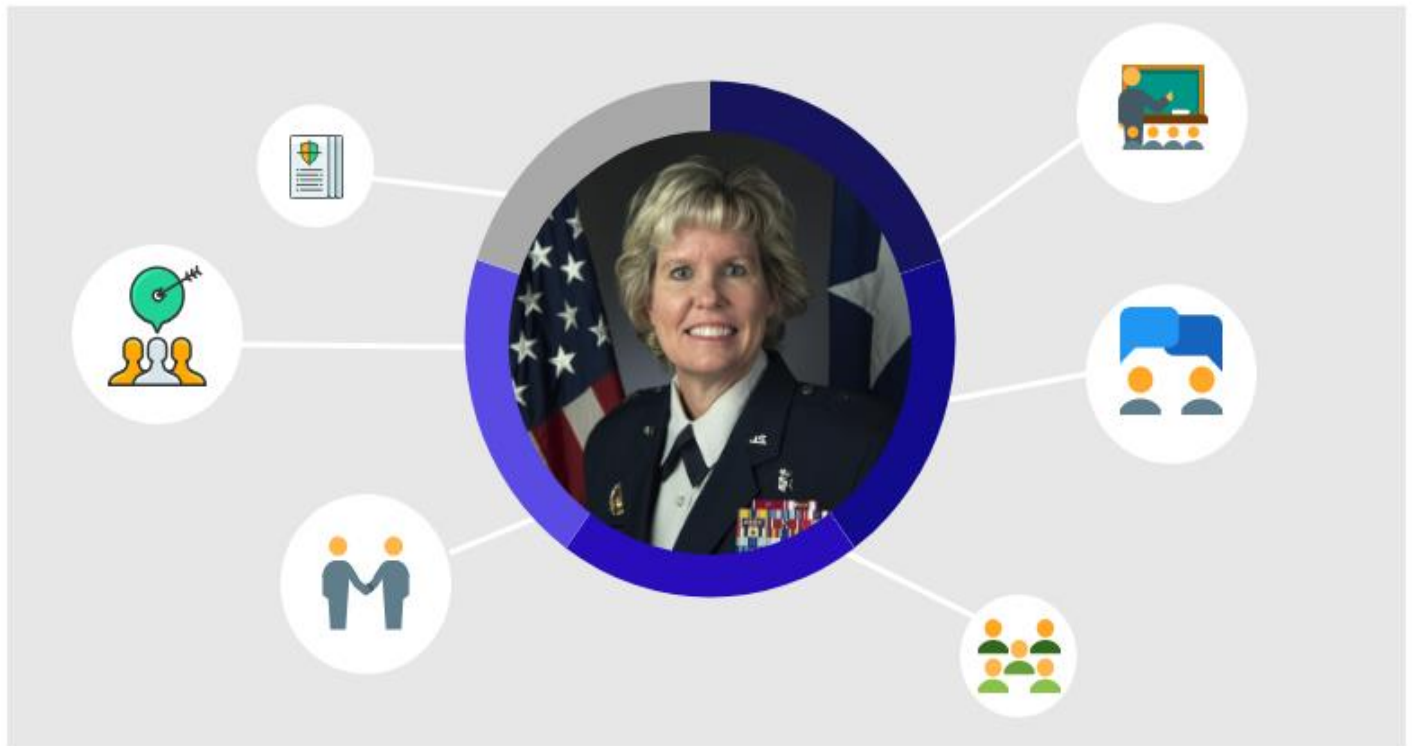


# Medical Service Corps MENTORSHIP *guide*



*Last Updated 4.20.20*





## A word from your 21<sup>st</sup> MSC Corps Chief

Fellow MSCs,

I am constantly amazed at the phenomenal work that is taking place in our Air Force Medical Service, led by you. A critical part of what we do is growing the next generation of leaders, especially through mentorship. From the time you enter our Air Force, until the time you separate or retire, I urge you to be active with mentorship, whether you are providing or receiving. This mentorship guide was written to support your efforts.

Much like the “face to face” mentorship you receive, this guide is not perfect or all encompassing. There are even some sections we will need to author. And that is ok. There are lessons and stories you will cherish while others may be less pertinent at this point in your career. The important part, is that this document will help serve as a foundational reference you can turn to in order to start answering questions that arise. If you think there is a section to add, or you want to make a contribution or update, please contact our Corps office at [usaf.pentagon.af-sg.mbx.msc-corps-office@mail.mil](mailto:usaf.pentagon.af-sg.mbx.msc-corps-office@mail.mil).

Thank you to every Medical Service Corps Officer that dedicated their time and talent to make this a reality.  
Sincerely,

SUSAN J. PIETRYKOWSKI  
Brigadier General, USAF, MSC  
21st Medical Service Corps Chief

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# Chapter 1

## **Reputation and Relationships**

Key Contributors: Col Gregory Coleman, Col Mary Ann Garbowski, Col Paul Skala, Lt Col Felicia Burks, Lt Col Josh Curtis, Lt Col Courtney Day, Lt Col Peter French, Lt Col Ray Vincent, Lt Col Liana Vogel, Maj Jason Glitz, Maj Ryan McCrae, and Capt Tamiko Gheen

BLUF: The relationships you form as a MSC will help you in the future and are worth investing in. They may even save your career.

### **1.1. WHY YOUR REPUTATION MATTERS**

**Lt Col Josh Curtis, Commander, 355<sup>th</sup> Medical Support Squadron, Davis-Monthan AFB**

Reputation is the perception that others have about you. You cannot control your reputation, you can only influence it. Your reputation will always precede you. This is true both among MSCs – because there are only about a thousand of us in the Air Force – and as an officer. Your reputation will grow with you throughout your career, being molded and shaped by your actions, decisions, and character. The perception of who you are as an Airman and as a MSC will be communicated through your career documents (OPRs, decorations, awards, etc.), by word-of-mouth, and by what you post online. Your reputation matters because it will, inevitably, be a factor as your career is vectored and you are being considered for your future assignments. It will also play a part in determining how you fit into the overall plan for the AFMS. For example, if you have a reputation of being a strong leader with an ability to find the “yes,” a Senior MSC on the DT will know those things about you. They will use that knowledge to vector you to a position that requires those attributes for success at the assignment level. Furthermore, a good reputation can inspire others to have trust and respect for you even before you sign in to a new assignment. Conversely, a bad reputation can have the opposite effect. It will require you to work even harder to change the perception your subordinates, peers, and leaders have of you to get your job done.

#### **1.1.1. PERCEPTION VS. REALITY**

Your reputation is shaped, in part, by perception. Those perceptions begin in reality with an action (on or off duty) and may change as opinions are formed. By and large, perceptions are a product of those opinions people establish as they evaluate what you did and how you did it. What’s more, those perceptions evolve and are altered as the opinions are passed from person to person arriving at a moment when someone is asking about you – the moment when your reputation becomes reality in the inquirer’s mind. We regularly hear that “perception is reality”, and this example is the point in time when it becomes true. You can influence people’s perception of you by being as open, honest, and transparent as



you can be about the decisions you make. This is particularly true for controversial decisions and choices that resulted in a negative outcome or that were wrong. Everyone has made decisions that they wish they could go back and change, and outside opinions about those decisions will undoubtedly be formed. It's important to stay true to yourself, to maintain the Air Force Core Values in your actions, and to communicate with your leadership to mitigate negative and inaccurate perceptions. There is truth in perception being reality, especially because reputation plays a part in career vectoring.

**Lt Col Courtney Day, Instructor of Management, USAF Academy**

Perception is reality. Their perception doesn't have to be correct for it to become their reality.

I was a single female Lt RMO going to a working lunch with a married male Major Logistics officer. We spent lunch drafting our closeout plan. When I returned I got feedback that the lunch wasn't a good idea. My first reaction was outrage and contempt. After reflection, I realized I didn't want that reputation (even if it wasn't reality). From then on we took our NCOICs with us to our working lunches.

Give people the benefit of the doubt because your perception is most often not their reality.

**1.1.2. SOCIAL MEDIA DO'S AND DON'T'S**

**Lt Col Melanie Carino, Programming & Resources Division Chief, HQAFSOC/SGA**

If you don't want your mom/dad/sibling/etc. to see it, don't post it.

If grandma/grandpa/etc. won't understand, don't post it.

Do continue using appropriate PII and HIPAA compliance when posting.

