



U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Ernest Miller, command sergeant major of Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 25th Infantry Division, climbs up a high wall during the Green Mile, a physical endurance course; concluding the final week of Jungle Operations Training Course at East Range, Hawaii, Oct. 1, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Angelo Mejia)

Centralized Boards Need a Clearer Picture of NCO Performance

By Master Sgt. Philip E. Pruchinsky

Sergeants Major Course

In November 2015, the U.S. Army introduced the new Department of the Army 2166-9 series Non-commissioned Officer Evaluation Report (NCOER), changing how the Army performs NCO evaluations. These new evaluations follow the leadership requirements model of *Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22: Leadership and the Profession*, while also limiting senior raters to only being able to rate 24% of their Soldiers as most qualified (Department of the Army, 2019a). This poses a problem because lieutenants and captains are

typically responsible for rating senior NCOs below the rank of sergeant major. These officers provide input on performance to centralized boards for sergeants first class and master sergeants but often don't have enough time in service to fully understand what these NCOs do. This article will explain why including first sergeants and command sergeants major in the senior NCO rating chain will add needed experience and input, allowing centralized board members to fully appreciate Soldiers' performance and potential.

Talent Management

The Army's current talent management process is to promote Soldiers based on their proficiency and their capacity to operate at the next grade. The Army Talent Management Task Force (2019) states, "The Army defines talent as the unique intersection of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and preferences (KSB-Ps)" (para. 1). Due to this talent-based promotion system, the Army must thoroughly assess these factors in order for centralized boards to identify the most qualified individuals so they can make informed decisions based on Soldiers' performance and potential without ever having met them.

The overarching problem is that raters, typically lieutenants and captains, lack the insight or knowledge of how to execute the tasks associated with those roles. For this reason, to accurately assess NCOs' knowledge and skills, centralized boards should receive input from senior leaders who served in these positions. Without this experience, officers cannot accurately provide necessary performance feedback, especially because their roles differ fundamentally from the positions they evaluate.

For example, sergeants first class receive effective Measures of Performance (MOP) from their lieutenant counterparts. However, first sergeants are in a better position to provide Measures of Effectiveness (MOE) due to their experience as NCOs. Likewise, captains also perform these functions for their master sergeant/first sergeant counterparts, yet their limited exposure to NCOs of the same grade and position limits their ability to make accurate comparisons. These officers provide board members with effective talent management MOPs by evaluating task completion, but they cannot provide accurate MOEs because they lack evaluation criteria experience.

Providing board members with only MOP limits the information they receive regarding an individual's effectiveness, ability to create sustainable systems, and the manner in which they achieve results. To ensure Soldiers are proficient in the current grade and have the capacity to operate at the next grade, the rating chain should provide both MOPs and MOEs.

Measures of Performance

Measures of Performance evaluation occurs by understanding the end-state of the tasks. *Joint Publication (JP) 3-0: Joint Operations* states, "MOPs help answer the question, 'Are we accomplishing tasks to standard?'" (Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018, p. II-11). It requires little knowledge of how to accomplish tasks, as it emphasizes only the successful completion of the task. The current version of the NCOER tracks this with performance blocks in various areas and qualifies the data with comments.

These MOPs do not assess an individual's effectiveness in the long run, to include the organization's long-term sustainment. While MOPs show achievements, they often lack unit impact. MOEs provide better critical



U.S. Army Master Sgt. Kimberly Fox, a recruiter with the Kansas Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion, evaluates senior for promotion during an Enlisted Promotion System board at the Heartland Preparedness Center, Wichita, Kansas, Oct. 24, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Ian Safford)

input regarding the sustainability of achievements and their impact on the organization.

Measures of Effectiveness

According to Westphal and Guffey (2014), "At their most basic level, MoEs should be developed to measure those items of information within the operational environment that give signs of progress toward creating the conditions described in the commander's end state" (para. 15). If an evaluation is centered on MOEs rather than MOPs, and given by senior NCOs who have knowledge and experience in the subject, the evaluation is more effective and benefits the Army as a whole by ensuring the most qualified Soldiers are promoted.

The Solution

To ensure a fair promotion system, the U.S. Army should undo the unit ranking percentage limit (24%) and ensure centralized boards receive both MOP and MOE input. For more accurate NCOERs, the Army should replace "Rater Overall Performance" with "Measure of Effectiveness" on PART IV of the DA Form 2166-9-2 NCOER. First sergeants and command sergeants major can then use this block to evaluate sergeants first class and master sergeants/first sergeants respectively within their formations. *Army Regulation 623-3: Evaluation Reporting System* already supports this function by describing the rating chain as:

"Rating chains correspond as nearly as practicable to the chain of command or chain of supervision in a timely manner and do not promote an elevation of the rating chain beyond the senior rater's ability to have adequate knowledge of each Soldier's performance and potential."
(Department of the Army, 2019b, p. 2)

The intent of these solutions is not to hinder the rater's ability to rate subordinates on performance, but to supplement it with input from individuals who have direct critical experience in the field. Retired Sgt. Maj. Steven Noonan, a former brigade operations sergeant major, said, "It would also be a forcing function to make those NCO leaders stay involved in the professional development and career advancement of their subordinates" (personal communication, November 11, 2020).

These solutions are a simple and inexpensive Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities and Policy (DOTMLPF-P) change recommendations that fall within the training and doctrine domains. The training solution would require creating a class to teach first sergeants and command sergeants major how to develop and write MOEs, focus areas, and criteria. The doctrinal solution would be to revise a few words on the NCOER and a

paragraph in AR 623-3 concerning intermediary evaluators and the narrative summary.

Conclusion

In its current state, the NCOER does not provide centralized board members a clear picture of NCO performance. MOP alone is not a sufficient rating tool and lieutenants and captains lack the necessary background experience to accurately assess their NCOs. Senior NCOs should be involved in the rating process to ensure evaluations reflect a holistic view of rated NCO achievements, contributions, and performance during the rated period. The DOTMLPF-P solution is inexpensive and requires a simple training module, a small change to the NCOER format, and a minor modification to the applicable regulation. Applying these changes will strengthen the NCO Corps, provide more accurate information to centralized board members, and ensure the Army promotes the most qualified NCOs. ■

References

- Army Talent Management Task Force/ Headquarters, Deputy Chief of Staff, Army G-1. (2019). *Army officer talent management*. Stand-To. <https://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2019/04/26/?st>
- Department of the Army. (2019a). *ADP 6-22: Army leadership and the profession*. https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN20039-ADP_6-22-001-WEB-0.pdf
- Department of the Army. (2019b). *AR 623-3: Evaluation reporting system*. https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN14342_AR623-3_FINAL.pdf
- Joint Chiefs of Staff. (2018). *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint operations*. https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_0ch1.pdf
- Knowledge. (n.d.). *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/knowledge>
- Westphal, T. & Guffey, J. (2014). Measures of effectiveness in Army doctrine. *eArmor*. https://www.benning.army.mil/armor/earmor/content/issues/2014/oct_dec/Westphal.html

Master Sgt. Philip E. Pruchinsky is a student of the Sergeants Major Academy (SGM-A), Class 71. He also served as an infantry company first sergeant and is working towards his bachelor's degree in leadership and workforce development from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.



<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/NCO-Journal/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NCOJournal>

<https://twitter.com/NCOJournal>

<https://www.instagram.com/ncojournalofficial/>

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the NCO Journal, the U.S. Army, or the Department of Defense.

