

HQ AFPC/DPMABR2  
550 C Street West  
Randolph AFB, TX, 78150-4707

DSN 487-5241 (Voice)  
DSN 487-4255 (Fax)

Other important promotion considerations to be aware of was highlighted by CMSgt Chuck Shorette, the 325<sup>th</sup> FW Senior Enlisted Advisor, while addressing a mentorship working group at Tyndall AFB, FL. In part, Chief Shorette offered the following advice:

"First, you've got to have goals. If you want to be promoted, if that's one of your goals, then it's your job to find out what it takes to get there and then work on it. What it takes to get there depends heavily on what you do every day, and then whether or not your performance reports reflect that."

"Consider:"

- Job Performance - As a Senior NCO, you have to look at yourself. Are you a doer or a leader? You should be managing and leading, and your EPRs have to talk about that. An AFPC fact sheet that explains the promotion process for the top two enlisted grades says that although all aspects of the performance report are considered, a strong performer's report should convey to the board that he or she has demonstrated qualities of leadership and managerial potential.
- Professional Competence - What are you doing above and beyond your job? What improvements are you making? This is where the "excellence in all we do", one of the Air Force Core Values kicks in. Former Air Force Chief of Staff Gen Ronald R. Fogleman emphasized that those selected for Senior NCO grades be the best qualified people available, and have sufficient leadership and managerial experience.
- Job Responsibility - Manage resources, lead people, and make sure your performance reports show this. Consideration is given primarily to what the individual has been asked to accomplish and how well it has been done, the fact sheet states. Is the person or has the person been in a job that requires significant decisions, or is it a type of job which is routinely carried out on the basis of someone else's decisions? Has the person proven to be an effective manager in superintendent positions where there is responsibility for directing the work of others, or is the person responsible only for his or her own performance?

- **Breadth of Experience** - Chief Shorette recommends people look for different positions within or outside their career field. Consider a special duty assignment. Take chances and opportunities to move on. This factor refers to the overall professional background, experience, and knowledge gained. Some items the fact sheet examines: Does the person have knowledge or practical experience in areas other than the current specialty? If the individual has remained in one career field, is there wide exposure across the career field? Is there potential for filling different types of jobs?
- **Leadership** - Be a role model. You have to lead the way. It's pretty tough as a leader to tell others to follow unless you lead by example. This will help you and your unit in the long run. The AFPC says board members glean from each record an assessment of a person's potential as a leader. Do people react to the individual in such a way that the job gets done better? What have rating officials said about leadership potential? What haven't they said?
- **Education** - Nearly 75 percent of the people most recently selected for promotion to E-8 and E-9 had some type of degree work completed. If you're a Senior NCO and you do not have at least an associate degree, you're behind the power curve when compared to your competitors. Course work in-progress is also important and the board sees this self-improvement if it's in the EPR. NCOs who are considered will have a broad range of academic achievements, the fact sheet says, but the most important consideration for the board should be the degree to which the education enhances the NCO's potential to serve in the next higher grade.
- **Recognition** - Recognition is vital—it makes you stand out. Recognition, either in the form of decorations or narrative comments, can help distinguish outstanding performers.
- **Get Involved** - Being involved in on or off-base community activities is essential. Get involved not to fill a square, but because you want to help others.

“CMSgt Shorette concluded his discussion by pointing out collectively, it's the “whole person” concept that makes an Air Force leader, and performance reports must clearly show this. Our numbers are smaller and the competition is tough, so if your goal is to be promoted, you have to do those things that are going to make you a little bit better than your competition.”

**Maintain awareness of Air Force benefits.** Referred to in earlier sections, you could never hope to keep up with the specifics of every Air Force benefit available. Requirements are just too fluid, and many issues are best left to be addressed by the functional experts. Still, you should have sufficient knowledge to provide meaningful performance feedback to your



subordinates. Much of the below information is tailor-made to be discussed during performance feedback with your subordinates. It was taken from a 29 Sep 97, "Air Force Benefit Fact Sheet" developed by MSgt Alvarez, HQ AFPC/DPPAER (Career Enhancement Element), DSN 487-5423):

**THIS IS A LISTING OF JUST SOME OF THE MANY AIR FORCE BENEFITS WITH A BRIEF SUMMARY OF EACH. SUPERVISORS SHOULD PROVIDE A COPY OF THIS FACT SHEET WHEN CONDUCTING PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK WITH FIRST AND SECOND TERM AIRMEN. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON A PARTICULAR BENEFIT, CONTACT THE APPROPRIATE BASE AGENCY.**

**RETIREMENT:** Individuals are retirement eligible upon completing 20 years of service. Those who first entered military service<sup>1</sup> on or after 1 Aug 86 will have their retired pay computed in the following way. First, their highest 36 months of base pay will be averaged to come up with their "retired pay base." This number is then multiplied by their retired pay multiplier. The retired pay multiplier is based on the number of whole years and months the individual has served. Under this retirement plan, the multiplier is reduced for each year less than 30 years of service the member has served. At age 62, this reduction in multiplier is eliminated and retired pay is recomputed. The following table outlines the range of possible retired pay multipliers available at retirement versus years of service.

Years of Service	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Multiplier	40%	43.5 %	47%	50.5 %	54%	57.5 %	61%	64.5 %	68%	71.5 %	75% Maximum by law

For example, an individual retires with 21 years of service and the average of their highest 36 months of base pay is \$2,200--to compute this individual's retired pay, you multiply \$2,200 by 43.5% (from the table above) which equals \$957 per month (retired pay is always rounded down to the nearest whole dollar). The following table outlines how the range of retired pay multipliers changes at age 62 when the individual's retired pay is recomputed.

Years of Service	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Multiplier	50%	52.5 %	55%	57.5 %	60%	62.5 %	65%	67.5 %	70%	72.5 %	75% Maximum by law

1. "First entered service" means the date the person is enlisted or inducted. This includes personnel who entered through the Delayed Entry Program.

**LEAVE:** Accumulates 2.5 days leave per month (30 days of vacation with pay each year) which can be carried forward (maximum of 60 days) into the next fiscal year.

**EDUCATION:** The Air Force pays 75 percent of tuition up to \$250 per semester hour in off-duty courses with accredited schools. Provides CLEP/DANTES tests which could result in receiving college credit versus having to enroll in certain classes.

**COMMISSIONING PROGRAMS:** There are many avenues to pursue for those interested in a commission. Officer Training School (OTS), Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) scholarship programs, and Airman Education and Commissioning Program (AECPP) are some of the many programs available.

**MONTGOMERY GI BILL (MGIB):** Individuals entering the Air Force after 1 Jul 85 are automatically enrolled in the MGIB, unless they disenroll in recruit training. The MGIB requires a \$100 a month nontaxable pay reduction for the first full 12 months of active duty. Benefits are \$427.87 a month for 36 months (adjusted annually based on the consumer price index).

**SCHOLARSHIPS:** Many scholarships are available for both military members and their families. Eagle Grants are also available for CCAF graduates who are pursuing a bachelor's degree. Grants range from \$250 to \$500 and may be used in conjunction with Tuition Assistance. Officer and NCO wives clubs also offer scholarship opportunities.

**VOCATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES:** There are training opportunities, both formal training associated with AFSC and various classes related to personal enhancement (PME, computer classes, management training).

**PROMOTION OPPORTUNITY:** Our system is fair and impartial—visible, understandable, and provides equal selection opportunity to all.

**SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE:** \$200K for \$17 per month (\$0.85/\$10,000 worth of coverage).

**CAREER BROADENING OPPORTUNITIES:** Special Duty Assignments, Retraining, Overseas Duty, Contingency TDYs, etc.

**FAMILY SUPPORT CENTERS:** Many services are offered by this support agency. They offer a Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for those separating/retiring from the Air Force, a Smooth Move program to prepare those who will PCS, and a base newcomers tour.

The family services program offers a loan locker that includes pots, pans, cribs, and other household items. The volunteer resource office includes a list of agencies accepting volunteers and maintains a list of those wishing to volunteer. The family life program offers classes in parenting, couples communication, stress management, and some limited counseling. The family readiness program has a support group for family members whose spouses are TDY. They also offer assistance through Air Force Aid and the Personal Financial Management program.

**MEDICAL AND DENTAL:** Medical and dental care are provided at no charge for active duty members. Full medical benefits are provided to dependents and retirees at minimal cost through the TRICARE managed care plan. Space available care remains free of charge for all beneficiaries.

**COMMISSARY:** Provides 29.7 percent savings over commercial purchases. (Based on 1996 Market Basket Survey)

**BASE EXCHANGE:** AAFES provides quality merchandise and services at uniformly low prices to active duty military, Guard and Reserve members, military retirees and family members, regardless of where they're stationed. Also, 100 percent of tobacco earnings are donated back to customers through quality of life programs and modern shopping facilities.

**BASE FACILITIES:** Includes the base fitness center, health and welfare center, golf course, family housing, child care center, hobby shop, auto shop, photo shop, aero shop, swimming pool, enlisted club, intramural sports, bowling center, library, chapel, youth center, and discounts on special events through special services and recreational sites.

**TAX ADVANTAGE:** Certain allowances are not taxed. These include Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS), Basic Allowance for Quarters (BAQ), Variable Housing Allowance (VHA), Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA), Cost-of-Living Allowance (COLA), and Family Separation Allowance (FSA).

**VA HOME LOANS:** May be eligible for home loans through the Veterans Administration.

**SPACE AVAILABLE TRAVEL:** Eligible for travel aboard military aircraft worldwide. Families are eligible for space available travel outside the CONUS.

**LEGAL ASSISTANCE:** The base Legal Assistance Office will assist with preparing wills, powers of attorney, and provide advice on domestic relations problems, contracts, civil rights, and tax problems

**CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTERS (CDC):** Certified by the Department of Defense, accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, fees are based on total family income. After school programs are available at some CDCs or youth centers.

### **OTHER ENTITLEMENTS**

Family Separation Allowance (FSA)  
 Dislocation allowance (2.5 times BAQ)  
 Transportation for dependents on duty changes  
 Shipment of household goods overseas and in the United States  
 Schooling for dependents overseas and at some CONUS bases  
 Station housing and cost of living allowances at many locations  
 Travel allowance for POV pickup/delivery at port  
 Storage of POV when PCSing to POV restricted area

### **PROGRAMS FOR DOCUMENTED PERSONAL DIFFICULTIES**

Emergency leave with priority on military aircraft  
 Humanitarian reassignment  
 Permissive reassignment  
**Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)**  
 Air Force Aid Society

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### **CAREER JOB RESERVATIONS (CJR)**

To be able to reenlist, selected first-term airmen must have a CJR in their CAFSC. Those who are 4-year enlistees may apply for a CJR when they enter the first day of their 35th month (59 months for 6-year enlistees), but not later than the last duty day of the month during which they complete 38 months on their current enlistment (62 months for 6-year enlistees). If an airman is undecided about a career, we highly recommend the airman apply for the CJR when first eligible as there is a limit to the number of first-term airmen who may reenlist in any AFSC.

Once issued a CJR, members may reenlist if they so desire, prior to the expiration of the CJR suspense date. If unable to obtain a CJR, airmen should seriously consider CAREERS (Career Airman Reenlistment Reservation System), retraining into an AFSC that has a Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) or an AFSC that could provide increased job satisfaction. Interested airmen may apply for AFSCs with retraining-in objectives in their particular grade anytime within the four month window specified above for CJRs. Individuals who are on the CJR Waiting List may apply for retraining until 120 days prior to their Date of Separation.

**This option is available regardless of the status (overage/balanced/shortage) of their current AFSC. The On Line Retraining Advisory is available for review at the MPF Customer Service or Retraining Office.**

**Don't be out-performed.** In recent years I've had ample opportunity to serve on a variety of enlisted awards boards at the unit, base, and Numbered Air Force level. Whether presiding on an airman's board, serving as a board member on a NCO board, or perusing the packages for a SNCO board, there seemed to be one "constant" throughout. The younger enlisted members almost always "outperformed" their seniors. That's to say, the junior enlisted members were doing more things both on and off duty that captured significant and exciting accomplishments in their packages. It's almost as if, when someone reaches a set age or rank, they quit aspiring to achieve a higher education, procrastinate on completing PME, or stop volunteering for new career challenges. If you think I'm kidding, I invite you to volunteer to set on a variety of boards as I have so you can get a first-hand look at this phenomenon. The point I'm trying to make is, don't be outperformed by your subordinates. "Stay on top of your game", be well-read, maintain situational awareness, don't be afraid to volunteer for things, lead from the front, pick up the pace and come up with new ideas if things start to stagnate, etc.

**Air Force Quality of Life focus.** If you've been reading about the things that haven't gone so well in the Air Force, you owe it to yourself and your people to also take a hard look at all the good things the Air Force is trying to do, to include improving the quality of life for its members. The following is some information provided in the "1997 Air Force Quality of Life Focus" report, dated Jan 97. It may seem a bit self-serving from a "management" perspective, but there are an awful lot of facts and figures as to what's going on in the Air Force's quality of life initiatives that you need to be aware of (published by the Air Force Quality of Life Office, DSN 225-3366, or e-mail at [AFQOL@DP.HQ.AF.MIL](mailto:AFQOL@DP.HQ.AF.MIL), and future updated versions can be viewed on the AFPC home page):

## **1. Pursue Fair and Equitable Compensation and Benefits**

**We strongly support legislation designed to increase reimbursements for member Permanent Change of Station (PCS) costs.** Through FY96, military members were reimbursed only 65 cents of every dollar spent on PCS moves. This means military members absorbed one dollar out of every three from their already limited finances; a situation that takes on even greater significance when looking at the fact the average

member is required to PCS 5 to 7 times in a 20-year career to meet military needs. We greatly appreciate recent Congressional support in helping lower member PCS "out-of-pocket" expenses. The increase in dislocation allowance from 2 to 2 1/2 times the basic allowance for quarters will put an additional \$220 in the pocket of the average staff sergeant to help defray moving costs. However, we still need to do more to help our most junior members contend with the financial burdens of moving. Specifically, we need authority to provide a temporary lodging expense (TLE) for enlisted service members and their families in conjunction with their moves to their first duty stations. These members incur the same expenses as do members on their second or subsequent PCS move, yet they do not receive the same compensation. For example, an airman with a spouse and one child moving to Montgomery, Alabama on their first PCS move may experience temporary living expenses of \$75-\$100 per day for which there is currently no provision for reimbursement. Over a 10-day period, this could amount to \$1,000 or nearly 5 weeks of the airman's basic pay. TLE, which reimburses up to \$110 per day for up to 10 days, would fully reimburse this airman and free his pay for other necessities.