It is better to place official messages on an official social media account (MDG/CC Facebook Page, or Clinic page) to minimize confusion.

If there are official pages, make sure to keep them current.

Know your audience. It's easy to confuse a joke with official statements if it's posted on a serious site.

Do be proud of being in the Air Force. You don't have to get into an argument to prove it.

**1.1.3. FRATERNIZATION**

It is easy to say that officers socialize with officers and enlisted with enlisted. While fraternization is still a crime under the UCMJ, Air Force life has changed over the years. Now you have Airmen earning commissions who are married to Airmen and families with both enlisted and officer members. If professionalism is maintained while in uniform and

you respect each other as a family, then it's a nonissue.

If you would not want your boss to know what you were doing with "X," then you probably shouldn't do it.

It's pretty common for enlisted and officers to be in similar off-base activities such as academic courses, sporting teams, and events for their children. If you focus on the activity, it's probably not fraternization.

Airman Snuffy and Lt Smith have to work on a project for Business Ethics 101. They have only one night to complete it. Having a working dinner at the bowling alley to complete it is okay. Completing the project at the bowling alley and then bowling a few games and having a celebratory brew...not so good.

The senior ranking individual sets the tone of the relationship. Maintain customs and courtesies, and no one will wonder.

If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

When I played on the base basketball team, I got yelled at by our coach, who was a TSgt. That was okay. Outside the gym, I was just "Lt".

Using customs and courtesies (Ma'am, Sir, Capt, etc.) makes it easier to not go over the line.

The intent of our fraternization rules is to prevent the appearance of partiality, and to protect good order, discipline, authority and morale. While our interactions may have changed over the years, the principle hasn't changed.

#### **1.1.4. PROJECT OFFICERS**

**Captain Tamiko Gheen, TOPA Flight Commander, 375th Medical Group, Scott AFB**

#### **WHAT IS A PROJECT OFFICER/WHY IS IT IN THIS CHAPTER?**

A Project Officer, often referred to as "Projo", is an individual with the opportunity to lead and execute an event or initiative as an additional duty. As a Project Officer, you must represent yourself and the Air Force well in your efforts because you are often acting on behalf of your leadership or, at the very least, representing their best interests. Your leadership may trust you to execute a high visibility event, site visit, or project based on your credibility and organizational skills. If you are successful, the opportunity may bolster your reputation as perceived by leaders and help you shine amongst your peers for Awards and Stratifications.

## **HELP! I JUST GOT NAMED TO BE A PROJO...WHAT NOW?**

When tasked as a Project Officer, you should first collect expectations from the appropriate level leader, and identify if there is any After Action Reports (AARs) or resources from previous years or similar initiatives (for example, an itinerary for the same type of site visit).

Be sure to clarify your role and who you should report to (Commander, Headquarters POC, Commander's Action Group [CAG], etc). You must make yourself available, respond promptly, and ask questions if necessary. You will typically not be the sole responsible figure as a Project Officer, but you will be held accountable for the project's smooth execution.

If you are tasked with an event that requires months of planning, schedule follow-up meetings with your reporting authority to ensure you are on-track. These updates will range in formality based on your reporting authority figure.

For example, if you are reporting to the Installation Commander for the Air Force Ball, it would be a good idea to provide a read-ahead talking paper clearly labeled with Decision Points and Information Only points for your regularly scheduled face-to-face meetings. On the contrary, if you are coordinating a site visit for a visiting team from AFMRA, you can simply check in with your AFMRA point of contact periodically and provide email updates as necessary.

If you are hosting individuals at your unit or base in any capacity as a Project Officer, be sure to provide resources to make the experience as smooth as possible. Your visitors' and/or guests' experiences and comfort should be at the forefront of your planning efforts from drafting an itinerary (incorporating "personal rest breaks" for busy days), ensuring they don't get lost (providing clear instructions and addresses, meeting people at the door to escort to a conference room, etc), to providing certain resources if families are impacted (hosting childcare at your Medical Group holiday party).

## **BUILD YOUR TEAM AND/OR SOLICIT VOLUNTEERS**

Often, you alone will not coordinate all of the necessities of the task at hand; you will need to build a team.

For more involved Group, Wing, or Base events, you may need a large pool of volunteers. You can solicit help from the base Private Organizations (examples: First Four through Company Grade Officer Council). Other times, you can build your team by requesting the CAG or Executive Officers to send a tasker out to the unit levels to identify volunteers. If you are on a base with mission partners, see if your Wing can coordinate a volunteer request through their CAGs. For example, on Scott AFB, there are many tenant units, an Air Force Major Command, and a Joint Combatant Command which greatly expands the pool of potential volunteers.

If you have a position or task fit for Airmen or NCOs in your flight or unit, ask them if they

would like an opportunity to shine.

## **DELEGATE, TRUST BUT VERIFY, & HOLD PEOPLE ACCOUNTABLE**

You may find that some people volunteer “for the bullet”, and don’t show up or deliver despite any clear performance expectations and deadlines you have given them. You must realize that the longer you put difficult conversations off, the more work everyone else on your team (including you) will have to take on. Hold your team accountable, and don’t be afraid to let members know if their participation level is not meeting your expectations.

## **PROTOCOL, PROTOCOL, PROTOCOL**

Solicit Protocol’s support and consultation even if you do not think it is necessary. Protocol will advise you on issues such as visitor parking, ceremonial requirements, appropriate customs and courtesies, and seating charts for meetings.

## **AFTER-ACTION REPORTS, CONTINUITY, & RECOGNITION**

You are doing a lot of work, and chances are you will not be the last person to lead the same or similar project or event. Create an After-Action Report (AAR), and send all your resources to the authority who may be tasking the next year’s Projo.

If an AAR is not necessary (i.e. the event is not annual), consider handing off any valuable resources for future similar events to contacts like the Exec Officers or the CAG. Many resources can be used again or tweaked for other upcoming needs, such as seating charts, name tag templates, or scripts.

Last, be sure you coordinate any thank you letters for your team’s volunteers and/or follow-up with any reporting authorities to thank them for their coordination. If it is a Wing Event, ask the CAG for the Wing Commander’s thank you letter template so that you can draft personalized thank you notes from the Wing Commander for each member of your team.

If you are working with a Staff Assistance or Site Visit team, follow-up with the individual at Headquarters who helped you coordinate the visit to thank him\her, and close the loop in communication on any deliverables, expectations, or questions from the visit.

If you were on the receiving end for coordination (i.e., you tasked the Project Officer), do what you can to ensure that Project Officer receives a thank you or recognition for a job well-done. As an Executive Officer to a One-Star General, I guided and directed many Project Officers who were hosting the Command Surgeon at their Medical Group. After this assignment, I was sent to a Medical Group and was tasked as a Project Officer multiple times in a short amount of time.

It took me physically being the Project Officer to realize that I should have advised my boss to coin the Project Officers at the end of his visits, or I should have drafted thank you letters or emails for him to sign and send afterwards. If you are in the position to remind

your leader that somebody went through extraordinary efforts to plan a visit or event on his/her behalf, he/she will always appreciate the nudge to recognize such hard work.

## **WHEN SHOULD I BE A PROJECT OFFICER?**

The answer to this really depends. It certainly would not hurt your chances for a Stratification to have some type of higher-level involvement (Group, Wing, Base, or otherwise) about once per Performance Reporting period or Stratification cycle. However, you may very likely have higher priorities; in these cases, it is appropriate to let your leadership know that taking on such responsibilities would come at the cost of your personal development goals or even your primary duties.

If you do have the bandwidth, it helps to volunteer for opportunities that you have a passion for; let your commanders know just what these interests are so they can be the first to recommend you for an opportunity when they hear of it.

As far as the Air Force is trying to steer away from “volunteering being the focus”, it is undeniable that a higher-level Project Officer opportunity can give you the opportunity to shine and set yourself apart from your peers. If you are able to balance your primary duties appropriately with such additional duties, you will have the opportunity to bolster your reputation as a reliable and motivated officer within your unit and with your leadership.

### **1.1.5. FAVORITISM**

#### **Lt Col Liana Vogel, Commander, 49<sup>th</sup> Medical Support Squadron, Holloman AFB**

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, favoritism is the showing of special favor or partiality. Throughout your career, you will have to keep it in-check as a supervisor, a subordinate and as a peer. Your challenge will be to treat everyone fairly. Here are some tips on how to do that.

