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**A**s this will be my last article as your National VP for Junior Officer Programs, I'd like to share a few thoughts, ideas, and observations in hopes of stimulating further thinking, planning, engaging, and implementation among our JOs out there.

**Get a mentor.** We all have read and heard such advice from senior officers, and various formal and informal programs in the Navy. The idea sounds simple enough but takes serious, persistent, and thoughtful effort to implement successfully over the long term. Finding, building, and maintaining a fruitful relationship takes lots of work, and a bit of luck and faith. Officers rotate every few years. People retire or move to other states because of civilian employment. These are only a few reasons that can make maintenance of a mentoring relationship challenging. However, our modern communications facilities can certainly mitigate some of the obstacles. It is a worthwhile endeavor to invest one's time and effort to nurture, from both sides. Think of oneself as *Luke Skywalker* looking for and working with *Yoda*.

**Make the most of one's JO years.** It's the wonder years. Sounds old-fashioned and corny enough? As JOs aren't required yet to compete for a pay billet within the APPLY process, one has a bit more freedom to choose billets, units, programs, or even designator change. Newly-commissioned officers are protected in a pay status for three years even in IAP status. One is certainly empowered to plan and shape one's own destiny rather than having to depend on the element of chance in the APPLY process. That is not to say success is going to drop into one's lap effortlessly. To capture successfully the potential opportunities for long-term professional

## Get A Mentor

growth, it takes much initiative; thinking; planning; persistent execution; and last, but not least, personal resources. If unsure about how to plan out the JO years, well, that's a good reason why one needs a mentor.

**Pursue meaningful assignments.** So, that goes without saying, does it not? Tell me something new, one might say. Well, the question is what's meaningful and relevant in today's Navy? In a recent issue of our *NRA News* magazine, RADM Keith presented a very detailed and comprehensive article on the ZBR process in validating Navy Reserve's capabilities and missions, and ultimately, size of various programs and their associated billets. In this write-up, there was a flowchart outlining the ZBR steps. One could, and should, go through these steps on a personal level and ask critically and honestly of oneself the very same questions, within the context of one's current billet, task assignments, and unit's mission. What are we bringing to the fight? Are we contributing *directly* to a ZBR-validated mission? Are we on some OPLAN or CONPLAN to support the joint warfighters? If unsure, ask your unit CO/XO. And if you are a unit CO, ask your Program Manager or OSO, or again, a mentor.

**Pursue relevant professional development.** If we have already completed our basic qualifications in whichever designator or program we are, the goal should be actively and continuously to pursue additional professional development. For some specialized communities, graduate-level education, professional licenses, NOBC's, and AQD's are must-haves to stay competitive. For URL officers, JPME will be a significant discriminator in only a few years from now, when one will have to compete in the APPLY process for a pay billet. It takes much personal resources and persistent effort but that's the way life will be in the Navy. Why? All these accomplishments go onto our OSR front page at which various statutory and administrative selection boards will look with discerning eyes. Not sure which path to invest one's limited time resources for the most optimal benefits? Ask a mentor.

**Exert maximum effort.** Sometimes people tend to forget or lose sight of the ongoing Global War on Terrorism, and war requires

maximum exertion of force (for those of us who read Clausewitz). What makes this war especially challenging is its requirement to maintain continuous long-term public support in an austere fiscal environment. For the past four years, ever since 9/11, the ops tempo and personal tempo have intensified for many of us. The old paradigm of one-weekend-a-month and two-weeks-a-year have been just that, old and obsolete. Many of us have been mobilized more than once. Many of us have put in other extra Herculean efforts, easily surpassing the 90-Inactive Duty annual point limit (many of which, of course, have been non-pay) and executing multiple AT/ADT's. I suppose one of the resultant effects of the Zero-Based Review and the Human Capital Strategy is to have less reserve pay billets, but those of us who are in one are expected to double-up or triple-up our time on duty. It seems to get to a point where the difference between active and reserve status is just practically a blurred line, and becomes more of a continuum rather than any finite discrete. That is certainly not to say things have been and will be any easier on our civilian employment, families, and personal life. But it shouldn't come as any surprise since we're naval officers in the middle of a war, should it?

It's been a wonderful and rewarding two years for me, serving as your National VP for Junior Officer Programs. I've been greatly blessed with the pleasure working with many of our dedicated JO readership; many thanks for your contributing articles, questions, and issues. I've learnt from many other senior and flag officers with whom I've come into contact. I'm grateful for your sharing of your valuable experience, and greatly appreciate your encouragement and mentorship. And last, but not least, I've found myself among the warm and caring family of NRA national and district officers and Headquarters staff. And for this, I'm just simply and humbly honored. At the time of this writing, the National Fall Conference has not yet been convened, and my relief has not been selected. But rumor has it that there would be at least two, if not more, candidates running for the job. BZ for these JOs and my hat's off to you; many thanks for stepping up! 🙏