As a further enhancement to PCS reimbursements, we are encouraging a long-overdue and logical change in the Mileage Allowance in Lieu of Transportation (MALT) program. The last PCS MALT adjustment was made in 1985 resulting in a current PCS mileage reimbursement of only 1/2 to 2/3 the rate for TDY mileage. We support Congressional action to direct the Government Services Agency to conduct a study of this situation. We are optimistic the findings will support an adjusted PCS rate to reflect actual costs or at least equal the TDY rate.

**We need to increase our transient lodging capacity to ease PCS transitions for our members and their families and to serve our members traveling on official duty.** The Chief of Staff directed action to improve Air Force lodging. The first step is a commitment to improve the condition of Temporary Lodging Facilities (TLF) with a \$101 million nonappropriated fund project that will construct 420 new units and renovate 305 existing units. We are committed to continue systematically improving lodging programs across the Air Force by upgrading transient facilities.

**We support legislation which will reform the Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS).** We support linking BAS to a credible food allowance and providing BAS to all active duty members. To this end, we support allowing BAS to increase 1 percent per year until such time as the US Department of Agriculture Moderate Food Plan Cost equals BAS. During this transition period, we support providing a "partial BAS" to members not currently entitled to BAS.

**The Air Force supports commissary savings for its active duty, reserves, and retirees.** Military members and retirees rely on commissary savings to help extend already stretched income. In fact, these savings are ranked with health care as the most prized non-cash benefits. Military members depend on commissary savings to offset impacts of lagging pay raises, inflation, and out-of-pocket housing and moving costs. While the Air Force supports actions to make the current system more cost effective, we are opposed to any actions that reduce government cost by passing these costs to the military community. Price increases carry a benefits erosion message to patrons. The elimination of the commissary subsidy has the same effect as a 9 percent pay cut for a young enlisted family.

**We support extending the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) for all active duty deaths.** Recent experience with major aircraft accidents involving loss of life highlighted inequities in family coverage under the current SBP law. In these accidents, airmen died in the line of duty or as a direct result of injuries sustained while performing their duty. The benefits awarded to the families of members who died instantly were dramatically less than those awarded to the families of members who were hospitalized, medically retired, and ultimately died as the result of injuries sustained in the same accident. To illustrate this: An accident today involves two captains, each with seven years of service; one dies instantly and one lives several days before dying. The spouse of the captain who dies instantly receives a monthly payment of \$833 for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the Veterans' Administration (VA) and no SBP benefits. The spouse of the captain who lives two days and is medically retired receives monthly payments of \$833 from the VA for DIC and \$470 for SBP. This \$470 per month difference is very difficult to explain to a grieving widow or widower. Extending SBP coverage to all active duty deaths is the most appropriate way to recognize each member's ultimate sacrifice to the Nation.

**Maintaining a quality All-Volunteer military force and productive civilian workforce demands that compensation keeps pace with the private sector and inflation.** The Air Force applauds the Administration's 3 percent pay raise for FY97 and strongly encourages adoption of the full Employment Cost Index (ECI) as the pay growth standard in the future. Under the current statutory ECI minus .5 percent pay raises, military and civilian compensation will continue to lose ground to inflation and private sector pay growth. For military and civilian personnel, the pay lag and subsequent loss of purchasing power is exceeding 13 percent. Adoption of full ECI-based pay raises is needed to provide competitive salaries in relation to the private sector--an absolute necessity if we expect to retain top quality military and civilian personnel.

**The Air Force supports pay equity with industry for civilian employees overseas through the locality pay provisions of the Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act.** Only our overseas US white collar work force is denied a locality-related component of pay, thus creating inequity in current salary and in future retirement benefits. Extending locality pay to overseas employees will provide them pay equity as compared with CONUS, overseas wage, and Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS) employees. Addressing pay inequity for overseas US civilians will enhance the Air Force's ability to recruit and retain quality OCONUS employees and, in turn, will increase the readiness of our total force.

## **2. Provide Access to Safe, Affordable, and Adequate Housing**

**It is vital for all airmen, particularly junior members, to have access to safe, affordable, and adequate housing.** Like most Americans, members of the Air Force want to live and raise their families in affordable, adequate, and secure neighborhoods. Our personnel do not expect to live in luxury—they simply want to place their families in a home and neighborhood that give them peace of mind, especially when they are deployed. Similarly for our unaccompanied personnel, adequate housing is key to maintaining and retaining a motivated, professional force.

Approximately 40 percent of Air Force families live in military family housing (MFH). The balance reside in the private sector and are paid housing allowances. DoD's policy is to go to the local community first, providing base housing only when the community can't meet the demands of the military personnel. Relocation challenges and inadequate compensation serve as deterrents to living on the local economy. Although we own about 110,000 houses and lease an additional 8,200 units, 41,000 families remain on waiting lists for base housing, clearly showing a strong preference by our people to live on base.

**We must sustain our investment in family housing.** Our average housing unit is 34 years old. Of the total units in the inventory, approximately 58,000 require significant improvement or replacement. Unfortunately, existing and projected Air Force resources are inadequate to maintain a large housing inventory. At the current funding levels, revitalization of these units will take about 26 years, ignoring the homes that are currently in good condition. An additional concern is the Air Force's inability to arrest the growth in deferred project maintenance, currently estimated at more than \$900 million. This work includes projects to repair homes, infrastructure, utilities, and community facilities.



The FY96 National Defense Authorization Act instituted the Military Housing Privatization Initiative, providing the Department of Defense new authorities to encourage privately funded construction and improvement of housing for military members and their families. Privatization has potential to reduce the backlog of family housing needing major upgrade. We're excited about using this tool-box of new legislative authorities (for providing land, money, and guarantees) to obtain private-sector expertise and financing to help solve our housing problem. The primary goal is to accelerate the buyout of housing renovation and replacement requirements by leveraging Air Force capital resources to attract private sector financing and development of quality, affordable housing. We must ensure that military members occupying privatization projects incur no "out-of-pocket" expenses.

One of our pilot privatization projects for family housing is at Lackland AFB Texas. The project calls for a developer, as the owner, to design, construct, maintain, and manage a housing development of 420 units on out-leased government land for rental to active duty military families. Award of this first project is anticipated by late 1997. Other housing privatization projects throughout the Air Force are also under consideration.

Our goal is to fix the revitalization backlog in 20 years. Successful privatization projects should reduce that time as we strive to improve or replace an additional 1500 units per year through private sector financing, development, and ownership. Additional funds will also enable the Air Force to accelerate the elimination of our 58,000 unit backlog. With an additional \$90 million per year for the construction program, the Air Force can replace and improve another 500 units per year and associated infrastructure such as utility systems, streets, parking, and landscaping. With additional funding for operations and maintenance, the Air Force can accomplish previously deferred maintenance projects, enabling us to protect the investment in our homes.

**We are implementing both the new "one-plus-one" dormitory construction and new Air Force "private-room" assignment standards and strongly support dormitory improvements for our unaccompanied personnel.** These initiatives enhance quality of life, retention, and readiness while ensuring personal privacy. Results of the Air Force Quality of Life Survey show that 88 percent of single, enlisted personnel believe private sleeping rooms would most improve their quality of life. Our strategy involves eliminating our remaining permanent party dormitories that are still configured with central latrines after the Administration's FY97 budget, and then beginning to eliminate the deficit of rooms for our airmen. Finally, we will replace our existing "two-plus-two" dormitories as they wear out.

With help from Congress and OSD in FY96/97, we have invested \$553 million in MILCON and Real Property Maintenance (RPM) towards improving the quality of our unaccompanied housing. This level of investment enables the Air Force to accelerate the "buyout" of central latrine dormitories by one year. We committed to our troops elimination of central latrine dormitories by FY00; we now expect to do so in FY99.

Our new assignment standards will allow private room assignments for the majority of personnel in existing, adequate dormitories. We have begun to phase in private room assignments, beginning with our people in central latrine dormitories in FY96, followed by E-4s in FY97, E-3s in FY98, and all grades by the end of FY02. We expect increased Military Personnel Account costs for BAQ and VHA until enough dormitories are constructed and brought into the inventory. The Air Force continues to carry unfunded RPM requirements. The dormitory RPM program has approximately \$100 million worth of FY98 unfunded requirements that continue the O&M revitalization plan for Lackland AFB "Recruit Housing and Training" dormitories, as well as help reduce additional dormitory RPM backlogs at CONUS and overseas installations.

**We strongly support measures designed to lower Air Force members' "out-of-pocket" housing costs.** Nearly two thirds of all Air Force members live off-base, many of whom bear an excessive financial burden. With the SECDEF's and Congress' assistance, BAQ increased 4.6 percent for FY97. This reduced member "out-of-pocket" costs from 19.6 percent to 19.4 percent. Legislation and increased funding in future years are necessary to take housing allowances to the level envisioned when Congress restructured them in 1985: 65 percent covered by BAQ, 20 percent covered by VHA, and 15 percent absorbed by the member "out-of-pocket." Since BAQ is indexed to pay raises rather than to housing cost increases, it has fallen well below the Congressional standard of 65 percent (approximately 60 percent). As a result, an average Air Force staff sergeant family must now spend over \$146 "out-of-pocket" for housing per month--over \$33 more than Congress intended.

We are optimistic current efforts to create a single housing allowance tied to indexed housing costs will accelerate closing the amount of out-of-pocket absorption. Meanwhile, we appreciate recent Congressional support in authorizing a variable housing allowance (VHA) locality-based floor. This initiative provides over 18,000 junior Air Force personnel living in high cost areas an average of \$34 per month to help them secure adequate off-base housing.

### 3. Provide Access to Quality Health Care

**The availability of quality health care remains the primary non-pay priority for our members--to include retirees.** The Overseas Family Member Dental Program has been fully implemented and positively received in the European theater, and we're well into establishing this same comprehensive family dental care in the Pacific theater. An Overseas Dental Program for our members assigned to remote and isolated overseas locations is our next target. The Congressional authority provided in 1997 defense legislation to extend much-needed dental insurance plans to reservists and retirees sends an important message of commitment to these important groups.

**The Air Force Medical Service and the entire TRICARE team is committed to the delivery of high quality, seamless health care for all our beneficiaries.** The cumulative effects of rising health care costs, and the closure of 35% of military hospitals through 1997 with only a corresponding 9% decrease in the number of beneficiaries, place a premium on appropriate and judicious use of health care resources. By April of 1997, 9 of 12 stateside TRICARE regions will be operational, providing care to active duty members, retirees, and their family members through a highly effective partnership of military and network providers. The Air Force is convinced that the program is setting a high standard for the quality of care provided, containing costs for both the customer and the Military Health Services System, and meeting the needs of those same customers. By the end of 1997, the remaining TRICARE regions are scheduled to be operational. We are fully dedicated to improving health and satisfying our beneficiaries.

**We are establishing Health and Wellness Centers (HAWCs) on every major Air Force installation.** This is but one aspect of the ongoing process of transitioning health delivery from intervention to prevention and toward building healthier Air Force communities. Standing up fully operational HAWCs requires a priority resourcing commitment. The HAWCs provide one-stop shopping for health promotion and fitness assessment. This is a very valuable service to active, Reserve, and Guard members and their families, as well as to civilian employees. Trained, qualified HAWC staff members are actively addressing the health and prevention needs of our Air Force people whether it be in self care of health problems, management of nutrition, exercise, stress, smoking cessation, and other specific health and risk needs. Fitness evaluations/ assessments are conducted by the units and accomplished at the HAWCs under the oversight of the exercise physiologist and/or HAWC/Health Promotion Manager. An individual requiring fitness improvement receives a tailored program developed by the exercise physiologist to meet that individual's unique needs. The assessments, tailored programs, and teaming with the fitness center personnel provide opportunities for individual Air Force members to be responsible for their own health. HAWCs are levers for improving mission readiness

and a tremendous referral resource to commanders. HAWCs, Family Support Centers, Family Advocacy, Services Divisions and many other helping agencies are teaming to provide integrated prevention services for our Air Force people.

**The Air Force supports the preservation of civilian employees' access to quality, affordable health care, for themselves and their families.** Health care is viewed as a critical quality of life issue for our civilian employees. The Air Force appreciates Congressional interest in health care issues and their efforts to maintain the availability of care for civilian employees at a reasonable cost. However, over time we have seen a gradual increase in the cost of civilian health insurance premiums and a decrease in benefits coverage, particularly for family coverage. For example, in the five year period from 1990 to 1995, the average monthly employee out-of-pocket cost for family coverage increased 20 percent. We need to provide our civilian employees the means to cope with the rising costs of medical coverage.

#### **4. Balance the Impact of High Deployment Rates**

**The Air Force has established a maximum desired level of 120 deployed days per person per year.** While a number of deployment management initiatives have been implemented over the past year, the OPTEMPO for many of our units remains high. Today, over 13,700 Air Force men and women are deployed to exercises and contingencies around the world. We've reduced total end strength by about 32%, cut overseas forward basing by about 66%, and now have four to five times as many Air Force people deployed today as in 1989. In other words, a larger portion Air Force forward presence is in a TDY mode than ever before. Airmen are engaged in enforcing no-fly zones, world-wide airlift and tanker support of military, humanitarian and peacekeeping operations, and helping stem the flow of illegal drugs from South America. A recent survey of unit commanders and first sergeants revealed PERSTEMPO is their primary quality of life concern. PERSTEMPO measures our people's contributions--"a day away is a day away." While we are committed to the success of these operations, leadership works hard to reduce the PERSTEMPO below the maximum desired level of 120 deployed days per person per year.