### **AS A SUPERVISOR**

Not all subordinates are created equal. Throughout your career, you will supervise officers, enlisted, civilians and contractors with varying skill levels and personalities. You will naturally gravitate to your higher performers and to those with similar interests. As the boss, it is imperative to always keep in mind the MSC Golden Rule, Perception is Reality!

Use objective criteria when making decisions. Publications and policies are your best friend; anchor your decisions to them whenever possible.

Be consistent. Establish fair policies and stick to them. Something as simple as granting leave can quickly turn into perceived favoritism if applied inconsistently. Office celebrations can also be a slippery slope (ex: baby showers, birthday parties, farewells, etc.). Just remember, what you do for one, be prepared to do for all.

Consider your criteria. We make many decisions every day. Take your decision-making

one step further and look at the criteria upon which you are using to base your decisions. Using leave as an example, there are a number of criteria to consider. Leave balances and staffing are two primary factors, but what about how often and how much time has been taken. Coworkers do not care about someone's leave balance if they have to cover someone else's duties four Fridays in a row.

Also consider which criteria or answer is "more right". I recently had the opportunity to choose which criteria was best to use when making a travel voucher decision. I had an MSC come into my office stating that RMO was not going to pay for her hotel stay on her way to and from her TDY. Although the Joint Federal Travel Regulation (JTR) only requires members to travel 400 miles in a single day, the member had not added the hotel stays to her Constructive Travel Worksheet (CTW). RMO had authorized the deviation from the standard mode of travel based on her cost projection without the hotel costs. Although both were right in their arguments, RMO was "more right".

Communicate publicly. Information is a commodity. As a supervisor, you can either hoard it or share it. Most information, as it applies to work, needs to be shared. The more often you can share it publicly, the better off you will be. If everyone hears the information from you directly and has the opportunity as a group to ask questions, the less opportunity there is for only the "chosen few" to be in the know. Think of information as currency: If you only give it away to a select few, some will be rich with knowledge while others will be lagging behind. You will have just created a class system without even realizing it. Use email groups, flight meetings, and huddle boards to distribute information to everyone at the same time. Information is power, empower everyone!

Recognition. Make an effort to recognize both superior performers as well as just a job well done. If you are lucky, you will have one or two All-Stars on your team that always rise above the rest. You will find it easy to write awards packages for those high performers. Your challenge will be finding ways to recognize those average or even less-than-average performers for that rare occasion when they hit a homerun. Be creative. Establish a weekly Good Catch or Outstanding Customer Service award. If you can get this right, you will decrease the gap and increase the morale of your whole team.

## **AS A SUBORDINATE**

Don't be a suck-up. I once supervised a young MSC whose goal was to make rank. This is not a bad goal to have; however, his approach brought his integrity into question. Instead of learning his job and taking care of his people and the mission, he chose to schmooze the boss instead, sometimes at the expense of the mission. At the end of the assignment, the Colonel retired and the young MSC had alienated his peers and tarnished his reputation in an effort to get ahead.

Bottom line, be a public servant and not a politician. In other words, focus on getting the mission done instead of getting your name out there. You will gain more points and credibility through your works than your words.

## **AS A PEER**

Be on the lookout for the “Golden Child”. If you can’t spot him or her, it is probably you. If it is you, be careful not to flaunt it. Use it to your advantage to build the team. If it is not you, observe what characteristics the “chosen one” possesses and what actions he or she exhibits. Strive to learn from him or her. Use it as a motivator to improve your own performance.

Regardless if it is you or not, Golden Child Syndrome can breed resentment. Being a-  
MSC is a team sport. All of our core functions play off of each other in one way or another. Let your work and reputation set you apart from the pack, but remember to bring your teammates with you. The Corps and the AFMS will be better for it.

### **1.2. FOSTERING RELATIONSHIPS**

#### **Lt Col Peter French, Budget & Execution Division Chief, DHA/J8**

All relationships are an opportunity. Professional relationships specifically present a special opportunity for personal growth because you do not usually choose your teammates (supervisors, colleagues, or subordinates). You are forced to navigate personalities, behaviors, and interpersonal challenges that you may not otherwise select to experience in your personal life. Furthermore, these challenges must be resolved or reconciled if you are to meet organizational objectives. In short, these relationships are an opportunity because you willingly take on the challenge of solving problems to achieve a goal with a diverse set of people.

Start by assuming the best in people. There are few intentionally malicious people in the world. Additionally, the Department of Defense recruiting and human resource processes, while not perfect, are more than sufficient to ensure that individuals have the education, skillsets, and intelligence required for their role. Therefore, other people are not “idiots”. Since we’ve established that the vast majority of people are neither malicious nor lacking in intellect, we can start with the baseline perspective that people are well intentioned and smart enough to excel at their job. Furthermore, social pressures are usually strong enough that no one wants to be viewed as lazy or incompetent. Therefore, we can safely start by assuming the best in people. The vast majority of people are well intentioned, competent, smart, and want to do well (until proven otherwise). So now it’s really just about motivation. That is where you come in. As a leader, it’s a lifelong learning event of experimenting in how to create the environment and context to bring out the best in people (this includes your peers and leadership).

The importance of assuming the best is that you will ask different questions when someone does not perform or act as anticipated. For example, when a deliverable does not meet the intended standard you may ask, “What barriers did the person encounter that prevented this from being the needed quality?”, “Did I give clear instructions?”, “Did they have the needed resources?”, and/or “What processes could support a better outcome next time?” Without assuming the best, you may focus on the person versus the process, and simply think, “This person failed at doing what was needed because they did not work hard and

lack the knowledge and skills to complete the task”. All that being said, there will be times people are lacking the skills needed and then the challenge becomes how to maximize their potential and optimally align them on the team. If you start by assuming the best in people, it focuses you on improving communication and processes first, rather than focusing on the person. You will seek to understand your colleagues first versus judge them. In short, when you assume the best, people become opportunities rather than barriers.

When you assume the best in people you start to view others with curiosity, which leads to a unique opportunity for your personal growth. Savor the challenge of dealing with difficult people and look forward to how much you will learn about yourself, relationships, leadership, and management along the way. Know that whoever is frustrating you, they will not be the last one. Someone more challenging is in your future and learning all you can in the present will serve you well going forward.

Therefore, each organizational superior is an opportunity. Avoid the black-and-white thinking of viewing supervisors as either “good” or “bad”. The supervisor that is demanding, nitpicking, and exacting is your opportunity to up your game, manage the details, build thick skin, and really hone your craft. The one that is absent, timid, or fails to make decisions is your opportunity to step up and lead in that vacuum. The odds of anyone trying to stop you are slim. That said, always be willing to give others credit and lead from behind. You can get a lot done if you don’t care who gets the credit, and time will always be kind to you with people seeing your humble dedication.

The supervisor that micromanages may be unsure and want more information. Learn how to anticipate your boss’ needs and proactively push information. Learn what they need, take care of them, and they will likely reduce the behaviors you found frustrating. No one wants to micromanage; they just need more details. Once they see you pushing them information, they will become more comfortable and stop asking. Remember that it’s not the job of your boss or leadership to adapt to you, but it is your job to adapt to your boss. Each supervisor is an opportunity to grow. Growth is not always comfortable. Be thankful for discomfort, as it is the optimal state for growth and learning.

Be candid in your communication. Being candid is being truthful, not rude. Good communication is: Honest, Appropriate, Respectful, and Direct (HARD). As professionals we must bring our best each day, sharing our thoughts and doing others the service of engaging in meaningful dialogue. Be honest - speak up and state your truth. Be appropriate – select the time and place for your communication (remember the old adage of correct in private and praise in public). Be respectful - this means treating others with kindness and compassion at all times. Finally, be direct – be specific in your observations of successes and shortcomings.

Telling someone that something is broadly “good” or “bad” is not helpful because it is not actionable and doesn’t give them something to focus on replicating or improving. Too often we fall short of this. We don’t speak up, we fail to be deliberate in the setting of our feedback, we project emotions in a way that undermines respect, and we are not specific in either praise or correction. Being aware is the platform for continuous improvement in your communication. When you start thinking about and having more conversations that



seem less comfortable, you are likely on the right track.

