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## The FOS Report

Additionally, trait averages should increase and promotion recommendations should move to the right within each tour. Declining trends from the same CO were strong negatives and “sunk” a few of these officers. Missing FITREPs were also a big factor, even though BUPERS publishes a missing FITREP list before each board. Surprisingly, only one officer reported that a long string of 1 of 1 FITREPs was the likely culprit.

A quarter of the officers, especially those eligible for O-6, attributed their FOS to the lack of a command (or XO) tour. Many had held command previously, but none at their current pay grade.

Nonproductive years resulting from broken service, time spent in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR), or UNSAT years were also noted as major factors. Officers who received no FITREPs for three or more years while not drilling were frequently “passed over.” Although many had valid reasons (e.g., graduate degree, family issues), selection boards do not guess well, and not writing a letter of explanation is tantamount to volunteering to be FOS’d.

Other causes cited by a few officers included transferring to the Naval Reserve just before a promotion board, or a late-career designator change. Two officers cited “homesteading” (remaining in the same unit for more than three years). Others noted service record problems, missing awards, and unimpressive educational or qualification records.

Several officers mentioned poor timing as being a factor, and advised against making a career change (e.g., to a new designator) less than a year before a selection board. By waiting until after selection, one has several years to establish a record of accomplishment in a new designator before being considered for promotion.

Each of the officers in this study was eventually promoted, *usually with the help of a mentor* who helped find and correct problems. Officers with “pack” records found ways to get into Reserve units where they could compete favorably with their peers. In some cases, this even meant

switching units to those with less demanding requirements. Some officers broke out on two simultaneous FITREPs (regular and concurrent) to improve their selection chances. A few even had COs who gave them an “almost end-of-tour award” early so that it would be seen by the board.

One officer offered insight into the importance of taking an active role in career management. He stated, “This is an administrative exercise that does not always guarantee you make it if you let the process work in the AUTO mode. You must switch to MANUAL.”

By far the most important factor listed as the reason for eventual promotion was submitting a well-written letter to the board. Selection boards, like nature, abhor a vacuum. By providing the missing details to the briefer, these officers significantly improved their chances for selection. If a briefer (and, therefore, the entire board) has to guess about a missing or unusual career item, he/she is likely to guess wrong. More importantly, information that remains missing (e.g., FITREPs) may be interpreted as “what is this officer trying to hide?” Bottom line: don’t leave anything to chance. Tell the board why you were a 1-of-1 MP, or better yet, forward a letter from that reporting senior telling the board why you received those grades.

Letters to the board should be brief and to the point. Remember, only one board member will ever view your letter. All other board members see only your Officer Summary Record (OSR) and Performance Summary Record (PSR). Therefore, your comments should help your briefer better explain your record to other board members. Never send copies of orders, travel claims, newspaper clippings, etc. Include missing awards and FITREPs and brief explanations of specific performance periods that the board might not understand from looking at your OSR/PSR. Keep it short and simple. Long letters to the board are viewed as a big negative.

Good luck in your drive to promote . . . and see the on-line article for the full results! 📄

Selection boards sometimes face two dilemmas: either they have more fully-qualified candidates than selection numbers, or they have insufficient fully-qualified candidates to fill all selection numbers. In either case, this results in officers who are considered to be “failed of selection” (or FOS).

Because statutory board members are bound by oath not to discuss proceedings without permission of the Secretary of the Navy, direct feedback is not possible. FOS’d officers are left to guess why they were “passed over.” The most likely reason is an uncompetitive record. Either the board required higher standards, or officers did not “break out” relative to their peers. However, there are many other reasons why an officer may fail to select, especially at O-5 and O-6 levels.

Sometimes, officers fail to select once, twice, even more, and, subsequently, are recommended for promotion. Although statutory boards may not discriminate between in-zone and above-zone candidates for promotion, this raises the question, “What did this officer do to get ‘over the hump’?”

I conducted a survey, on my own, and received 63 responses nationwide. I asked the above question and investigated attitude and the use (or nonuse) of a mentor. The details of the survey are at <<http://www.navy-reserve.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1934>>. An executive summary follows.

Half of the officers believed the primary reason for FOS was related to fitness reports (FITREPs). The biggest factor was FITREPs that were mediocre “pack” or “pack minus.” Simply put, *you must perform well against your peers*. Officers who promote are usually EP/MP performers.