The Air Force employs three main initiatives to achieve this PERSTEMPO goal. First, we use Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve volunteers to reduce the taskings on our active duty members. In FY95, Reserve Component MPA days were up to 66 percent of DESERT SHIELD levels; FY96 use rose to about 77 percent. Full man-day program funding permits the optimal use of Air Reserve Component (ARC) volunteers to backfill active duty units. Second, we are spreading the wealth across the Air Force. To do this, we use worldwide sourcing to balance the workload across all active duty Air Force units regardless of the theater to which they are assigned. For example, ACC A-10s provided relief for USAFE A-10s, reducing USAFE taskings 40 percent. Third, we stood

up and said we can't support taskings anymore. A Global Military Force Policy (GMFP) was developed in conjunction with the Joint Staff to reduce taskings on our low density/high demand (LD/HD) weapon systems and skills where our people have the highest PERSTEMPO--such as AWACS, U-2, and RIVET JOINT weapons systems and combat control teams.

**Our growing reliance on ARC volunteers to absorb daily contingency taskings means we must be prepared to extend appropriate services, support, and benefits to Reserve and Guard members.** The ARC's OPTEMPO/PERSTEMPO has increased greatly in the past two years, and we will soon reach a point where the demands put upon traditional Guard and Reserve members may very well negatively impact on their ability to continue the current participation rates. This would further complicate readiness issues and concerns. Since the ARC is becoming less and less a 39-day-per-year resource, it is imperative that we have programs in place to provide them with necessary services and benefits regardless of the duration of their active service. The Air Force anticipates positive results from the Congressionally-directed parity studies of pay and medical coverage for ARC members serving on extending tours.

**We have made family readiness a priority in the Air Force and have committed the resources necessary to help families cope with deployment impacts.** The Family Readiness Program conducted by Family Support Centers supports base-level deployments with many services, including deployment preparation for the entire family, family support during separations, and expert guidance when the deployed member reunites with the family. With the high number of deployments, these services have become business as usual at many bases. These and other family programs are critical components of maintaining readiness and managing the stresses of high PERSTEMPO for active and Reserve members and their families. They deserve continued funding and support. In an effort to secure this support, the Air Force has funded an NCO billet at every Family Support Center beginning 1 Oct 97. This person will take responsibility for coordinating services to families of deployed, remote, and TDY members and will also participate in efforts such as our recent Saudi repatriation. This readiness NCO will be the base focal point for coordinating assistance to families for future man-made or natural disasters. This readiness NCO will also focus on reunion preparation and assistance to those who remain behind. We must sustain a strong program in the future.

**The Air Force is working hard to reduce the stress on deployed members associated with high PERSTEMPO.** As operational and personnel tempos remain high, the Air Force has become increasingly aware of the need to provide substantial Quality of Life enhancements to troops deployed in support of the mission. The pace of recent

operations has highlighted the importance of providing hot meals as quickly as possible and recreational opportunities at deployed locations. New Initial Deployment Kitchens (IDK) will soon be part of the first strike force support assets deployed to provide hot meals from day one until larger food production assets arrive. Beyond basic food and shelter, commanders agree that recreational opportunities are critical in maintaining morale and improving productivity. Today, Air Force fitness and recreation specialists are deployed throughout the world, operating fitness centers, recreation programs, and libraries at nine deployed locations including tent cities in Italy, Turkey, and Croatia. These programs give service members critical respite from the rigors of field operations and remain important elements of the deployment package.

## **5. Increase and Enhance Support to Community Programs**

**Community support and family programs are a key part of the total benefits package structured to help the Air Force recruit and retain the right people.** The Air Force is working to expand morale, welfare and recreation activities, fitness facilities, and child development programs; to improve employment, transition and relocation assistance, and family advocacy programs; and to improve the personal financial management skills of our members and their families. Balanced community and family activities directly support unit readiness through programs that enhance individual fitness and unit cohesion, provide a hometown environment, and serve family needs. Privatization initiatives may soon play a significant role in Air Force community programs and influence future investment plans, but the concern for top-quality standards for our people will remain unchanged.

**We must improve our fitness programs by standardizing equipment and refurbishing and constructing fitness facilities.** Air Force surveys have told us that our people consider fitness centers the most important base-level service offered with junior enlisted members rating fitness most important 4-to-1 over other programs. Members have indicated that they would increase their use of fitness facilities if there were more and better facilities with improved programs. Quality, well-equipped fitness facilities mean fit and healthy airmen and that translates into combat capability. Recognizing the role a fit force plays in mission accomplishment, initiatives to increase fitness is an Air Force priority. Fitness center manning was increased by 16 percent to make facilities available to shift workers and those who want to use them earlier in the morning or later in the evening. As a result of this increase, Air Force fitness centers extended hours of operation from 63 hours per week to 112 hours per week--a significant increase in service to members.

The number and size of facilities and availability of equipment limit the extent of participation in fitness programs. Antiquated construction standards do not accommodate the significant presence of women in the force and workarounds to provide them facilities do not meet contemporary standards. In fact, the average Air Force fitness center is 30

years old--it would take over \$200 million to renovate or replace these aging facilities over the next five years. The FY98 Air Force budget includes two fitness centers (\$6.5 million); and the outyears of the MILCON FYDP list include 16 fitness centers estimated at \$88 million. In addition to facility improvements, the demand for fitness equipment exceeds our current capacity. Meeting the core requirements for cardiovascular and strength equipment for all Air Force fitness centers will cost nearly \$19 million Air Force-wide.

**Funding support for Child Development and Youth Programs remains a high priority.** We are continuing to increase capacity in our Child Development Programs. Presently, the demand for child care is nearly 86,000 children per day and we provide care for 45,000 children daily in our child development centers, family day care homes, and youth programs--meeting only 57 percent of the demand. Nearly 75 percent of the unmet need is for infants and toddlers--age groups for which off-base care is the most expensive and least available. This is consistent with the experiences of the other services since all are struggling with more demand than capacity. DoD currently sets 65 percent of need as the goal for service programming; the goal will increase to 80 percent by 2005. To begin stepping up to this challenge, we added 325 appropriated-fund caregiver positions. These additional positions will increase our capacity to meet 65 percent of childcare need over the next five years as well as allow us to keep fees stable and provide additional spaces for infants and toddlers. The MILCON FYDP list includes six construction projects (\$26 million), that provide seven child development centers.

Air Force members and their families continue to experience pressures from increased operations tempo, two parents working, and general societal pressures that make parenting challenging. To meet their needs, we are working to increase the number and quality of school-age programs by expanding programs in our Youth Centers. Before and after school, vacation, and holiday care give parents peace of mind that their school-age children are in good hands and engaged in healthful activities. Complementing these efforts are improvements in our youth sports programs.

The Air Force recognizes the need for intervention programs that focus on emerging youth issues such as gangs, drug use, teen pregnancy, violence, and the stress of relocation. Air Force members are parents to over 200,000 children between the ages of 6 and 18. As in society at large, our youth face the normal adolescent challenges that put them "at risk." In addition to coping with the normal growing pains, Air Force youth face the stresses of growing up in a military environment with frequent moves and lack of support normally available from relatives. Over the past year, we completed training sessions for 340 base level personnel who work with "at-risk" youth. The results of the DoD Adolescent Survey will give us additional insight into things we can do to target these vulnerable age groups.

To address the needs of this vulnerable part of our community more proactively, we are seeking funding to continue the successful FY95 Congressionally-sponsored program that authorized professional teen counselors at each base. The counselors provide intervention, counseling and referral services to children who need help most. This initiative is an important element of a complete youth program. Reinstating the counselor program across the Air Force would cost \$4 million per year.

**We will increase customer access to libraries by exploiting technology.** The Air Force is a highly technical Service and relies on having well-educated personnel to operate and maintain its systems. Survey results show that Air Force members visit

libraries over 1.4 million times per month for formal education, professional military education, personal research, personal enjoyment, and job related research. Air Force libraries need technology to ensure connectivity on-base, inter-base, and with off-base public, academic, and technical libraries. To fund these initiatives, we need to invest \$7 million to ensure libraries are capable of providing one-stop reference resources to users so they can pursue educational objectives from any Air Force base in the world.

**The Air Force is committed to providing comprehensive family support programs for the total force, including our civilian employees.** Our Family Support Centers (FSCs) are key to delivering critical assistance to our people, and base leaders view FSCs as essential to unit readiness. In an effort to expand services to the total force, FSC programs are now available to DoD civilian personnel. In some programs, this is being done despite severe budget cuts. There are also plans to provide additional FSC services through new facility construction. The MILCON FYDP list includes two projects estimated at approximately \$7 million. The FSC's Transition Assistance Program (TAP) provides crucial services to civilian and military members who are concluding their service to the Air Force and our Nation. The TAP served over 310,000 AF members the last five years. Long known for providing top quality transition services, the AF TAP is now struggling to give satisfactory service to our transitioning force. An executive order mandates the military services to provide transition assistance to all eligible federal civilian employees. Demand for these transition services continues to exceed capacity as civilian force drawdowns impact more and more of our people. A Congressional budget reduction of 20 percent equated to the loss of one Transition position at over half of our bases. We are examining ways to restructure our programs to obtain maximum economy and efficiency. Even so, our service to transitioning personnel will be compromised, especially overseas.

Due to the mobility requirements for military and civilian personnel, as well as the moves of civilians impacted by the drawdown, the Relocation Assistance Program (RAP) remains one of the most demanded installation services. In FY96, personnel and family



members contacted the RAP for information over 418,000 times and staff provided private consultations to over 41,000. The impact and value of the RAP are documented: Those receiving RAP services experience fewer and less serious problems with costs of setting up new residences, finding spouse employment, schools, and child care, and adjusting to higher costs of living. Staff are beginning to target groups that face more difficult relocations--those moving overseas and first-term members. Newly developed training for sponsors will strengthen that first link with incoming personnel and gaining units. This thrust of targeted assistance is possible only if a range of self-help resources is made available. Standard relocation information must be made accessible to personnel via base LANs and families must be able to access information at computerized self-help resource centers and community kiosks.

The Career Focus Program (CFP) helped over five thousand members and family members find employment in 1996. Spouses who pursued professional careers, and junior enlisted spouses who entered the job market for the first time earned \$67M. Our youngest spouses need jobs immediately after a PCS move when the family is most financially vulnerable. An important aspect of the Career Focus manager's role is, not only to assist the junior enlisted spouse with immediate employment to pay bills, but to follow up with long range planning to enhance career growth. In a changing workplace, it is critical that CFP personnel maintain the highest level of service to spouses.

The Information and Referral program (I&R) serves as a source of community information as well as an advocate for all active duty military, federal civilians, and their family members. In FY96, staff responded to 878,000 requests for information; it is clearly a needed and highly used service. Implementation of a new computerized I&R data base holds promise to make such information more widely available.

FSC staff positions are now dual and triple-hatted by staff members at many Air Force locations. To continue providing essential services we must expand use of computer resource centers and self-help oriented methods. However, half of the FSCs have outdated computers and no LAN or internet capability. We are working to upgrade computer capabilities but it will cost approximately \$14.7M. We are aware that increased and rapid response to contingencies creates family needs that may not be appropriate for self-help methodology. In these cases, the ability of our FSC to respond is being severely degraded by manpower losses. Overseas civilian employees, military members, and their families are especially hard hit, where isolation, lack of community resources, and cultural challenges are the norm.

Family Support services for our Air Reserve Component employees and members are a growing concern. Many Reserve sites have no family support services available. The Air Force Reserve now supports 65 percent of our contingency requirements around the globe. From 1953 to 1990, Reservists responded to 10 contingencies. Since 1991, Reservists have responded to 28 full-fledged contingencies/deployments. Families of traditional Reservists and Air Force Reserve civilian employees need assistance in preparing themselves for short and long deployments, man-made disasters, and reunion issues. To adequately address the needs of our Air Force Reserve community, we need additional family readiness positions to serve our Reserve sites.

## **6. Preserve Retirement Systems and Benefits**

**The Air Force remains committed to preserving retirement benefits for the military and civilian workforce.** A solid retirement benefits package has long been the foundation of the military All-Volunteer Force. It is our obligation to honor the retirement pledge we make when each member of the team signs on. For military members, the retirement benefits package allows us to partially compensate for the extraordinary demands placed on the service member in the course of their career. The 1980s reforms of the Military Retirement System have diminished the lifetime value of military retired pay by 25 percent. For the first time in recent history, military retirement is no longer rated number one as a retention incentive among our career-minded military personnel. Results from the 1996 Air Force "Careers Survey" indicate military retirement slipped to third place, behind job security and available medical care, in terms of retention value. It is imperative to Air Force readiness that the military retirement system retain its retention value, ensuring enough of our best people will want to continue their careers until retirement eligibility. For this reason, the Air Force supports maintaining stability in the military retirement system and preserving the purchasing power of military retired pay.

For civilian members, both the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employee's Retirement System have been the targets of significant actual and proposed reductions over the past several years. From reductions in the formulas for computing survivor benefits to reductions in matching agency contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan, we have seen pressure to erode civilian retirement benefits. The Air Force supports honoring the pledge of trust to those who entered federal service with certain expectations from their retirement system. Solid retirement benefits are crucial to attracting and retaining a high quality civilian work force.