Through all this you must manage your emotions. This does not mean that all emotions are bad and that you should not show them. It does mean that you should be aware of your emotions, specifically ones of frustration and anger. It's okay to feel and acknowledge hurt, frustration and anger, but do not let them linger, fester, or drive your actions. There is a simple four step process for when you encounter an obstacle.

First, acknowledge your emotional response. How do you feel? Try to understand to root of WHY you feel this way. Then let it go. It will not serve you. Second, analyze the situation. What is the context? What is going on and why? Third, assess options in how to remedy the situation. What are your options to address it? What are the potential outcomes? What outcomes are most likely? Finally, fourth, pick your course of action and execute it. Remove the emotion and have a propensity for action (even deliberately choosing nothing is action if done with intention). Remember that all of life is a team sport, your emotions are yours to manage, but you can always look to others when analyzing challenges and executing a course of action.

All of the above is challenging, but it is some of the most helpful information I've instilled over the years and used in my own personal development and in the conversations with other Airmen (officers, enlisted, uniformed and not). I fall short every day and at the same time I improve every day. Some people are naturals in managing relationships while others are not. Additionally, even some who are good at managing relationships still have an Achilles heel or blind spot. In all cases, it starts with self-awareness and a desire to improve. Ego is the enemy of self-awareness and a learning mindset. If you are honest with yourself and create an environment where others can be honest with you (a willingness to show vulnerability helps), your growth potential as a leader will be unlimited.

#### **1.2.1. WITH LEADERSHIP**

##### **Col Greg Coleman, Commander, 377th Medical Group, Kirtland AFB**

You don't have to be interested in or do the same things your leaders do but you should have some knowledge of their favorite things. This will help you understand your leaders and their decision-making process; it also proves you're paying attention.

##### **Col Paul Skala, Deputy Command Surgeon, HQ AFSOC/SG**

Realize there are no shortcuts to quality relationships with leadership, peers, and subordinates—they are built and reinforced daily over your career.

Seek first to understand your boss' priorities, communication style/preferences and expectations then loyally communicate and energize the talent of your Airmen to best execute the mission.

Understand that every boss has a different personality, life experience, and risk tolerance.

That said, demonstrating self-awareness and flexibility during interactions with your boss is an important part of building a positive relationship.

Invest the effort to first to become an expert at your job and use that knowledge to develop and lead your Airmen to consistently achieve leadership's priorities ahead of schedule. Leading your Airmen to achieve positive results demonstrates your reliability, trustworthiness and future potential to leadership—all of which positively enhance your relationship.

Your credibility is earned every day and is critical to building a highly reliable reputation/relationship with leadership. Leading Airmen consistent with our Air Force Core Values (Integrity, Service and Excellence) is foundational to your credibility up, down and across the chain of command. Be prepared to make the necessary difficult decisions at your level of responsibility rather than passing them up the chain of command. Bad news does not get better by delaying communication with leadership. Take a proactive approach to problem resolution by: quickly identifying the problem/potential risk(s) to the organization, develop recommended courses of action (COA) for leadership's consideration and then volunteer to take the lead in executing the selected COA. Take responsibility for missteps, learn from the experience and humbly share your lessons learned with peers/subordinates to help them grow.

Take advantage of initial, mid-term and impromptu feedback opportunities with your boss. Be an active participant in the process by listening attentively and dispassionately to the feedback and don't hesitate to ask clarifying questions. Use this feedback to fuel your professional growth. Your boss will likely be interested in your family, career goals, challenges and candid suggestions for organizational improvement. Be prepared for this conversation and consider asking some thoughtful questions to broaden your understanding.

As you grow as an MSC, leadership challenges become more dynamic and complex—potentially including serving in positions where you are accountable to multiple bosses. In these circumstances, it is important to understand the formal/informal organizational structure and leadership priorities then strive to maximize communication, transparency and responsiveness to provide your best support. The relationships you have built throughout your career can be very helpful in navigating this delicate leadership challenge.

### **1.2.2. PEERS**

**Col Paul Skala, Deputy Command Surgeon, HQ AFSOC/SG**

Treat your peers with the kindness, respect and understanding you would a family member or a close friend.

Consider taking a holistic approach and get to know your peers on both a professional and personal level. This understanding will help enrich your current relationship and serve as a catalyst for maintaining life-long friendships.

Take advantage of opportunities to build a diverse network of peers (Other Medical Corps/LAF/Joint officers, Federal Agency staff, Civilians...) and seek to understand their challenges, humbly share your experiences and try to help them achieve their goals. Building relationships with a diverse set of peers will provide a wealth of unique perspectives to inform your decision making and leadership approach.

Make a concerted effort during each assignment to meet and build relationships with healthcare administration peers within the community. These relationships can provide a different thought perspective, enhance communication between organizations and springboard the growth of your professional network.

Relationships with peers can be challenging as some may view peers as their competition. Avoiding this mindset while helping your peers succeed not only helps strengthen the organization but also facilitates individual personal growth. The number of close peer relationships will naturally grow over time—make keeping in touch with your peers a high priority.

Maintain a big picture perspective to best maintain relationships with your peers. With respect to problem solving, active listening, unemotionally sharing perspectives and working hard to get to a collective yes is pivotal to the health of long-term peer relationships. Maximize the use of face to face communication, especially early on in a peer relationship or when addressing potentially contentious issues where context and recognition of non-verbal cues is valuable.

Keep your ego in check (maintain professionalism) when developing relationships with your leadership, peers and subordinates. Significant/repetitive missteps in this area have the potential to negatively impact your career.

### **1.2.3. SUBORDINATES**

#### **Col Paul Skala, Deputy Command Surgeon, HQ AFSOC/SG**

Assume the best of your Airmen and provide them the support they need--they will not let you down.

Consider taking a holistic approach and get to know your peers on both a professional and personal level. This understanding will help enrich your current relationship and serve as a catalyst for maintaining life-long friendships.

Come to work with a positive and energetic attitude. A positive/solution-focused leadership orientation will inspire your Airmen, provide them the confidence to tackle the biggest challenges in the most turbulent of circumstances, and pay positive dividends to unit morale.

Take care of basic leadership blocking and tackling to include timely OPRs, EPRs, Decorations, Promotion Recommendation Forms, and Award packages to grow the next generation of medics. Thoughtfully documenting the impact of your Airmen's

performance demonstrates your commitment to them and their future opportunities.

Take advantage of initial, mid-term and impromptu opportunities to provide feedback to your Airmen. Use a caring approach to deliver feedback and provide specific examples of positive performance and opportunities for improvement. Seek to understand your subordinate's family situation, career goals, challenges and candid suggestions for organizational improvement. Demonstrate the potential you see in your Airmen by outlining potential career path options and tailored recommendations for advancement.

Push your deserving Airmen for professional growth opportunities (even it means leaving your area of responsibility) and creates short-term staffing challenges. Putting the needs of your high performing Airmen first sends a powerful message to your team and provides others an opportunity to step up as you help to grow the next generation of Airmen.

Opportunities provided to you during your career are in no small part the result of the mentorship and advocacy you have received from former leaders and peers. Consider taking advantage of opportunities to pay this debt forward by advocating for deserving Airmen using your network of relationships.

Maximize the use of face to face communication, especially early on in a relationship with subordinates or when addressing potentially contentious issues where context and recognition of non-verbal cues is valuable.

Attempt to model a healthy work/family life balance for your Airmen—although challenging to execute, it is a critical component to both mission accomplishment and family satisfaction.

#### **Lt Col Felicia Burks, Director Revenue Cycle Management, Falls Church, VA**

“Mission first, people always” is the quote often used by military leaders because clearly the mission cannot succeed without people. While it sounds cliché, Theodore Roosevelt's quote, “Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care” is true. Many may recall that John Maxwell used a different twist, “people don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” Regardless of who penned it first, it is a fact that we must lead with our hearts as much as we lead with our heads. Your emotional intelligence quotient is stacked up with your intelligence quotient. Don't get it twisted in this great Profession of Arms.

As leaders, it is critical that your subordinates know that you care about them, their families and their values which include their development, both personally and professionally. For some leaders, it is easier to engage others and quickly build meaningful relationships with those they lead. For others, relationship building may not be a natural process thus creating a unique challenge. Whether introvert, extrovert or a combination of both, there are basic leadership skills similar to those skills we use in our personal relationships. While there are clear boundaries we must consider with leader and subordinate relationships, we must continuously hone our interpersonal skills to and know our own barriers to effectively fortify strong relations.

“None of us is as smart as all of us.” – Ken Blanchard

Be the alphabet and practice the A-Z to effectively foster relationships with subordinates.

Be Authentic and be Accountable. Authentic leadership is critical to your success in leading people. Say what you mean and mean what you say as you lead others. Be real and be diplomatic. . It may take practice if this does not come natural to you but take the time to learn ways on how to open that aperture. It will make you a better leader when you can show genuine interest in your team both in good and bad times. Your subordinates are always watching how you lead and will take cues from you to sometimes legitimize their actions, good and bad. Keep your glass clean because you live in a glass house. As leaders hold their teams accountable, they should also have established networks/friends/peers to help keep themselves true. You can't talk the talk unless you walk the walk. If done well, authentic leadership yields dividends beyond your imagination building trust and loyalty.

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Be Bold, be Brave and be Balanced. Bold leaders are bold enough to be creative, to be innovative and to fail. Truthfully no one likes failure and clearly there are areas that are a no-fail task or mission so you must use good judgment when taking calculated risks. However, do not allow fear of failure prevent effective leadership. Demonstrate courage when necessary based on the challenge. You must be courageous enough to stand as a brave leader alone and unafraid at times..

Be brave and consistently embrace the heart of a champion. You will inspire courage in others. Think about how you can share the opportunity to serve as inspiration or motivation for the people you lead. In bravery, you will make mistakes. You will struggle. You will fail, however you are never alone. You will learn. Be brave enough to embrace every challenge as a growth opportunity.

Balance? What is balance? Does it even exist? Some argue that there is no such thing as balance, but there are priorities. Know how to balance your priorities. Remember that the personnel you lead will naturally model what you teach them. Learn to maintain your priorities by keeping your top three in front of you. This method will help you to establish a daily rhythm which will prevent you from working extended hours. If you are always staying late at work, your subordinates will feel the pressure to stay late at work. Set the example and show that you respect personal/family time. There will be occasions when duty calls, but that should be the exception to the rule and not the norm.

Be Confident, Competent, Consistent and Compassionate. Have you ever met a leader who exuded energy and confidence? How did you feel after meeting with them? At times, Leaders must always exude confidence, be competent in their jobs, be consistent in actions as well as personality, and be compassionate during the most challenging of times. You will gain more respect and confidence from the people you lead when you are confident, competent, consistent and compassionate. When all else fails, think of what you expect of your leadership and be the example even when your boss may not be at that moment.

Be Direct and Dedicated. Direct leadership is necessary. Do not be passive-aggressive. As long as you respect your people and remain consistent in your approach, they will always know where you stand on an issue. Directly communicate with them at all times with dignity and respect. Furthermore, remain dedicated to the people you lead, their families and the mission.

Be the Model of excellence. “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.” - Aristotle

“Excellence in all we do” is one of our Air Force Core Values. Live and breathe excellence. As you maintain a spirit of excellence, so will your people.

Be Fun. Learn how to have fun with your people. Work hard...play hard. There will be times where you will need to intentionally engage in teambuilding activities to increase the morale. It will also help you to learn your people and build relationships so that they are comfortable bringing their real-life problems with you. Remember, they often won't have the solution to their own personal problem, but you must build a relationship with them to be introduced to the problem. Learn to have fun and watch your subordinate relationships flourish.

“There is little success where there is little laughter.” – Andrew Carnegie

Be Grateful. Always express gratitude to those you lead, and let them know you're grateful to lead them. Get into the happy of reflecting on reasons to be grateful each day. It will shift your perspective and your environment.

“Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others.” – Marcus T. Cicero

“Be present in all things and thankful for all things.” – Maya Angelou

“A person who feels appreciated will always do more than expected.” – Unknown

Be Humble. C.S. Lewis shared, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less. Embrace servant-leadership as you lead your people. Remember you have positional power but you will lead best with influential power.”

Be Inspirational.

“When people go to work, they shouldn't have to leave their hearts at home.” – Betty Bender

It is clear that we are leaders and expected to manage our emotions. Many leaders learn the value of staying emotionally well during a crisis, and expect that their subordinates are able to do the same. However, there is a people-factor in leading that we must always remember. Life happens! There will be times where the people you lead may not be able to leave their personal issues in the parking lot. Because we lead a multigenerational and

multicultural Air Force; it's important to remember people respond to significant emotional events in different ways. Consider your leadership style and know when situational leadership is necessary. There are cases where directive/authoritative types of leadership styles are needed to get the job done, but there are other cases where inspirational leadership is the clear way to go. Inspirational leaders find ways to motivate others to be their best. Look for ways to inspire your personnel in peacetime or wartime. Lead!

**Be Just.** Let truth and justice guide you. It is important that you lead with equity. Fairness is the key to building the bridge to the solid relationship with your subordinate.

**Be Knowledgeable.** Know your stuff and know your people. Knowledge within your functional area is critical to your role as a leader, and it makes you more credible. Get to know your people, and get to know their jobs. The better you know them and their functional areas, the better equipped you will become as their advocates.

**Be a Listener.** Learn to listen to verbal and nonverbal communication effectively. Take the necessary notes and then respond accordingly. It is important to be there (mentally) when engaged in communication with your subordinates. In the age of multitasking, leaders can easily become distracted by their smart devices or email when a subordinate is trying to communicate with them. Leaders must be intentional to remove distractions from out of sight and out of mind to ensure they are fully present when their personnel are communicating with them. In the case where nonverbal communication is the only opportunity to hear what's not being said, be mindful. Just think about it. How often do you observe the cues your personnel may give when in a meeting, in your office or in the hallways? Are you listening to the people you lead?

**Be a Mentor...Be a Coach.** Bring the best out of others. Grow others. There is potential in everyone you lead or encounter. Despite how it may be packaged, each subordinate is equipped with a gift within; however, the leader/mentor often helps them discover it. You must raise their level of awareness by giving them a mirror to reveal untapped potential. Everyone you lead should know that they are skilled, talented and smart enough to achieve excellence. Empower your personnel to lead, to take chances and to be innovative. Encourage their creativity to come forth. At some point, leaders may plant a seed, and another may water the seed. However, with continued fertilization (exposure) in the right environment, you will see growth. As a coach, discover your subordinates purpose, passion and interests in efforts to assist them in developing a personal development plan using the S.M.A.R.T. template. Be deliberate and give honest, constructive feedback both formally and informally. Timely feedback is essential to fostering a leader/subordinate relationship.

**Be Nosey.** Yes, be nose-y. Basically, be inquisitive and learn what's most important to the people you lead. You will learn a lot about them as you ask questions leading to discovery of who they are and what matters to them. There are times when you need to know/be curious about their lives.

**Be Optimistic.** Positivity is a force multiplier. Be optimistic in work and with speaking about others.

**Be Punctual.** Be punctual in responding to emails and to your one-on-one meetings.

**Be Qualified.** You're expected to be qualified to lead. Lead well. Be the example at all times. Qualified leaders model the success they expect of their people. Stand in confidence as a qualified MSC. Maintain competence and hone your emotional intelligence skills.

**Be Reputable.** Your reputation matters and arrives at locations long before you do. As Benjamin Franklin said, "It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation and only one bad one to lose it." Make sure your reputation can enter a room in excellence. Your name is always in the universe with your reputation as its greeter.

**Be Self-Aware.** Self-awareness is necessary for leaders to understand their strengths, shortfalls and emotions. Each leader should be deeply aware of how their life or leadership experiences shape who they are as a person. Our experiences, beliefs, values, backgrounds, culture, gender, social status and education impacts how we hear or interpret responses, how we hear things and how we respond. Be aware of your unconscious biases.

**Be Trustworthy, Truthful and Transparent (T3).** Where there is trust, there is a strong relationship. Establishing trust is necessary and can be done through an open, honest relationship with those you lead. Build trust by effectively communicating with your personnel and being a leader of integrity. If you made a commitment to them, follow-up. If they deserve feedback, provide it as often as necessary and as soon as possible. Be a leader of truth as it will also fortify trust. And, always practice transparency in organizational leadership. Let your team know the strategy and vision of the organization. Be transparent in sharing decisions that impact them and their future. A trusted, truthful and transparent leader will build a strong relationship with those they lead. Above all remember that you need to be able to trust them too and you may have to test them by trusting them with a task to complete. Provide clear guidance and watch them deliver by using the T3 approach. Every encounter of trust is a chance to build it. Make your reputation be one of the T3. The key will be knowing when to intervene if mission success is at risk.