**The Air Force supports exploring continuing medical coverage for medicare-eligible military retirees.** Currently, there are 1.4 million military retirees who are medicare eligible and of those approximately 234,000 or 21 percent use the military health care system on a consistent basis. The total number of these dual-eligibles is expected to increase by another 30% by the year 1999. Providing or arranging for affordable, quality health care for all our beneficiaries, including those over age 65, is a complex issue. We have found there is no easy answer or "one size fits all" solution. The failure to enact Medicare subvention demonstration legislation was a setback, but we are currently studying various options for our retired population. DoD is planning to deploy independently a Medicare subvention simulation project at six sites across the Nation in FY97 to demonstrate to Congress and others our ability to track cost and other data. We realize that subvention may not cover all retirees, especially those who don't live close to military medical treatment facilities. The Air Force Medical Service is looking at other options as well. Medicare-risk HMOs offer a full range of benefits including pharmacy, dental and prevention/health promotion, all for the Medicare Part-B premium. We feel these Medicare-risk HMOs are a viable alternative for our retirees over the age 65; however, like TRICARE Prime, they are not currently available in every part of the country. Since Medicare does not cover pharmaceuticals, many retirees have indicated through surveys that one of their most valued benefits is the ability to obtain prescription drugs. We are looking at the feasibility of providing a worldwide pharmacy benefit for all retirees. Additionally, we have just begun to explore the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan-65 option to provide subsidized Medicare supplements.

## **7. Expand Educational Opportunities and Access**

**We must preserve the tuition assistance program.** Tuition assistance is a valuable recruiting and retention tool. It provides all our airmen the means to obtain associate, undergraduate, and job-related advanced degrees. Recruits cite educational opportunities as one of their main reasons for joining the Air Force. It is a popular quality of life benefit, it is cost effective, and it improves the overall professionalism of Air Force members. The Air Force is committed to maintaining the current 75 percent-level of tuition cost coverage.

**We must expand the enrollment opportunities in the Montgomery GI Bill program.** The Montgomery GI Bill program continues to be a success story for the Air Force and the Nation. We rely on this bill as a critical incentive to recruit and retain quality people. It is also used as an effective transition program. Over 95 percent of our enlistees enroll in the Montgomery GI Bill program upon entering service. Those who "opted out" of the program along with 70,000 other active duty members who entered between 1977 and 1985 and did not take advantage of the Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP) do not currently have a GI Bill program for education.

We support a one time "open season" for all of these active duty members to take advantage of the Montgomery GI Bill program.

**We must expand distance learning and educational support at overseas locations.** We want to provide additional distance learning and educational support for our military members, civilian employees, and their families at overseas installations through two initiatives: (1) expanded computer-assisted and satellite-delivery learning opportunities; (2) expanded college and university course offerings through the internet. An additional investment of \$1.5 million will allow Air Force people overseas to take advantage of the additional distance learning activities, such as those associated with the Air Technology Network.

**The Air Force recognizes the importance of continuing education and professional development for our civilian work force.** We would like to implement a tuition assistance program for civilian employees. Air Combat Command achieved impressive results in a recently concluded test program modeled after the active duty tuition assistance program. The test provided 75 percent tuition assistance for voluntary, off-duty, job and mission related courses. The objective of the program was to develop the most professional, proud, motivated, and mission-ready military and civilian team. Enrollment, cost, and supervisor survey data confirmed this program to be relatively low cost with high pay-back. Parity between our active duty military and civilian employees, increased job performance, and improved quality of life are direct results of this program.

## Summary

Efforts over the last fiscal cycle produced significant gains in the Air Force's "People First" Quality of Life strategy and this paper outlines our plan to continue that success. We have adjusted the initiatives under the seven broad categories of priorities based on input from the field and major air commands. The result is what we intend to be an integrated and balanced focus in the Air Force's Quality of Life agenda that will earn the sustained support of senior leadership within DoD and Congress.

**Falling on your sword.** I believe every SNCO should be willing to "fall on their sword" on issues they feel are critical to the Air Force in general, and their people in particular. But when you do, make sure it's for the right reason. As touched upon in the NCO section, I think you need to be committed to sticking up for your people if they've been wronged; even to the point of taking matters up through your chain of command and pleading your case to the commander. However, again, before you do that you need to make sure your people are in the right.

There are cases too, where someone may start out in the right, carry things too far, and you'll have to reevaluate your support to that individual. A good case in point occurred at one of my previous assignments overseas. A SNCO had several children in their early teens, living in base housing, who started getting into trouble. Fairly innocent things at first, like running around the neighborhood ringing doorbells and causing minor disruptions at school. Initially, the SNCO was receptive to working with base agencies to try and turn his kids around. I, in turn, did everything in my power to ensure no stigma was attached to this SNCO because of the actions of his children (for those of us in the military with families, this scenario sounds all too familiar). It wasn't too long, however, until this misbehavior escalated to more serious incidents, and the SNCO started becoming more and more defensive. It reached the point that the SNCO stopped going to family counseling at Family Advocacy and, finally, his son picked a fight after school and stabbed someone. When I tried to talk to him about the incident, he replied, "yes, but it was just a small knife." At that point, I knew if he wanted someone to go to bat for him in the future, he better visit the Louisville Slugger Plant in Kentucky.

I guess my bottom line here is, you shouldn't make it a habit of "falling on your sword" all the time because people will stop taking you seriously. But, if you're not willing to do it at all, I don't believe you'll be a very effective SNCO either. Equally important, you need to know when and how to take your stand using a little logic and common sense.

**Working problems.** Not too long ago I got pretty upset trying to work out a problem (or I should say a series of problems). We had an individual and his family PCS'ing from Japan to Germany. Late in the evening the night before they were to fly out, I received word the military member's dad had died. Not only had he died unexpectedly, but he passed away in the Philippines where there was no Red Cross agency to verify the emergency. After jumping through a number of "maddening" hoops throughout the night, I was able to cancel their flight to Germany, get them on a plane to the Philippines early the next morning, and make arrangements so the member could establish a new port call with associated billeting when he was ready to do so. It got worse. Three days after they were gone I received a frantic call from the wife who explained that the military member had been missing for two days. At the time, there was considerable communist insurgency activity going on in the Philippines and I had to jump through a number of other "maddening" hoops to notify and work with the proper authorities on this as well. To make a long story short, the service member was OK; it seems transportation was extremely primitive in the remote part of the Philippines where he was at, and it simply took a couple days to get back home from Manila (where he was trying to arrange follow-on transportation to Germany).

After I worked through this problem it dawned on me that I really shouldn't have gotten so upset because, in large part, handling problems are what SNCOs are paid to do. I realized SNCOs are managers, and managers often times have to manage problems; that's just a fact of life, it's part of our job. So, the next time you feel like pulling your hair out over a particularly perplexing issue, don't take it personal or get too frustrated. If it weren't for problems to handle, we'd probably be out of a job.

## **Enlisted Guide to Important Reference Material**

<b>AFI 36-704</b>	<b>Discipline and Adverse Actions</b>
<b>AFI 36-2101</b>	<b>Classification Officer and Enlisted</b>
<b>AFI 36-2110</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
<b>AFI 36-2403</b>	<b>Enlisted Evaluation System</b>
<b>AFI 36-2502</b>	<b>Promotion of Airman</b>
<b>AFI 36-2503</b>	<b>Administrative Demotion of Airman</b>
<b>AFI 36-2603</b>	<b>Correction of Military Records</b>
<b>AFI 36-2604</b>	<b>Service Dates and Dates of Rank</b>
<b>AFI 36-2618</b>	<b>The Enlisted Force Structure</b>
<b>AFI 36-2606</b>	<b>Reenlistment</b>
<b>AFI 36-2701</b>	<b>Social Actions Programs</b>
<b>AFI 36-2803</b>	<b>Awards and Decorations</b>
<b>AFI 36-2805</b>	<b>Special Trophies and Awards</b>
<b>AFI 36-2903</b>	<b>Dress and Appearance</b>
<b>AFI 36-2905</b>	<b>AF Weight Management Program</b>
<b>AFI 36-2906</b>	<b>Personal Financial Responsibility</b>
<b>AFI 36-2907</b>	<b>UIFs</b>
<b>AFI 36-2908</b>	<b>Family Care Plan</b>
<b>AFI 36-2909</b>	<b>Professional and Unprofessional Relationships</b>
<b>AFI 36-2923</b>	<b>Occupational Badges</b>
<b>AFI 36-3003</b>	<b>Leaves</b>
<b>AFI 36-3009</b>	<b>Family Support Center Programs</b>
<b>AFI 36-3105</b>	<b>Red Cross Activities in the Air Force</b>
<b>AFI 36-3205</b>	<b>Palace Chase</b>
<b>AFI 36-3208</b>	<b>Administrative Separation of Airman</b>
<b>AFI 36-3401</b>	<b>Air Force Mentoring (basic AFI for CGOs), ACC Sup (for enlisted)</b>
<b>AFI 37-138</b>	<b>Records Disposition</b>
<b>AFI 37-160V2</b>	<b>Pubs and Forms</b>
<b>AFI 51-202</b>	<b>Nonjudicial Punishment Guide</b>

<b>AFI 137-128</b>	<b>Administrative Orders</b>
<b>AFH 37-137</b>	<b>Tongue and Quill</b>
<b>AFP 35-49</b>	<b>Air Force Leadership</b>
<b>AFP 36-2241 Vol I</b>	<b>Promotion Fitness Examination</b>
<b>AFP 36-2241 Vol II</b>	<b>USAF Supervisory Examination Study Guide</b>
<b>Untitled</b>	<b>USAF “Little Blue Book” on Core Values (Obtain on the internet: <a href="http://www.usafa.af.mil/core-value/">http://www.usafa.af.mil/core-value/</a>)</b>

## **Enlisted Guide to Important Reading Material**

**Enlisted:\***

**(Airmen - ALS)**

**“The Passing of the Night” by Robinson Risner**

**“10 Propositions Regarding Airpower” by Phillip Meilinger**

**(NCO - NCO Academy)**

**“Lincoln on Leadership” by Donald Phillips**

**“They Also Flew: The Enlisted Pilot Legacy, 1912-1942” by Lee Arbon**

**(SNCO - SNCO Academy)**

**“Makers of the United States Air Force” by John Frisbee**

**“Winged Victory” by Geoffrey Perret**

**“Profiles in Courage” by John F. Kennedy**

**“The Killer Angels” by Michael Shaara**

**\* - CMSAF Benken, along with the Air Force History Support Office and senior enlisted leaders, helped the Chief of Staff identify the books on the enlisted reading list. The goal is to broaden the perspective of enlisted members while fostering the growth of an air and space culture throughout the service (Shaw “Spirit”, 17 Oct 97)**



## APPENDIX 1

### Enlisted Promotion Timelines/PECODs

The following table outlines eligibility criteria and timelines for SrA fully qualified and SrA BTZ promotion.

36 MTHS TIS TAFMSD OF:	&	20 MTHS TIG DOR OF:	OR	28 MTHS TIG DOR OF:	THEN FULLY QUAL PROM IS:	MEETS BTZ BOARD IN:	BTZ PROM TO SRA IS:
JAN 95 - MAR 95	&	MAY 96 - JUL 96	OR	SEP 95 - NOV 95	JAN 98 - MAR 98	JUN 97	JUL 97 - SEP 97
APR 95 - JUN 95	&	AUG 96 - OCT 96	OR	DEC 95 - FEB 96	APR 98 - JUN 98	SEP 97	OCT 97 - DEC 97
JUL 95 - SEP 95	&	NOV 96 - JAN 97	OR	MAR 96 - MAY 96	JUL 98 - SEP 98	DEC 97	JAN 98 - MAR 98
OCT 95 - DEC 95	&	FEB 97 - APR 97	OR	JUN 96 - AUG 96	OCT 98 - DEC 98	MAR 98	APR 98 - JUN 98
JAN 96 - MAR 96	&	MAY 97 - JUL 97	OR	SEP 96 - NOV 96	JAN 99 - MAR 99	JUN 98	JUL 98 - SEP 98
APR 96 - JUN 96	&	AUG 97 - OCT 97	OR	DEC 96 - FEB 97	APR 99 - JUN 99	SEP 98	OCT 98 - DEC 98
JUL 96 - SEP 96	&	NOV 97 - JAN 98	OR	MAR 97 - MAY 97	JUL 99 - SEP 99	DEC 98	JAN 99 - MAR 99
OCT 96 - DEC 96	&	FEB 98 - APR 98	OR	JUN 97 - AUG 97	OCT 99 - DEC 99	MAR 99	APR 99- JUN 99
JAN 97 - MAR 97	&	MAY 98 - JUL 98	OR	SEP 97 - NOV 97	JAN - MAR 2000	JUN 99	JUL 99 - SEP 99
APR 97 - JUN 97	&	AUG 98 - OCT 98	OR	DEC 97 - FEB 98	APR - JUN 2000	SEP 99	OCT 99 - DEC 99
JUL 97 - SEP 97	&	NOV 98 - JAN 99	OR	MAR 98 - MAY 98	JUL - SEP 2000	DEC 99	JAN - MAR 2000

**Enlisted Promotions - SSgt through MSgt**

<b>Weighted Airman Promotion System Eligibility</b>						
<b>Cycle</b>	<b>DOR/TIG Required</b>	<b>TAFMSD/TIS Required</b>	<b>PECOD</b>	<b>Test Month</b>	<b>Released</b>	<b>Promotion Months</b>
96E5	1Feb 96/ 6 MOS	1Aug94/ 3 Years	31 Mar 96	Apr-Jun 96	Aug 96	Sep 96-Aug 97
97E5	1Feb 97/ 6 MOS	1Aug95/ 3 Years	31 Mar 97	Apr-Jun 97	Aug 97	Sep 96-Aug 97
98E5	1Feb 98/ 6 MOS	1Aug96/ 3 Years	31 Mar 98	Apr-Jun 98	Aug 98	Sep 96-Aug 97
99E5	1Feb 99/ 6 MOS	1Aug97/ 3 Years	31 Mar 99	Apr-Jun 99	Aug 99	Sep 96-Aug 97
96E6	1Aug94/23 MOS	1Jul92/5 Years	31 Dec 95	Jan-Mar 96	May-Jun 96	Aug 96 - Jul 97
97E6	1Aug95/23 MOS	1Jul93/5 Years	31 Dec 96	Jan-Mar 97	May-Jun 97	Aug 97 - Jul 98
98E6	1Aug96/23 MOS	1Jul94/5 Years	31 Dec 97	Jan-Mar 98	May-Jun 98	Aug 98 - Jul 99
99E6	1Aug97/23 MOS	1Jul95/5 Years	31 Dec 98	Jan-Mar 99	May-Jun 99	Aug 99 - Jul 00
96E7	1Jul94/24 MOS	1Jul88/8 Years	31 Dec 95	Jan-Mar 96	May-Jun 96	Aug 96 - Jul 97
97E7	1Jul95/24 MOS	1Jul89/8 Years	31 Dec 96	Jan-Mar 97	May-Jun 97	Aug 97 - Jul 98
98E7	1Jul96/24 MOS	1Jul90/8 Years	31 Dec 97	Jan-Mar 98	May-Jun 98	Aug 98 - Jul 99
99E7	1Jul97/24 MOS	1Jul91/8 Years	31 Dec 98	Jan-Mar 99	May-Jun 99	Aug 99 - Jul 00
96E8	1Jul94/20 MOS	1Mar 86/11 Years	30 Sep 95	Oct 95	Mar 96	Apr 96-Mar97
97E8	1Jul95/20 MOS	1Mar 87/11 Years	30 Sep 96	Sep 96	Mar 97	Apr 96-Mar97
98E8	1Jul96/20 MOS	1Mar 88/11 Years	30 Sep 97	Sep 97	Mar 98	Apr 96-Mar97
99E8	1Jul97/20 MOS	1Mar 89/11 Years	30 Sep 98	Sep 98	Mar 99	Apr 96-Mar97
96E9	1Mar95/21 MOS	1Dec83/14 Years	31 Jul 96	Sep 96	Nov 96	Jan 97-Dec97
97E9	1Mar96/21 MOS	1Dec84/14 Years	31 Jul 97	Sep 97	Nov 97	Jan 98-Dec98
98E9	1Mar97/21 MOS	1Dec85/14 Years	31 Jul 98	Sep 98	Nov 98	Jan 99-Dec99
99E9	1Mar98/21 MOS	1Dec86/14 Years	31 Jul 99	Sep 99	Nov 99	Jan -Dec 2000

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **AFPC-DEVELOPED EES TRAINING GUIDE**

**(15 April 1996)**

**(Acknowledgment: With the assistance of a host of agencies throughout the Air Force, the Air Force Personnel Center, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, was successful in gathering volumes of information to be included in this Enlisted Evaluation System (EES) Training Guide. Information was extracted from other EES guides provided by various MAJCOMs and Air Force bases. The following agencies were instrumental in providing information for this guide: HQ AETC, HQ ACC, HQ AMC, HQ AFMC, 81 MDG, Keesler AFB, and Enlisted and Officer Professional Military Education (PME) Branch, Maxwell AFB. This was an Air Force team effort and the entire staff within the Evaluation Branch at the Air Force Personnel Center extends their appreciation for a job well done.)**



### **PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE**

In February and March of 1995, the Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF) and Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) chartered an independent study group to review the tenets and principles of the enlisted evaluation system (EES); address field perceptions and comments; validate and/or recommend changes to improve the EES. The group was also given the authority to make recommendations on any issues.

A 33 question EES survey was distributed throughout the Air Force to gather feedback from the field. Surprisingly enough, over 47,000 survey responses were received by the EES Review Group. This itself sent a strong message that EES is important. After analyzing the survey responses from the field and examining other facets of EES, the EES study group validated that EES was sound. However, they did find areas where improvements were required and made recommendations to enhance these areas. One of their key recommendations, which was also an echo from the field survey responses, was in the area of EES education and training. The EES Review Group recommended, and it was approved by the CSAF, that EES be taught to the officer corps at their commissioning source; incorporate EES training at all officer professional

development courses; continue to teach EES training at all levels of enlisted professional military education (PME) schools; and finally, teach all supervisors the principles and philosophies, as well as the “how to’s” of EES.

Currently, EES is being taught at officer professional development courses, commissioning sources, and at all levels of enlisted PME. Additionally, an Enlisted and Officer Training Plan has been developed to train all supervisors requiring EES training and education. This training guide will complement the EES Training Plan and can be used as a management tool for all supervisors. Supervisors are encouraged to maintain a copy of this guide within their work place to assist them in carrying out their daily supervisory responsibilities. It is also important for supervisors to remember that this guide is not all inclusive and to further broaden their knowledge on EES principles, they should become familiar with the contents of AFI 36-2403 (The Enlisted Evaluation System), and AFPAM 36-2627 (Airman and NCO Performance Feedback System).

## HISTORY OF EES



### IMPLEMENTED

Prior to EES, the Airman Performance Report (APR) System existed. It was developed in 1968 (21 year lifespan). During its existence, it steadily lost its positive impact on the enlisted promotion process. Rating inflation was identified as the contributing factor: 80 percent of those below the rank of Senior Master Sergeant and over 99 percent of Chief Master Sergeant received “**Top Block**” ratings, literally making it almost impossible to identify our best performers. Marginal performers were easy to identify; their ratings stood out as the exception. “**Who signed**” the report became more important than what the supervisor had to say about that individual’s duty performance. The focus of the evaluation process shifted away from the flightline, the office, and the shop, where the actual work was being done. This led us to ask the question, **did performance count?** More importantly, the supervisor, the person with direct knowledge of an individual’s duty performance, was unable to enhance the promotion opportunity for his/her best performers.

In early 1988, the Air Force established a study group to examine the APR system from top to bottom. This group identified problems, proposed possible solutions, and made specific recommendations for change. After 18 months of intense study, inputs from the field, and the active involvement of Air Force senior leadership, the study group recommended adoption of a revised evaluation system--the "EES." The revised Enlisted Evaluation System was implemented on 1 May 1989, but the improvements didn't stop here.

During the study group's data collection phase, it became quite clear enlisted members of all ranks weren't receiving adequate performance feedback. The study group found that using the performance report as a feedback device had serious drawbacks. Most appraisal system experts believed that documenting performance and providing feedback to workers are two separate actions. The enlisted corps didn't view the performance report as a feedback device and generally agreed with this philosophy. Many airmen indicated that often times they were unaware of any deficiencies in performance until they were recorded in the official record. Evidence further indicated that some supervisors were not providing performance feedback at all, or not far enough in advance of the performance report to give ratees an opportunity to improve. The reason for supervisors' reluctance to discuss duty performance was not always clear, and the study believed this practice was counterproductive. Consequently, the Air Force approved adopting a formal feedback program that required supervisors to talk to their people and, in some instances, provide a written progress report about specific performance requirements and other general military and career factors.

The group devised separate feedback performance worksheet (PFW) forms for airmen and NCOs, which supervisors must use in a corresponding face-to-face discussion with their ratees. The handwritten form was designed solely to improve the ratee's duty performance and was not to be an official part of the ratee's career records or take the place of any counseling.

There were other changes that resulted from this study group. They are not all inclusive, but some of the key changes as a result of this review were: 1) the EPR forms were revised; 2) indorsements for TSgt and below were capped; 3) indorsements for MSgt thru CMSgt were limited to only the senior rater if they were time-in-grade (TIG) eligible for the next highest grade; 4) the first sergeant was included in the review process; 5) EPRs were limited to a 10 year look back for the E-8 and E-9 evaluation board process, and 6) the requirement for EPRs for airmen with less than 20 months total active duty military service was deleted. Minor changes were made again in July 1991 as a result of an EES Revalidation Review. The most noted change was the deletion of PATS (Promotion for Advancement Through Superior Performance).

Because EES had not been reviewed since July 1991, and many issues concerning EES constantly surfaced for validation of their existence, it was approved by the SECAF and CSAF to charter another study group to review EES. The study group convened in early 1995 and made recommendations to improve EES. Their approved recommendations will be discussed later in this section of the guide.

## **EES OBJECTIVES**



### **PROVIDE CANDID FEEDBACK**

The Enlisted Evaluation System has two objectives. The first objective is to provide ratees with candid performance feedback so they will know what the Air Force and their supervisors expect of them, and to let them know how they're doing once they've been given the opportunity to meet expectations and standards of performance.



### **OFFICIAL RECORD OF PERFORMANCE**

The second objective of the Enlisted Evaluation System is to provide an official record of performance as viewed by officials in the rating chain who are closest to the actual work environment. The enlisted performance report (EPR) is this official record of performance.

# 1995 EES REVIEW GROUP CHANGES



## CHANGES.....HOW DID WE GET THERE?

The 1995 EES changes did not come about overnight, and were not only the results of just the EES Review Group's efforts, but they were a combination of a joint effort from **thousands** of enlisted personnel throughout the Air Force. During the collection data phase of the 1995 EES Review, over **47,000 survey responses** (33 questions) were reviewed for a common denominator of how people felt about EES and the changes they wanted made. After the EES Review Group reviewed and validated many of the responses, they made their recommendations and had a formal EES Checkmate Team headed by a Colonel and the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (**CMSAF David Campanale**) validate their recommendations. This team basically performed as the **check and balance team** for the EES Review Group. When the EES Review Group passed the Checkmate Team's validation test, their recommendations were sent to the Air Staff for review and approval. There, the recommendations had to withstand another test of validity, and subsequently were approved by the CSAF.

It is important to know that the EES Review group (17 members) composition consisted of a wide spectrum of experience (Civil Engineering, Communications, Security Police, Maintenance, Operations, and Supply). The Review Group was headed by Lt General John Fairfield (HQ PACAF/CV); 4 officers and 12 enlisted (four commanders, two MAJCOM senior enlisted Advisors, three first sergeants, one PME commandant, one joint service representative, one representative from the Community College of the Air Force, four rater's raters, and one personnel officer). This wide spectrum of experience in different Air Force Specialty Codes (AFSC) and positions, proved to be invaluable during the initial and final stages of deciding what recommendations should be forwarded to the Air Staff for approval.

## EPR RESPONSIBILITIES



### KEY PEOPLE PLAY KEY ROLES

An effective Enlisted Evaluation System requires a joint effort from not only the rater, but many others within a unit. Goals and standards of quality must be set and enforced if the EES program is expected to get off the ground. All key players must know their responsibilities and how to execute them in the most effective and cohesive manner. Key players are the Commander, First Sergeant, ratee, rater, rater's rater, and indorser. Some of their key responsibilities are outlined as follows:

#### ● COMMANDER:

- ▼ Ensure evaluations accurately describe actual performance.
- ▼ Ensure evaluations make realistic recommendation for promotion (or increased responsibility).
- ▼ Ensure rater changes are not approved prior to the effective close-out date of the report that is already a matter of record.
- ▼ Ensure supervisors conduct performance feedback sessions as required.
- ▼ Ensure the first sergeant or designated senior NCO conducts a quality review on all EPRs before the commander's review.
- ▼ Ensure no family member is in the rating chain.
- ▼ Conducts the commander review.

#### ● FIRST SERGEANT:

- ▼ Review and coordinate EPR notices before sending them to the rater.
- ▼ Send them to the rater.
- ▼ Notify the rater of important quality force indicators they must consider in preparing the EPR.
- ▼ Review all EPRs before the commander's review and advise the commander of important quality force indicators.



**● RATEE:**

- ▼ Ensure the rater's goals and expectation are understood, measurable, and achievable/realistic.
- ▼ Know when each of the mandatory scheduled performance feedback sessions (initial, midterm, and follow-up) are required.
- ▼ Know that performance feedback must be accomplished within 30 days of the ratee's request and what course of action to take if it's not (elevate to rater's rater for assistance).
- ▼ Check performance status periodically by asking the right questions; how am I doing, where do I need to improve, etc.
- ▼ Self evaluate; compare performance with peers (same AFSC) and standards.

**● RATER:**

- ▼ Observe ratee's behavior, performance, achievements, and efficiency.
- ▼ Examine the results of the ratee's work and get meaningful information from the ratee, and from other sources (including those who previously supervised the ratee during the reporting period). This information does not have to be documented on an AF Form 77 (LOE).
- ▼ Evaluate the ratee's performance against specific factors.
- ▼ Consider the significance and frequency of incidents (including isolated instances of poor or outstanding performance when assessing total performance.
- ▼ Provide scheduled, requested, or as needed feedback to help ratee improve performance.
- ▼ Record the ratee's performance and make a recommendation for promotion (for reports on CMSgt, recommend increased responsibility.
- ▼ Check each performance factor and promotion recommendation rating to ensure assigned ratings accurately describe the ratee.

**● ALL EVALUATORS (RATER, RATER'S RATER, INDORSER):**

- ▼ Review the ratee's Personnel Information File (PIF) in the unit orderly room and Unfavorable Information File (UIF) as applicable.
- ▼ Consider the following items when evaluating performance, Equal Opportunity Treatment (EOT), Weight Management program (WMP), internal control, acquiring and managing inventory items, productivity, occupational safety and health, etc.

# FACTS ABOUT PREPARING THE EPR



## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

There are some basic factors that the entire rating chain should be aware of when writing or indorsing EPRs. If these requirements are not known to the rating chain, how can they ensure reports are error free?

### ● ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

AIC

- ▼ Use AFI 36-2403 and AF Form 910 (enlisted performance report) through TSgt, and AF Form 911 for MSgt through CMSgt.
- ▼ Use 10 or 12 point font with 6 lines per inch spacing (computerized version may be used with proportional spacing provided a 12 point font is used) (**NOTE: Check for MAJCOM-specific font requirements; some allow only a 12 point font**).
- ▼ Write in bullet format; limit comments to the space provided.
- ▼ Limit bullets to three lines per bullet.
- ▼ Although minor corrections are acceptable, they should be avoided.
- ▼ You may use correction fluid (not correction tape) or pen to change minor errors.
- ▼ Should an evaluator make a pen-and-ink change to the report, he/she must initial the correction or erasure.
- ▼ Avoid nicknames, code names, or acronyms; if you use them, explain them.
- ▼ Do not correct ratings (Section III and IV): reaccomplish the report if a rating changes before the EPR is a matter of record.
- ▼ Do not sign or date the EPR before the close-out date, or sign blank forms that do not contain ratings.