**Be Uncompromising With Your Integrity. Integrity FIRST!**

**Be Vulnerable and Open When Needed, but Use Wisdom.** This strength allows leaders to connect with their subordinates. There will be times that it is appropriate. Vulnerability and transparency will help foster stronger relationships with your subordinates. Use discretion on what's appropriate. Some stories are necessary for resiliency but others are not.

**Be the Example.** Lead by Example, and Set the Example. You are the template for the people you lead. They will model you and remember you for years to come. Teach them to be quality leaders, and they will continue to raise the bar.

**Be Well-rounded.** "You have to be a well-rounded leader. You can't fly by the seat of your pants anymore. You have to be incredibly tough-minded about standards of performance,



but you also have to be incredibly tenderhearted with the people you're working with."  
– Douglas Conant

Be Yourself, and Check Yourself When Necessary. It's okay to be yourself as the real you will help in building relationships; however, know when to check yourself. You're expected to be the leader...not the competitor.

Be Zealous. Passion is always a plus and infuses others positively. As you breathe passion, you will also inspire it in others. Be passionate as a leader!

**Maj Ryan McCrae, Chief Operational Reporting, Air Force Medical Operations Center, Pentagon**

## **OWNERSHIP**

One way to get people to reach Excellence in All We Do is by promoting ownership. Everyone in the Flight is an owner of something within the MTF...the multi-service market, referral management, medical records, managing the healthcare benefit for our patients, and other extremely important pieces to the network and direct care system. Encourage each member of the team to "own it" in the specific areas where they work, to take pride in what they own, and realize that everything we do has value to the patients we serve. Remind them that we and our families are patients too.

We have been given a huge responsibility to be good stewards of not just government resources, but stewards over the quality of healthcare delivered at our MTFs. We don't just impact the healthcare of our beneficiaries, we ARE the healthcare they receive. At the end of the day this is a team approach; everyone from the Group Commander down to the newest Airman has a responsibility to own what they do.

## **FAMILY CULTURE**

Our priorities as leaders in the AFMS should be focused on the well-being of others. This doesn't just apply to our patients but to coworkers as well. We are a team and a family. Look out for each other, don't stab each other in the back, celebrate in each other's success, and step up when others need help. Here's a quote I like, "You should never look down on someone unless you are helping them up."

At the Flight and Squadron level, the MDG is our larger family who we support and in turn receive support from. At times we need to work across the organization to make things happen and get things done to provide the best care to our population. This concept expands into enhanced Multi-Service Markets and working with joint partners at home or down range.

## **PATIENT FOCUSED**

Remember that at the end of everything we do in the AFMS, every process, every phone call, every checklist, is a patient that will be affected in some way. When we get caught up

in trivial matters, remember, at the end of it all are patient outcomes. We have policies and procedures we must follow, but our attitude and our actions also directly affect patient outcomes.

## **PRIDE AND TEAMWORK**

Part of instilling pride in subordinates includes connecting the dots between what we do each day and how that supports the overarching mission of the base, the community, and the expeditionary mission. Pride comes from knowing the mission and vision of the organization and how we as Airmen are part of that. Within the UPS Company, an imperative that always remains constant, is to "deliver." Our imperative in the AFMS should be similar...we "deliver" healthcare. That's our business and is the center of what we do. Knowing we have a huge impact on the quality of healthcare for our enrollees should be what motivates us to wake up each morning for work. How we deliver healthcare also affects the Readiness mission of having medically-ready Airmen to deploy. It's how we take care of the families of those who serve now and those who have served before us. What we do in the MTF is where the rubber meets the road. We really do have a noble profession and should be excited about what we do!

## **DECISION MAKING**

Indecisive leaders are very frustrating to deal with. However, at the other end of the decision-making spectrum are those who respond to everything with a knee-jerk reaction. Analysis by paralysis obviously gets an organization nowhere fast, but pulling the trigger too early also has consequences.

Leaders often have to assimilate a lot of information quickly to make informed and timely decisions. Sometimes risk assessments are necessary for the decision at hand to determine the volume, quality, and accuracy of the information provided, and to then make the best decision from that.

When you encounter leaders who cannot make swift decisions, presenting a few different courses of action (COAs) to choose from with recommendations helps the leader make a decision more efficiently, versus just asking them for an open ended answer.

A SNCO's perspective is invaluable.

When you need to make a decision quickly, or are requesting another leader to make a decision, ensure the experts are in the room whenever possible, build a few COAs, and consider the recommendations.

It is sometimes too easy for leaders to pass the buck, and kick the can down the road. Leaders need to be competent in effective decision making.

Transparency is important to drive dialogue when making decisions. As leaders we should always encourage dialogue to bring out the strengths among individuals on the team. This dialogue should foster inclusiveness among all stakeholders who may be affected by the

decisions yet to be made. This promotes unity, the transparency of ideas, and ultimately creative solutions.

## **FAIRNESS AND CONSISTENCY**

A commander should take time to mentor everyone, to include personnel both within and outside of their own career field/AFSC. Do NOT show favoritism. Favoritism ruins morale, and destroys good order and discipline.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE WHY**

In order to promote Excellence in All We Do, it is crucial as leaders to help our personnel understand and be able to connect the dots between what they do on a daily basis and the overarching mission of the base, the community, and of supporting deployments.

## **PASSION**

Having passion for what you do can definitely be contagious in a positive way throughout the organization. A leader who carries passion for what they do sets a clear vision and having a little charisma can really inspire an organization to reach new levels.

## **LEADERSHIP PHILOSOPHY**

Have a leadership philosophy and live it.

My leadership philosophy simply stated is to know your people and bring out the best in them. This philosophy rests on my belief that people are our most important asset.

Leadership is all about taking care of people and making sure they have the tools, resources, and top cover required to accomplish the mission.

As leaders we can leverage knowing our people to bring out the best in them and to create a positive and productive working environment.

## **DIRECTION**

Finding the right path, following the right path, and having the ability to stay an unpopular course is a skill that strengthens with experience. While we all should inherently know right from wrong, and be able to decide the right path to follow, having the ability to stay that course in the face of adversity is the true test of a leader. As leaders, the expectation is we have that competence, but not every leader is able deliver on that expectation.

## **EMPATHY**

Empathy is a good trait to have, but it needs to be understood that it is different than emotion. My leadership philosophy is all about knowing your people and bringing out the best in them, but this can be quickly derailed if you allow too much emotion to get in the way. Leaders need to balance empathy (compassion) and emotion (feelings), and understand that they are two different terms. These two terms can easily be confused with each other. We certainly need to let our troops know we have compassion and understand

their situations and where they are coming from. However, when decisions are made, they should be based on facts and not feelings. If you allow your decision making to be overtaken by feelings, then you have lost your resolve as a leader. Empathy is a trait leaders should possess, but we need to be careful not to confuse it with emotions or feelings.

## **KNOWING YOUR PEOPLE**

We can definitely gain perspective on how as individuals we and the troops we lead all come from different backgrounds/environments, which influences how we respond to different leadership or decision making scenarios. We have to understand that everyone comes from a different home environment and therefore all have different viewpoints on life. In the Air Force we say, “Every Airman has a story.” As leaders we must take time, as best we can, to know our people and what their stories are. Knowing our people makes us better leaders.

## **AUTHENTICITY**

Your personal leadership philosophy, at its core, should be centered on being authentic. Having authenticity as a leader means knowing who you are as a person, where you come from, what you’ve been taught, and what you believe. In order to be authentic, you have to be aware of your morals and values and let those principles guide you in life and in decision making. It’s great to have role models and/or mentors, and be able to emulate specific characteristics of certain leaders that you respect and who have proven to be successful. However, being authentic means you lead in your own way, with your own twist, and do not try to merely copy another person. Leaders need to be introspective at times and continually focus on developing their authenticity.

Having a support team is critically important for developing as an authentic leader. A good support team will not just tell you what you want to hear, but will speak the truth, so as a leader you can grow and become better from it. I think one of the biggest steps leaders can take for growth and development is to build their support network with those who can be trusted to provide them with an external opinion and constructive feedback.