## ● FEATURES OF THE ENLISTED EPR (AF FORMS 910 AND 911)

▼ **Section I - Ratee Identification data.** Use the identification data found on the EPR notice.

- ▼ **Name** - Enter ratee's last name, first name, and middle initial (if applicable). Use all uppercase or a combination of upper (First letter in the name) and lower case letters.
- ▼ **SSN** - Enter SSN without a prefix (FV and FR).
- ▼ **GRADE** - Use all uppercase or a combination of upper and lower case letters for the grade as of the close-out date.
- ▼ **DAFSC** - Enter the DAFSC (including the prefix and suffix, if applicable) held on the close-out date of the EPR.
- ▼ **ORGANIZATION, COMMAND AND LOCATION** - Enter the information as of the close-out date of the EPR.  
**NOTE:** The organization names do not have to be exactly as the EPR notice (computer language) appears but may follow the style in AFI 37-127, Air Force Standards Functional Address System, or as commonly used for mailing purposes. For classified locations, enter "Classified" followed by the MAJCOM in parenthesis.
- ▼ **PERIOD OF REPORT** - Use the dates reflected on the shell.

▼ **Section II - Job Description:**

- ▼ The job description should be written in a way everyone can understand. Use laymen terms to describe activities. Acronyms should always be spelled out the first time used. Assume the reader knows nothing about the duties and responsibilities within the area performed. Do not include classified information.

- ▼ **Duty Title** - The duty title on the EPR notice(s), or shell(s), is the one in the Personnel Data System. You may use the computer abbreviations contained on the shell, or if the

duty

title on the EPR notice is not correct, enter the correct duty title on the EPR and submit appropriate documentation to correct the Personnel Data System. The duty title should

be

the duty title on file as of the close-out date of the EPR.

- ▼ **Key Duties, Tasks and Responsibilities** - Enter a clear description of the ratee's duties. Avoid using jargon or acronyms. Clearly the task the ratee performs, how selective the ratee's assignment is, and the scope and level of responsibility to include the dollar value of projects the ratee manages and the number of people the ratee supervises. You may include additional duties performed during the reporting period if they influence the ratings and comments.

▼ **Section III - Evaluation of Performance:**

- ▼ Raters use this section by placing an "X" in the rating block that accurately describes the ratee's performance. Each block must be marked. Subsequent evaluators should carefully review the report to ensure the ratings accurately describe the ratee's performance and the comments in Section V are compatible with, and support the ratings. This area, though not used for promotion points, shows the potential for increased responsibility.
- ▼ Evaluators may show disagreement with a rating by placing their initials in the rating block they believe more accurately describes the ratee's performance. If the rating block already contains the initials of a previous evaluator, the next evaluator **MUST** provide one or more reasons in their comments block on the back of the report.

▼ **Section IV - Promotion Recommendation:**

When completing or reviewing this section, raters consider the ratee duty performance and promotion potential and how the ratee compares with others in the same grade. Effective 1 October 1995 promotion comments are allowed in the following sections and are primarily allowed to complement the overall rating in section IV.

▼ **Section V, VI, and VII - MUST BE IN BULLET FORMAT:**

Raters are only allowed three lines per bullet.

▼ **Section V - Rater's Comments. (AF Forms 910 and 911)**

This section is provided for comments about the ratee's performance. Comments that describe the ratee's performance must be compatible with ratings recorded in Section III and Section IV.

▼ **Section VI - "Rater's Rater Comments."**

- ▼ The rater's rater uses this section to support his/her rating decisions. If the rater's rater is the final evaluator on AF Form 911, write in the indorser block, "This section Not Used," and initial the unused signature blocks where they disagree. This phrase is not required on AF Form 910 since it is the last indorser block available on the EPR.
- ▼ If the rater's rater agrees (marks the "concur" block) with the rater, then provide information that adds meaning to the EPR and is compatible with the ratings in Sections III and IV.
- ▼ If the rater's rater disagrees (marks the "nonconcur" block), then the rater must provide comments, including one or more specific reasons for disagreeing. The rater's rater initials the block where he/she disagrees.
- ▼ Minimum rater's rater grade on AF Form 910 is a MSgt or civilian GS-7. On AF Form 911, the minimum grade for a rater's rater to close-out the report must be at least a Major (Navy Lieutenant Commander, Civilian GS-12, or higher). However, at the rater's level (Section V), the minimum grade is Colonel.

▼ **Section VII - "Commander's Review" (AF Form 910) and Section X, "Commander's Review" (AF Form 911)**

The commander's review is for the commander to exercise influence over the quality of reports sent to file and to ensure comments in reports are not exaggerated or have ratings reflecting inflationary tendencies.

▼ **Section VII - Reviewer (AF Form 911 Only)**

This section is reserved for the senior rater or a lower level indorsement and shouldn't be taken lightly when deciding who will indorse this section--ratee's future promotion may depend upon it.

▼ **Section VIII - "Final Evaluator's Position" (AF Form 911 Only)**

The evaluator completes this section by marking the appropriate block for level of indorsement. This block is used

for evaluators such as the senior rater, senior rater deputy, intermediate level, and lower level indorsers.

▼ **Section IX - Time-In-Grade Eligibility (AF Form 911 Only)**

The rater completes this section before forwarding the EPR for additional indorsement. This information is extracted from the EPR notice and can be determined also by reviewing para 4.13 of AFI 36-2403.

## REFERRAL EPRs



### WHAT HAPPENS WHEN STANDARDS ARE NOT MET?

In a 1995 Air Force Times article and video tape (distributed to the field), **General Ronald R. Fogleman, the Air Force Chief of Staff**, announced his concerns about people being accountable for their action and that the highest standards are expected from all Air Force personnel. He specifically stated...“In the Air Force, we expect all members to live by the **highest standards implicit in our core values**: integrity, service before self, and commitment to excellence. **We should not and will not accept less**. However, when those standards are not met...then it is our responsibility and our duty to hold people involved accountable for their actions and respond appropriately.”

“Depending on the severity of the action, the suspense might be disciplinary action under the Uniform Code of Military Justice or some type of administrative action such as letters of reprimand or admonishment. However, to be effective, the response for a particular individual must be consistent.”

“When I become aware that someone received a letter of reprimand for substandard duty performance or nonjudicial punishment for misconduct, and then I find out that person received a firewalled performance report for the same period---or was picked up to be a supervisor or fill a choice job--I wonder about the consistency of action taken. This chain of events leads me to question the lack of accountability following an obvious breach of our standards.”

In reading the above quotes from General Fogleman, you can't help getting a gut feeling that this is not the only situation that exists throughout the Air Force whereby supervisors are not making the tough and unpopular calls when appropriate, and then documenting it accordingly. This leads into our next topic for discussion: referral action taken when a subordinate is not meeting required standards of conduct and performance on or off duty.

## ● REFERRAL REPORTS--WHAT SHOULD A SUPERVISOR KNOW ABOUT THEM?

- ▼ Most importantly, supervisors cannot just focus on how to write well written, outstanding reports, but also must know how to write well written referral performance reports. In doing this they must first know what makes a report referral. People are different physically, mentally, educational, etc. This same fact holds true for meeting performance standards.
- ▼ Occasionally, an individual will not meet established standards and, therefore, the EPR should be written to reflect this substandard performance. An EPR of this type is known as a **"Referral EPR."** A **referral EPR mean the EPR is referred, or shown, to the ratee** to allow him or her an opportunity to comment on the ratings or comments made in the EPR prior to it becoming a matter of record (placed in ratee's personnel folder at the MPF or AFPC). For an EPR to be a referral it must meet one of the following criteria:
  - ▼ A **rating in the far left block** of any performance factor in AF Form 910 and 911, Section III.
  - ▼ A rating of **"1"-Not recommended for Promotion** in AF Form 910 or 911, Section IV.
  - ▼ Comments referring to **behavior** not meeting minimal acceptable **standards of performance, personal conduct, character, or integrity.**
- ▼ **If the EPR is referral:** The referral evaluator must **prepare a referral memorandum and hand deliver it** (or "return receipt requested" if mailed) to the ratee with a copy of the EPR. A copy of the memorandum and attached EPR must be sent to the evaluator. For example: If the rater's comments or ratings makes the report a referral then the rater prepares the referral letter to the ratee and the ratee provides his/her comments to the rater's rater. If the indorser's comments make the report a referral, then the

indorser must prepare the referral letter and the ratee returns his/her comments to the indorser's rater.

- ▼ The referral memorandum **must contain the specifics of why the EPR is a referral report**, the actions required by the ratee, including the name and complete address of the evaluator to whom any comments should be sent, a statement regarding the ratee's right to apply for a review under Correction of Military Records, and the time limit (10 calendar days) to provide comments to the evaluator (extensions may be granted by the evaluator). The ratee **must acknowledge receipt of the referral memorandum**, and then date and sign it. This verifies receipt; it does not indicate whether the ratee will provide comments.
- ▼ The **ratee may provide comments** to the evaluator named in the memorandum within the stated time limits. If the ratee does not provide comments, the evaluator completes the EPR stating "I have not received comments from the ratee," signs the EPR after ratee's allotted time to provide comments, attaches the referral memorandum to the EPR, and continues with the EPR processing. If **comments are provided**, the evaluator states on the EPR, "I have received comments from the ratee"; considers the comments before commenting and signing report, and attaches the referral memorandum with the ratee's comments. Use the appropriate evaluations section to include comments. If **additional space** is needed, use **AF Form 77** (Supplemental Evaluation Sheet). The evaluator then continues the EPR process as prescribed in AFI 36-2403.

## EFFECTIVE WRITING



### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Writing effective EPRs comes down to one thing: **using hard-hitting, fact-filled words and statements** which paint an accurate picture of the ratee in the mind of the reader. Since most promotion folders for senior NCOs meeting the E-8 and E-9 evaluation boards receive only a few minutes of review by board members, it becomes



critical that EPRs “**come alive**” to the reader and contain meaningful information about the ratee as an senior NCO and leader. Critical facts, specific achievements, and performance-based potential must be easily recognized by the reader. This also holds true for those organizations throughout the Air Force that have made it a policy to use EPRs as the primary source for awarding decorations.

This training guide emphasizes the key aspects of an EPR in today’s highly competitive environment. It offers suggestions for preparing effective written reports, section-by-section, and provides written examples to highlight both good and bad writing techniques. **Observation, objectivity, judgment, and the integrity** needed for the task of communicating an individual’s performance and potential **must come from you--the rater.**

Remember, meaningful EPRs in the eyes of boards members must meet **clarity, credibility, composition, and content.** To put it simple: be **direct, clear-cut, to the point, and state the facts, and the impact of those facts.**

## THE READABILITY TEST



### BOTTOM LINE!

Often times raters fail to take **quality measures** to ensure an EPR is **discrepancy free** and has the strength which they truly want to portray to the reader. Usually when this happens, the rater spends more time correcting and strengthening the report than he/she would have if they had taken some quality review measures from the very beginning. To improve EPRs you write in the future, use the following quality review process:

**Review the Product.** When you think you’ve finished the EPR, let it sit for a day or two, then go back and read it. Does it say what you want it to say? Does it meet the test of simplicity, directness, and impact? Edit the text to economize on words. Remember, choose your words very carefully--some are valuable and others are very dangerous. Look up words if you are not absolutely certain of their meaning. However, remember, if you have to look up words, those who read it may have to as well, or over-

look it. Don't compromise the meaning of your thoughts because of misunderstood or misinterpreted words. Be very careful in the diction you use. Remove words or sentences that don't add to the message. Does sincerity come through? If not, look at your choice of words and sentence construction. Read the draft aloud and listen to the sound of the words, phrases, and sentences. Do your ideas flow smoothly in the text or do the points you've made keep jumping around? If they don't sound right--dump'em and start again. Remember, you're trying to convince. Do it smoothly; do it logically. Once you have arranged and organized your information on the ratee and chopped it to its barest essentials, work on polishing the words, phrases, and sentences to exhibit sincerity, conviction, and mission impact. When that's done--you're done!

**Bottom Line.** The EPR is the most important document in an enlisted member's record. The ratee deserves a chance to have his or her performance understood first, and evaluated second. If you want someone promoted, make your EPR comments "**jump off the page**" at the reader and seize his or her attention with your feelings of conviction for the ratee--that's your job--the most important one. As Sir William Osler put it, "**The best preparation for tomorrow is to do today's work superbly well.**"

## TIPS IN WRITING EPRs



### EXAMPLES OF WEAK AND STRONG EPRs

#### WEAK JOB DESCRIPTION

##### 1. DUTY TITLE.

Operations Branch Superintendent.

##### 2. KEY DUTIES, TASKS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES.

Responsible for the effective management of over 300 airmen performing duties in weapons systems security, law enforcement, military working dog utilization, air base ground defense (ABGD), point area defense, military customs, and town patrol operations. Plans, coordinates and publishes operating plans and instructions for normal and contingency operations. Coordinates police activities with local police departments. Liaison with the Office of Special Investigation for joint operations. Serves as S-3 Operations Representative, during ABGD operations. **ADDITIONAL DUTIES:** Vice-president Wing Top Three Association and president, Squadron Top Four Association.

**Vague; leaves one guessing about the exact level of the job.**

**STRONG JOB DESCRIPTION**

**1. DUTY TITLE**

Munitions Superintendent

**2. KEY DUTIES, TASKS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES.**

Supervises 21 personnel. Responsible for the effective management of 13 facilities, 19 vehicles, and a munitions account valued more than \$110 million. Ensures capability to receipt, inspect, store, and perform organizational and intermediate maintenance on over 270 line items. Provides guidance and establishes training standards required for the effective planning and scheduling of all munitions functions supporting operational and contingency requirements. Ensures the timely accomplishment of all Time Compliance technical orders. Established accountability procedures for all aircraft training munitions. Writes the Munitions Employment Plan. Enforces safety and supply discipline.