As a leader it is also important to have the capacity to accept criticism and determine if the criticism itself is authentic. If the criticism is authentic and constructive, then as growing leaders we should take the necessary steps to act and mature from it. Being self-aware is referred to as having emotional intelligence. When you behave authentically, you are leading others based on who you know you really are, and not just by who someone else has told you to be. You may even find there’s more enjoyment in what you’re doing when you can be authentic.

At times you may have to pay a price for being authentic. Anytime you have to stand on your morals and values as a leader, there will be some level of sacrifice involved. You will have to decide if it’s worth it. Even if you lose out because you’ve stood on your morals and values, and were true to yourself, it is always worth it in the end. Your integrity,

character, and reputation rely heavily on your actions. You have to stand on what you believe in and not always just go with the flow.

## **SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

Situational Leadership theory is a versatile leadership style that can be used in many situations. You can use this style to better know your troops and learn ways to bring out the best in them.

This theory takes into consideration not only the task at hand, but also the follower's readiness, ability, and willingness to accomplish a given task. As an effective leader, it is important to have a good pulse on the capability, aptitude, and attitude of your followers. Having this information at your fingertips enables you as a leader to most effectively influence a group of individuals to work toward a common goal, which is what leadership is all about.

## **COMMUNICATION**

When taking time to learn about others, remember the importance of unidirectional communication between the leader and followers. This communication should be more in the form of dialogue rather than a monologue. As leaders, we should always encourage dialogue to bring out the strengths among individuals on the team. The dialogue should foster inclusiveness among individuals to promote unity, the transparency of ideas, and ultimately creative solutions. As individuals begin to express their ideas, it is essential that as leaders we do not stifle their expression of those ideas. As leaders we want to encourage individuals to challenge traditional thinking, by thinking outside the box, or without a box, and to share their differing viewpoints. Creating a culture that allows this type of open dialogue helps us to avoid group-think, false mind-sets, and certain biases that we are all prone to.

## **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS**

Just as it's been said you can't over-communicate your leadership vision for the organization. Likewise, leaders can always do more to continually build relationships and networks across the organization. That is our job as leaders...to inspire others to work toward common goals. It's much easier and more efficient to inspire groups who have already developed into organizational networks, who have established goal congruence, and share aligned values. Leaders should spend adequate time breaking down barriers so that effective organizational networks can be established. It's all about building relationships! Work is much more enjoyable and productive when you have established positive networks.

## **MISSION FOCUSED & PEOPLE ORIENTED**

Leaders should be mission-focused and people oriented. Leaders must embrace core values and establish a vision, then communicate both in a way that permeates the organization. This shapes the organizational climate. Leaders must set the example and lead from the

front. Handling difficult disciplinary issues while maintaining focus on the mission can sometimes be a challenge. Begin by first setting clear expectations through solid, initial feedback. Difficult disciplinary actions can quickly become distracting to the point where it's easy to lose focus on the mission. Nonetheless, these actions cannot be ignored, and Airmen need to be held accountable.

Issues should be handled at the lowest appropriate level. This alone eliminates a lot of “noise” that can stir up with minor infractions. The difficult issues end up going straight to the top, and usually demand immediate attention in order to obtain a swift response.

Acting swiftly is important to maintain good order and discipline, because it shows that disciplinary problems will be taken seriously and will not be tolerated in the work center. Handling these situations swiftly also allows you to get back to focusing on the mission.

It is all about striking a balance between the mission and people. Leaders must focus on taking care of people to avoid the otherwise inevitable burn-out. Leaders must also have a strong mission focus and hold troops accountable for their work performance and disciplinary issues to ensure the unit is organized, trained, and equipped to perform the mission.

Leaders have several resources they can tap into for assistance with difficult disciplinary issues. These include the Superintendent, First Sergeants, legal office, your own commander, and peers. Tapping into these resources can help a leader resolve issues more efficiently and quickly.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE**

Commanders should establish an organizational climate that is positive, ethical, trusting, and known to hold people accountable for abandonment of standards. It's important for a positive organizational climate to permeate the unit in order to build organizational resiliency. Having a resilient climate built on trust and accountability will allow an organization to bounce back during trying times and be able to continue carrying out the mission. The way a leader issues disciplinary action will over time shape the organizational climate and ultimately be a determinant for mission success.

## **COMMITMENT TO GROWING PEOPLE**

It's our job as leaders to grow other leaders. Sometimes there is only so much we can do as leaders to steer Airmen in the right direction. Different Airmen respond to different forms of correction. Sometimes you can give a troubled Airman more responsibility and that will turn them around. At other times a more strict disciplinary action may be required.

It's important to note that disciplinary actions taken on Airmen are not necessarily meant to punish the individual, but instead discipline should be used as a tool to break bad habits and correct poor behavior. Discipline should be fair, consistent, and timely to maintain good order and discipline.

## **MENTORING YOUNGER AIRMEN**

At the Flight level, you will often have brand new Airmen working in your section who may be straight out of Basic Military Training. As leaders, we have a huge responsibility for the future growth and development of all Airmen. However, these newer Airmen are still young adults and very impressionable.

Our focus should more on how we can develop the strengths of these Airmen, rather than focus on how we should deal with their weaknesses, inadequacies, and risky behaviors.

Airmen today are faced with so many challenges. As leaders we should be sensitive to all Airmen and the diverse backgrounds they come from. Some of our younger Airmen have endured difficult home environments, others may struggle academically, and some find it challenging to establish social relationships with other young adults. Senior leaders are not immune to these situations either.

We all have “situations” in our lives. Some come and go, while others are long lasting. We must maintain a vision that all Airmen have potential to become successful, regardless of the unique circumstances they may have faced before coming into the military or are currently going through now.

Our younger Airmen, who might begin having difficulties adjusting for whatever reason, should not be viewed as problems to be fixed, but rather resources to be developed. This philosophy rests on the understanding that people are our most important asset.

Having a positive perspective is one of the most important leadership traits we can all possess as leaders of today’s Airmen.

As leaders, we should also be advocates for participation. Young Airmen seek opportunities for increased responsibility and to self-govern. Airmen need to be engaged by opportunities that matter and are meaningful to them.

Younger Airmen have a voice that matters and deserve to be empowered as they mature over time. This is important because it gives our Airmen a feeling of being relevant. Allowing our younger Airmen’s voice to be heard allows for collaborations to take place that in return builds strong relationships and promotes shared decision-making.

When Airmen’s voices are heard, they will feel empowered and become more engaged which has the potential to drive a more positive Airmen development experience.

## **FEEDBACK**

Operate with the 360 degree leadership principle. We are all leaders at some level in what we do, and mentorship goes both ways up and down the chain.

We can all learn from each other. Respect tradition, but be excited by change.

Most of us can agree with the phrase, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," but we should also accept there is always room for improvement.

## **HOW DO YOU LEARN?**

You can learn from doing, and from the results that follow previous experience or previous decision making.

Be proactive in learning by taking it upon yourself to lean forward to expand your knowledge.

Sometimes this involves stepping out of your comfort zone. When leaders always remain in their comfort zones and refuse to step up, either to take additional responsibility or to tackle new challenges, they eventually become stale in their ability to learn from those lost opportunities.

We learn and grow the most when we are put in situations where we have to perform and use what we know. In these situations, whether we succeed or fail, we should sit back and learn why we succeeded or failed.

Ask, did I succeed on a whim, or was it because of my preparation and wise decision making. Was the reason I failed my own, or were there external contributing and possibly uncontrollable factors?

Learning is lifelong and a daily occurrence.

## **ARE YOU WILLING TO IMPROVE?**

Be humble. Never consider yourself to be at the top of your game, even when things seem to be perfect. There is always a skill you can improve on whether at work or at home. Learning and improving go hand in hand. The more you learn directly affects the opportunities you have to improve. If you asked Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, or your favorite all-star athlete, they too would say there's always room to improve their skills in the game.

## **HOW TO LEARN FROM TEAM MEMBERS**

First, throw out the idea that you already have the best answer. Then watch and listen to what others on the team have to say, and determine if it makes sense based on the situation at hand. One of the biggest strengths of the team concept is being able to learn from one another while working toward a common goal. Sometimes you may have to ask questions or admit your ignorance. Sometimes you must accept that your idea is wrong, or even if your idea is correct, there may be a better way to implement that same idea.