**ADDITIONAL DUTIES:** Unit Training and Safety NCO.

**Comprehensive description; clearly identifies scope of responsibilities and supervisory role. Clearly addresses major tasks associated with the job.**

**WEAK RATER'S COMMENTS**

**RATER'S COMMENTS**

- Aggressively ensures applications are submitted within Air Force guidelines and time frame
- Continually ensures enlisted performance reports and officer performance reports are monitored and submitted with a 100 percent on-time rate
- Devised schedules for ergometry manager to ensure unit personnel were tested safely and effectively
  - Coordinated with base ergometry manger to ensure unit monitors were thoroughly trained prior to conducting testing
- Led subordinates to improve leave processing by establishing a system whereby leaves can be processed via telephone
  - Set up and taught a training class to ensure section monitors were aware of Air Force leave policies and procedures

**Definite lack of specifics; sub-bullets do little to substantiate claims made in primary bullets; "white space" tells a story.**

### STRONG RATER'S COMMENTS

#### **V. RATER'S COMMENTS**

- Aggressive management of maintenance inspections resulted in the unit's up time rate of 99.99 percent and an "Outstanding" rating in equipment reliability during the HQ AETC ORI
- Superbly managed the \$10 million radar operations and maintenance (O&M) contract, ensuring successful installation and testing of AN/FPS-117 (V5) radars at two remote sites
- Outstanding management of QA section. Resulted in "Excellent" rating on annual activity inspection
- Skillfully completed an unprecedented inventory of a \$4 million supply account, identifying over \$300,000 in unaccounted assets
- A true professional, our most frequent choice to work the unit recognition program-- absolutely my best
- Proven track record confirms he is ready for promotion to CMSgt now.

**Strong active statements; good support of main bullets; good use of specific accomplishments. Strong promotion recommendation statement.**

### WEAK RATER'S RATER COMMENTS

#### **VI. RATER'S RATER COMMENTS**

- Best Master Sergeant on my team! Involved in all facets of our operation
  - Highly effective member of USAF Air Traffic System Analysis team; analyzed facility operations, detected misleading procedures, and recommended action to improve safety and operational effectiveness
  - Directorate tax Advisor; provided excellent advice and assisted personnel in preparation of tax returns

**Sub-bullets don't support the great introduction; lack specific details and do not show results**

**STRONG RATER'S RATER COMMENTS****VI. RATER'S RATER COMMENTS**

- A strong, enthusiastic leader who works the tough issues and get results
  - A pacesetter...selected as chief of the most dynamic, greatest volume flight...annually, awards \$24M and 14,000 actions
  - A multi-talented NCO...within three months, his strong guidance and leadership resulted in the best command purchase lead times and highest buyer productivity
- Honor Graduate of Advanced Management of Defense Acquisition--most deserving to the rank of SMSgt

**Effectively communicates the impact of each accomplishment. Provides comments which communicates to the reader the ratee's promotion potential (complements Section IV, Promotion Recommendation)**

**WEAK INDORSER'S COMMENTS****VII. INDORSER'S COMMENTS**

- People and aircraft are his business and SMSgt \_\_\_\_\_ knows how to make them go
- Subordinates are spurred to high productivity by his leadership and example
  - Concern for both has cohesively melded his unit under the objective wing concept
- A driving force and mentor to younger, less experienced junior NCOs
  - Promotes Air Force policy perfectly; always focused on solutions; he has my total confidence

**Lacks specific details and does not show results; most bullets could be used for any NCO. There are no comments relating to ratee's potential for promotion or increased responsibilities.**

### **STRONG INDORSER'S COMMENTS**

#### **VII. INDORSER'S COMMENTS**

- Air Force winner of the 1991 Secretary of the Air Force Leadership Award as top SNCO Academy Honor Graduate from a group of 1500 competitors
- During the MAJCOM ORI, as Chief, Unit Exercise Evaluation Team, received "Excellent" or better ratings in every category and was hand-picked to monitor multi-million dollar island radar and upgrades
- My finest SMSgt and number one choice for promotion to CMSgt this cycle.

**Without a doubt the ratee's accomplishments are clearly stated. The indorser communicates to the reader where the ratee stands within his/her organization. Strong promotion recommendation statement.**

**NOTE:** Evaluators should remember to always show potential for promotion and increased responsibility, and reserve these type of comments for their very best people--those most deserving. Supervisors should use strong action verbs to illustrate ratee's accomplishments (See **sample action verbs below**). Also, remember promotion recommendation comments are now allowed in EPRs and should be used for those deserving immediate promotion to the next highest grade, and not those ratees who aren't quite ready to take on the responsibility of the next highest rank.

## **SAMPLE ACTION VERBS**

Acquired	Established	Procured
Activated	Estimated	Produced
Administered	Executed	Programmed
Advised	Expanded	Proved
Analyzed	Expedited	Promoted
Anticipated	Extracted	Provided
Appointed	Forecasted	Published
Appraised	Formed	Purchased
Approved	Framed	Recommended
Arranged	Hired	Recruited
Assessed	Improved	Redesigned
Audited	Increased	Reduced
Augmented	Initiated	Rejected

Averted  
Avoided  
Bought  
Built  
Captured  
Centralized  
Conceived  
Commanded  
Converted  
Corrected  
Controlled  
Created  
Cultivated  
Counseled  
Decreased  
Decentralized  
Defined  
Demonstrated  
Designed  
Determined  
Developed  
Devised  
Documented  
Doubled  
Edited  
Employed  
Enforced  
Ensured

Instigated  
Inspected  
Instructed  
Interpreted  
Interviewed  
Introduced  
Invented  
Investigated  
Launched  
Led  
Liquidated  
Localized  
Located  
Maintained  
Managed  
Marketed  
Minimized  
Modernized  
Monitored  
Negotiated  
Obtained  
Operated  
Original  
Performed  
Pioneered  
Planned  
Prevented  
Processed

Regulated  
Related  
Renegotiated  
Reorganized  
Reported  
Researched  
Resolved  
Reviewed  
Revised  
Revitalized  
Saved  
Scheduled  
Selected  
Settled  
Simplified  
Sold  
Solved  
Standardized  
Stimulated  
Studied  
Supervised  
Supported  
Taught  
Terminated  
Tested  
Tightened  
Traded  
Trained

## INFLATED EPRs



### INFLATED EPR RATINGS DEFLATE SYSTEM'S PURPOSE

Airman Meedy Oaker truly deserves an overall “4” rating on her performance report, but giving her less than perfect rating could really hurt her chances for promotion and dampen her morale. What the heck; do some creative writing; give her straight 5’s and be done with it.

That scenario is a crystal-clear example of how the enlisted evaluation system can be inflated. But is inflation fair to Airman Top Notch, or the unit, or the Air Force? Inflated ratings inevitably reduce the effectiveness of the evaluation system, and the promotion and special recognition opportunities of the Air Force’s top performers. Some supervisors are afraid of hurting their people and the section’s morale by not being realistic and honest and giving less than perfect ratings.

Supervisors who are afraid of hurting their folks by writing truthful comments and giving truthful ratings are actually doing more harm than good. Supervisors aren’t helping their people by hiding the truth from them. For example: Sooner or later a person will receive a task they can’t perform and will have a rater who won’t hesitate to inform them of their weaknesses and measures to take to improve them. Quite often ratees think their records speak for themselves--not realizing their previous supervisors had given them false or inaccurate evaluations. The Air Force cannot afford to have supervisors providing subordinates inaccurate performance assessments--it negatively impacts the mission as well as the ratee.

Supervisors must use the management tools they’ve been given to ensure they write accurate, uninflated EPRs. They must draw on their leadership, experience, professionalism, and most important, integrity, to carry out the four steps of the evaluation process. These steps are observing, evaluating, providing feedback, and recording.



One key element in curbing rating inflation is effective performance feedback. Performance feedback has been required since 1989, and is the integral part of the Enlisted Evaluation System. It provides supervisors with a performance measuring process to determine if subordinates are truly meeting the established standards of performance and expectations. If this measurement is used effectively by raters, they will get an accurate and uninflated assessment of their ratees' performance.

There are no easy solutions to winning the battle against inflated EPRs, but there are some rules of engagement. Air Force supervisors control the destiny of inflation. It is essential that those supervisors who haven't yet, take control of this yard stick they've been given and use it as it should be used by providing honest and fair appraisal of their subordinates. Because of the reduction in force, it is even more critical that supervisors take a stand and do what's right--our mission and national security depends on it. It will be difficult to sustain a strong force and high morale if we promote people undeservingly and place them in positions that will have an adverse effect on those they represent or directly supervise.

Finally, many have stated the only way to control inflation is by establishing quotas. This may be true to some degree; however, it is not the desire of our senior leadership. They want supervisors to step forward to make those tough decisions (fair performance assessments), and immediately correct others when required. Established quotas could never replace integrity of a supervisor and be as effective. Remember, nothing that's worth anything is ever easy--take charge now.

## TIMELINESS



### LATE EPRS

**“SORRY! Your EPR didn't meet the Air Personnel Center E-8 Evaluation Board...”** This is definitely not the way to start your day, either for you or for subordinates whom you rate. The EPR is the most important evaluation tool used for promotion, assignment selection, and decorations. Not only must EPRs be of the highest quality, they must also be completed on time if they are to have any kind of impact on

evaluation boards. Too often the rater or indorser will “**put it off**” because of their personal writing inadequacy. This should not be allowed to happen. **There is no excuse for a late or inaccurate report**, unless an unforeseen emergency occurs. Timely submission of EPRs is the responsibility of reporting officials at all levels. Waiting until the last minute to accomplish a report is not fair to the individual and often results in a poorly written report. A late report also reflects unfavorably on you as a supervisor. Anticipate when a report is due and be sure you get it done on time.

Supervisors should become familiar with their unit’s EPR suspense system and timelines. They will quickly discover that the impact of EPRs on day-to-day personnel management transcends several arenas--everything from force management to electronic forms usage! The goal is to come up with the best process for ensuring we promote the best people to keep our force strong and robust--which is done simply by writing timely, accurate, and error free reports; whether it’s an outstanding or referral report.

## IMPACT OF EPRs



### YOUR CAREER WILL DEPEND ON IT

As stated several times throughout this guide, EPRs can have an outstanding or devastating impact on an individual’s career. Take for example, the Weighted Airmen Promotion System (WAPS); it is an objective system and uses scores from several weighted factors (to include the EPR). Let’s take a look at how EPRs fit into the enlisted promotion system.

## ● PROMOTION TO SSGT - MSGT

- ▼ The Specialty Knowledge test (SKT) is designed to measure the knowledge of the AFSC and is worth up to 100 points.
- ▼ The Promotion Fitness Examination (PFE) is also worth up to 100 points and is used to assess an individual's overall knowledge of military subjects and managerial concepts for a particular grade level.
- ▼ Enlisted Performance Reports (EPRs) and APRs) are also scored and count towards maximum of 135 points (overall "5" rating).
- ▼ Decorations received for outstanding performance are worth a maximum of 25 points.
- ▼ Time-in-Grade counts up to 60 points (1/2 point per month).
- ▼ Time-in-Service can earn up to 40 points (1/6 point per month).

## ● PROMOTION TO SMSGT - CMSGT

- ▼ USAF Supervisory Exam 100 points.
- ▼ EPRs 135 points.
- ▼ PME 15 points (will be removed on 1 Apr 96).
- ▼ TIG up to 60 points (1/2 per month).
- ▼ TIS up to 25 points (1/2 per month).
- ▼ Decorations 25 points.

**NOTE:** It is obvious from looking at the above point spread how **critical** the **EPR** is for both NCO and SNCOs promotions.

## ● EPR COMPUTATION FORMULA

- ▼ As stated earlier, 135 points are the maximum points for EPRs. To determine how points are calculated for EPRs, multiply each EPR/APR rating that closed out within 5 years immediately preceding the ratee's promotion eligibility cut off date (PECD), not to exceed 10 reports. Use a time weighing factor beginning with 50 for the most recent report and use decrease increments of five (50-45--40-35-25--20-15-10-5) for each remaining report. The multiplying factor for EPRs is 27 and 15 for APRs. After calculating each report, add the total value of each report for a sum, and then divide that sum by sum of the time weighted factors added together for the promotion performance factor. **Example:**  
EPR/APR string (most recent to oldest): 5B-4B-9A-9A-9A-9A.....

$$\begin{array}{r}
 5 \times 50 = 250 \times 27 = 6750 \\
 4 \times 45 = 180 \times 27 = 4860 \\
 9 \times 40 = 360 \times 15 = 5400 \quad 29160 \\
 9 \times 35 = 315 \times 15 = 45725 \quad \underline{\hspace{1cm}} = 129.60 \\
 9 \times 30 = 270 \times 15 = 4050 \quad 225 \\
 9 \times 25 = 225 \times 15 = 3375 \\
 \hline
 225 \qquad \qquad \qquad 29160
 \end{array}$$

**NOTE:** The **total** EPR promotion performance factor is **129.60**

## ● USE OF EPRs FOR DECORATIONS

- ▼ In accordance with HQ AFMPC Msg, 281830Z Sep 94, EPRs have been approved as an option to use for justification in approving the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) and Air Force Commendation Medal (AFCM). Obviously, EPRs are now becoming even more important in other areas of personnel. Without decorations an individual's promotion opportunity rate decreases.
- ▼ As stated earlier, an individual testing for promotion to the next higher grade can have a maximum of 25 decoration points. This may seem like a small percentage to some--but wait until one of your ratees misses promotion by five or less points. Their initial instinct is to examine reasons for not making the promotion cut off, and when they discover their EPRs were not strong enough to justify receiving an MSM or AFCM they usually point the finger at the rater who wrote the EPR. This is fine, if this was the rater's intention (not to write a strong EPR). But what if it was his/her intention to ensure the ratee's EPR was strong enough to withstand the test for an award, and the EPR proved to be weak. The ratee may have missed an opportunity for an award they truly deserved--clearly you can see the important role you play in the evaluation process.

## ● USE OF EPRs FOR SPECIAL DUTY ASSIGNMENTS

- ▼ EPRs are also used in the special duty assignment process. When an individual is competing for a special duty assignment, their more recent EPRs are reviewed very carefully in determining performance levels. EPRs are also used to determine what experience an individual may have when competing for a job. The individual whose EPRs layout a superb track record is usually the one selected for the special duty

## ● USE OF EPR FOR SUBSTANDARD OR POOR PERFORMANCE

- ▼ A referral EPR or an EPR with an overall rating of “2” renders a ratee ineligible for promotion, and cannot become eligible again until he/she receives an EPR with an overall rating of “3” or higher that is not referral. EPRs could also have an impact on a ratee being involuntary discharged from the Air Force.

# PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK



## WHAT IS PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK?

- Performance feedback is the single most important means for changing behavior and developing your subordinates. The primary purpose of feedback is to improve performance. Feedback lets subordinates know where they stand in relation to duty expectations and standards. It is most effective when given frequently, honestly, and in a constructive atmosphere.



## WHY IS FEEDBACK REQUIRED AND WHO SHOULD RECEIVE IT?

- Feedback is required to communicate, provide information, and to motivate the ratee.

### COMMUNICATION

- ▼ Feedback is formal and informal communication occurring between a rater and ratee. The more formal type is regularly scheduled, whereas informal feedback can take place any time, any where. Feedback should explain duty performance and expectations, how the ratee compares to those expectations, and ways to improve for the future. To be truly effective, the rater must clearly state those responsibilities, and both the rater and ratee must understand them.
- ▼ People desire to know what is expected of them and how they're progressing in comparison to those expectations. People will perform better when they receive face-to-face, open, honest feedback about performance progress and improvement areas. All too often ratees don't receive any feedback at all or not far enough in advance of the annual evaluation to improve. To get the most from people, raters must provide this information.

### INFORMATION

- ▼ Feedback gives information to the ratee and allows them to judge where they are in relation to the given expectations. Without this information, the ratee has no way of knowing if their performance is adequate or how best to improve. The more information the ratee is given, the better they will be able to adjust toward the expected outcome, and the more motivated they will be.

## MOTIVATION

- ▼ **Feedback can motivate.** People who know how they are doing try harder and persist longer at tasks than those who don't. Motivation is directly related to needs, behavior, and is goal directed. Communicating the proper information will motivate ratees toward accomplishing mission goals as well as their professional goals.

### ● **FEEDBACK IS MANDATORY FOR ALL ENLISTED PERSONNEL.**

- ▼ Formal performance feedback is documented on a **Performance Feedback Worksheet (PFW): AF Form 931, (AB - TSgt) and AF Form 932, (MSgt - CMSgt)**
- ▼ **WHEN IS FEEDBACK DUE?**
  - ▼ **Initial sessions** are held within **60 days** of change of reporting official (**CRO**).
  - ▼ A **midterm session** is held **midway** between the date supervision began and the projected EPR close-out date to focus on how well the ratee is meeting expectations and clarify any suggested improvement areas.
  - ▼ If a rater change is expected or the projected EPR close-out date limits the amount of supervision to less than 150 days, a feedback session should take place at least 45 days prior to the EPR close-out date.
  - ▼ For **airmen who do not receive EPRs**, a follow-up session is due **180 days** after the initial session.
  - ▼ For **airmen who do receive EPRs**, a follow-up session is due within **60 days** following completion of an EPR, provided the EPR was prepared as result of a change of rater. The rater should **discuss performance** recorded on the EPR plus provide direction and **guidance for the new rating period**.

- ▼ Sessions are held if the **rater determines a need**, or within **30 days** of receiving a **request from the ratee**, provided **at least 60 days** has elapsed since the last feedback session.



## CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK

Conducting the performance feedback session is not always easy or fast. As the one conducting the session, remember that you must be fully prepared, and that the success of the session relies on your ability to deal positively with people. Remember your attitude about performance feedback can set a positive or negative course. Also, remember that flexibility is important. You may start out with the intent of only doing a performance feedback session, but may end up in a full counseling session instead. Regardless, take the time to fully prepare and decide what you want to accomplish. **The following are some key rules to use in preparing to conduct a performance feedback session:**

- **PLAN FOR THE SESSION:** Review job requirements/description. To be able to discuss duties and responsibilities with the ratee, you must be familiar with the current job requirements. Check to see if the job description is still current and valid. Does the ratee still perform these duties? Are there any other new ones the ratee is performing that is not stated in the job description? Are there any jobs they're not performing that they think they should be performing? Identify and record those areas that apply to the ratee. It may be a good idea to review any governing directives that pertain to the job: AF JQS, AFIs, OIs, TOs, In-House Training requirements, etc.

- **REVIEW GOALS AND STANDARDS:** Evaluate how well the ratee met the set goals and standards. Consider asking yourself: Who set the goals and standards? Were the standards too high? Were the goals reached ahead of time? Were they not met due to something beyond the ratee's control? If they were not met, did the ratee know exactly what the goals and standards were? Remember, when ratees help in setting performance goals and standards, there should be no misunderstanding about how their performance will be evaluated, and they will be more motivated to perform their best.



● **REVIEW PAST HISTORY:** You should review the ratee job skills, training, any special experience they have, education, etc. This will allow a better picture of the whole person concept for you to help develop the ratee in the future. It will also help identify any problem areas that negatively impact their job performance.

● **EVALUATE JOB PERFORMANCE VS STANDARDS:** Match the actual job performance to the standards and expectations. Consider the timeliness, quality, quantity, and difficulty of the jobs performed. Remember to evaluate this person only. Don't compare them to others in the same unit. The standards and expectations previously set were for that ratee. Avoid the pitfalls of rater error: halo, horns, rating the person's characteristics, and biasness.

● **CONSIDER CAREER OPPORTUNITIES OR LIMITATIONS:** Consider opportunities that the ratee had taken or not to enhance their career. Did they have opportunities and decided not to take them, or were they not able to due to mission requirements, emergencies, etc. Consider what, if any, opportunities you provided. Desired, but missed opportunities can have a major impact on job performance, positive or negative.

● **PREPARE THE FORM:** Take your time and do a very comprehensive job. Consider possible questions the ratee might have concerning the marks you give. Anything less than top score should deserve a recommended method to improve. Even some top scores still leave room to improve. Also, it is important you give the ratee time to prepare as well. Let them know well in advance the areas that you will discuss and have them evaluate their performance. This technique should help in mutual understanding of any deficient areas and help set goals for the future.

● **SELECT PROPER TIME AND PLACE:** Pick a **neutral place**, don't put the ratee in a position that makes them **feel uneasy** or one that reinforces your **position of power**. Make sure the room is private and quiet. Avoid any interruptions by having someone hold calls and take messages. Put a "**Do Not Disturb**" sign on the door. Ensure you schedule enough time for the session and leave a little extra time in case the session goes longer.

● **NOW IT'S TIME TO CONDUCT THE SESSION!** You must consider the style of approach you will use for the session: directive, nondirective, or a combination of the two. A combination of both tends to be the best style. You may have to adapt as the session progresses. This where your interviewing skills come into play.

● **CREATE A POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE:** Establish rapport. Make the ratee at ease to encourage discussion. Try to ease any anxiety the ratee may have. Although personal talk is nice, try to get to the heart of the matter quickly; most ratees appreciate it.

● **USE A 7 - STEP PROCESS:** Generally speaking, you should have specific guidelines to follow to increase the probability of success in a feedback session. It should be simple to remember so you don't have to refer to notes, nor do you want it to be a checklist approach. The following is only one of many approaches. Find one that works best for you.

**STEP 1: State the purpose of the session:** Explain why you're having the session. Tell them the session is a **two-way communication** between the two.

**STEP 2: Encourage the ratee to appraise own performance:** Listen! Avoid dominating the conversation. Use open-end questions, not yes/no type.

**STEP 3: Present the results of your evaluation:** Honesty is the best policy here. Start by focusing on the strong point first.

**STEP 4: Ask ratee for comments:** While ratee is expressing his/her comments, remain in control.

**STEP 5: Negotiate a performance agreement:** Ask ratee where they would like to see improvement.

**STEP 6: Set future goals:** Set **specific goals that are clear** and not misunderstood; they should be **measurable** against standards so the ratee can match **performance behavior**.

**STEPS 7: Close the session by reflecting on what was discussed.**

● **FOLLOW-UP:** A strong follow-up shows your commitment to the ratee's development as well as offers a chance for the ratee to ask questions that may have come up since the session.

● **PRACTICE MBWA:** Management By Walking Around gets you out of the office and in the field so you can see how your ratees are performing. It is also a way of giving immediate feedback to the ratee on the session you just held. They're probably just as curious as to how you feel the session went. This would be a good time to offer praise or answer questions. This will also reinforce that you truly care about your people and display a sense of urgency in ensuring a positive working relationship is established.



## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE KEY PLAYERS

● **COMMANDER:** The commander has the overall responsibility in ensuring his/her squadron has an effective feedback program. He/she can take **quality performance measures (QPM)** to ensure feedback is being conducted. The recent EES changes to feedback opened the door for commanders to **expand their checks and balances** in ensuring feedback is effective within their squadrons. **Previously**, commanders could not track feedback or review the PFWs without restrictions. They now can do both at any given time as long as they're in compliance with EES directives (do not allow unauthorized personnel to have access to PFWs).

● **RATERS AND RATER'S RATERS:** Raters are not the only ones that can see a PFW now--the rater's rater can too. Therefore, it is not only the responsibility of the rater to ensure performance feedback is conducted, but also those who have access to PFWs as well. The rater's rater should initiate this action (review PFWs) when they actually have a need to know or have evidence that would warrant such a review. However, there is nothing prohibiting the rater from periodically spot checking to determine if his/her subordinates are providing feedback to their people.

● **RATEE:** It is important that ratees know that it is not only their rater, rater's and commander's responsibility in ensuring they received feedback, but also it's their ultimate responsibility. Ratees need to know they can ask for unscheduled feedback as long as there has not been a formal feedback session conducted in the last 60 days. The rater has 30 days upon request to provide it. If not provided within this window, the ratee has justification to elevate the rater's failure to provide feedback to the rater's rater, and to the commander if necessary.



## CONCLUSION

- **Make feedback count.** It is obvious there is a lot that goes into a performance feedback session, and the success depends on you the supervisor. How well you conduct performance feedback may have the single greatest impact on your subordinates and the attitudes they carry. It's up to you to help them develop into the very best they can be. Take the time to do it right for them and for you. Finally, honesty and fairness are the key to success; won't you give your subordinates the keys?

## Suicide Prevention Tips

(SOURCE: The following information was extracted from a suicide prevention video script developed by Dr Tom Menefee, Chief of the Mental Health Clinic of the 20 FW, Shaw AFB, SC)

### A. AWARENESS:

#### COMMON PROBLEMS/SITUATIONS OF SUICIDE VICTIMS:

- Relationship problems, either family or work relationships
- Marital separation or divorce
- Financial problems
- Significant career disruptions. These could be legal or administrative actions, perhaps an Article 15 or the loss of a stripe. Sometimes an incidental failure in a person's career pursuit is associated with suicide
- Being under investigation
- Work related problems
- Loss of a loved one
- Mental health related disorders including:
  - Depression
  - Schizophrenia
  - Alcohol Abuse
  - Panic Disorder

**BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS ASSOCIATION WITH SUICIDE:**

- Talking or joking about killing themselves
- Changes in a person's eating or sleeping patterns
- Drastic changes in a person's personality or behavior
- Taking unusual or unnecessary risks; perhaps being reckless or abandoning normal safety precautions
- Thinking a lot about death or "what would it be like if I weren't around?"
- Decreasing their normal amount of social interactions...withdrawing from friends or family members
- A marked decrease in a person's interest in their hobbies, activities, or recreational habits
- Persons who kill themselves sometimes give away prized possessions shortly before they do
- They sometimes demonstrate an increase in their alcohol or other drug use prior to killing themselves

**B. "DO" (some specific things to remember on what to do):**

- Get involved. Don't ignore the issue in hopes it will go away. All too often, the thing which goes away is the precious life of the co-worker or family member forever
- Be available to listen, and maybe to talk if they want you to
- Show interest and support in the person's issues
- Be direct in your dealings with a troubled person, don't beat around the bush
- Quite simply, ask if they have been thinking about killing themselves. Talk openly with them about it. We often have a misguided fear that asking them about suicidal thinking might "give them the idea." This has never been found to be true. Your mentioning suicide will not be a novel idea they have never heard of before. Instead, it will bring an obvious issue into the discussion
- Allow them to express their feelings
- Offer them empathy that you are beginning to have some understanding how they feel
- Offer them hope that alternative actions and outcomes are available
- Listen to them...determine if they have a plan. If they report a particular means of killing themselves, and you can remove that means safely without placing yourself in danger, do so immediately
- By all means...TAKE ACTION!

C. "DON'T" (Be sure you don't):

- Leave the person alone. Stay with them until either help arrives to secure their safety, or, you escort them to the safe care of others
- Never, ever be sworn to secrecy about their suicidal intentions. Your obligation to protect a person from killing him/herself is far greater than your obligation to maintain a confidence. Suicidal people do not remain angry at a friend or co-worker for saving them from killing themselves; but there have been dead people whose friends kept the secret too long.
- If they do acknowledge suicidal ideations, don't act shocked, lecture them on their bad idea, or attempt to give advice. This will only create distance between you, and they will stop opening up
- Of course, never dare them to do it, or in any way call their bluff. These strategies have sometimes ended with fatal results