## **HOW TO DRAW ON STRENGTHS OF OTHERS IN THE ORGANIZATION**

Empower individuals and make them aware just how valuable the work they do is, that



they are a major contributor, and that you need their expertise. Ask, “Can you make me smarter on this process?” Formally making someone part of the team, such as a workgroup or a committee, can make a person feel important and willing to share their strengths with the group. The toughest circumstances can be when individuals, whether military or civilian, who have all the knowledge in the world on a certain process, have already made up their mind to not participate for whatever reason. Those individuals require special care and inspiration to become involved as team players. That’s when you may have to do a lot of listening to figure out the best approach, and determine if there is any way to change their behavior. Sometimes you can’t.

## **VIGNETTE ON TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT**

How would you handle walking in as a new flight or squadron commander then suddenly discover a toxic work environment was forming? I have had this experience once in a large flight, and honestly I felt somewhat unprepared at first. The root of the problem was a civilian, mid-level supervisor who had been exhibiting toxic leadership for a long period of time without being held accountable. It had severely affected the work center by decreasing morale and overall work productivity. The supervisor spoke harshly to subordinates and generally came across as cold and not caring. This supervisor’s rationalization for his own behavior was that metrics were not up to par and employees needed to be held accountable for their work. However, this supervisor would often set unrealistic expectations regarding the workload required to meet metrics. The supervisor failed to understand individual employee’s needs and concerns, never praised positive outcomes, and used fear and criticism instead of encouragement to drive performance. This person would never take responsibility for failure and always casted blame on the employees. Employees felt like they were at a dead end and could never do right in the eyes of their supervisor. Several employees began to exhibit disciplinary problems and some failed to execute their duties and responsibilities. The abundance of disciplinary issues were also with younger Airmen, a few NCOICs, and various civilian personnel and contractors.

It took time to eventually realize the full complexity of the situation, and I ended up dealing with it using a varied approach. The first order of business was getting to know the people. This was accomplished by casual meetings in the flight, breakfasts, lunches, or individually meeting with the civilians, Airmen, NCOs, SNCOs, and officers. During these type of meetings you can discuss tough issues, collect feedback, listen to ideas, set clear expectations, and share your vision for the organization. It was important to hear all sides of the story to determine whether the issues stemmed from poor employee performance or if a particular supervisor was out of line. After due diligence, it turned out that both areas required corrective action. I discussed ideas for improvement with section supervisors and the squadron commander, then began implementing a corrective action plan. Initially, we focused on gossip control and mentoring key leaders and personnel within the section that had influence. Next, all Airmen, NCOs, SNCOs, civilians, and officers were held accountable for poor discipline and performance. Letters of counseling and reprimand soon followed. Section supervisors redistributed workload in certain areas so it became manageable for employees to accomplish. Be prepared to receive and endure criticism of your efforts from those displaying the toxic behaviors. That civilian supervisor eventually

became very irritated, because flight leadership was taking time to understand the environment and listen to all of the employee's concerns. The toxic supervisor was dealt with appropriately using several stages of one-on-one feedback and documentation.

After a slump of swift disciplinary actions, there were several resiliency events planned to help personnel bounce back. Chapel funding was secured for Airmen to participate in a high-ropes course at a local Adventure Park to build trust, cohesiveness, unity, and teamwork across the work center. This resiliency outing followed by a few good mentoring sessions was a big hit, and the Airmen turned in the right direction. Another Airman shadowed the First Sergeant for a week which was an eye-opening experience for them. Other resiliency events included rounding to influence, "True Colors" training provided by the Airmen and Family Readiness Center, and squadron leadership hosting random popcorn parties in work centers to say "thanks for working hard."

As a leader it is important to know what resources are available when faced with challenging situations. Airmen go through "stuff" all the time. It's not our job as leaders to solve every problem and every situation. It is our job to help guide and direct individuals to the proper channels when they need assistance. You will be better prepared to deal with this situation by knowing what resources are available to provide assistance. The resources used in this case included base chapel services, resiliency training events, Civilian Personnel Management Office, Labor Relations and Workforce Effectiveness, First Sergeants, Superintendents, the union, squadron commander, and reaching out to peer MSCs and mentors who could be used as a sounding board.

It's also important to deal with these types of situations in a way that follows due process, doesn't show favoritism, and holds everyone accountable. After eliminating a toxic situation, it was very helpful to provide rehabilitative solutions, because it's our job as leaders to grow other leaders. Remember, leadership is all about people. Once you take time to know the people and dynamics within your sphere of influence, it will be easier to respond when difficult situations, like a toxic environment begin to stir. This is an example of utilizing situational and servant leadership. A person's leadership style can be more effective by tailoring a response to challenges, using knowledge gained from your personnel, and understanding the full dynamics of the situation. Furthermore, knowing internally what you stand for as an authentic leader will enable you to draw on your core values for direction.

### **1.3. NAVIGATING TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS**

#### **1.3.1. WITH PEERS**

**Col Mary Ann Garbowski, Director AF Medical Logistics, Ft Detrick, MD**

Learn something about them that is positive, show an interest as a method of making a connection...

Manage your own personality. Don't try to change theirs.

Maintain the quality of your work and character in order to avoid impacts to the organization or harm to your reputation.”

Don’t gossip. Who you are and who they are will ultimately speak for itself...

### **1.3.2. WITH LEADERSHIP**

#### **Col Greg Coleman, Commander, 377th Medical Group, Kirtland AFB**

If you think you have a toxic leader you are probably right; listen to what your eyes tell you. Maya Angelou once said, “When people show you who they are, believe them the first time.” Establish your boundaries and lead without fear.

#### **Col Mary Ann Garbowski, Director AF Medical Logistics, Ft Detrick, MD**

If it’s a personality issue, try to learn something about them, show an interest, and make a connection as a method of detoxifying the relationship.

Continue to produce first rate work and maintain professional behavior.

Do not gossip. In your feedback session, initiate a professional respectful discussion regarding your perception of the situation in an effort to improve things and move forward.

Do not engage in avoidance/passive aggressive behaviors. This will compound problems and ultimately harm you more than addressing the problem(s).

If the toxicity is more serious and represents an infraction of rules or ethical behavior, take formal professional action.

#### **Lt Col Ray Vincent, Commander, 375th Medical Support Squadron, Scott AFB**

I’ve been fortunate. Over the past almost 18 years, I’ve never had a bad boss or a bad assignment; however, I have experienced, and survived, an assignment with a toxic leader.

While stationed overseas, I served in a position in which I was a mini-MTF commander without the G-series orders. By AFI, we were an Air Base Squadron aligned under the Mission Support Group; my immediate Sq/CC was a line officer, and my Group CC was the Mission Support Group Commander. Functionally, I was aligned under the Medical Group at a different geographic location, and I was in contact with the MSC commander there at least once per week.

My mission was to take care of the US-assigned NATO personnel’s family members, as well as the US-assigned Air Base Squadron (ABS) members and some retirees in the area. The US NATO-assigned personnel were to get their care from the host-nation medical facility. We did provide certain aspects of the flight physical for US flyers per USAFE directive since the host nation flight physical did not cover all of our USAF requirements.

In charge of the base at the time was a US General Officer. This particular GO, while not in my chain of command, had a lot of influence over my operations and the entire ABS as a whole, even though we didn't report to her. This was the crux of the issues we faced over my two years in this position.

The problems started when the GO realized that getting anything done through NATO was going to be a slow process, so she began to exercise her influence over what she could control more easily, i.e., the USAF forces, i.e., my clinic. She began by enlisting the help of my only flight surgeon, 1 of 3 providers, or 33% of my manpower. Figuring he had her top cover, which he did, he actively subverted my authority whenever possible. Basically, she treated him as though he were speaking for my clinic, and he relished that role and audience with her. She began tasking him with NATO mission sets, thus taking him out of the clinic and leaving the facility short-handed for completing the MTF's assigned mission set. Furthermore, when I elevated these issues through both my operational and functional chains, she became angry and would call meetings with me and my personnel without any notice, interfering with our patient care, to explain that we were there to support her and her NATO mission...period. (This was NOT why we were there, although providing support to the NATO flyers' families assisted her with her mission.)

She continued to interfere with our operations and would go VFR direct to the MAJCOM commander and the Wing CC saying she was having issues with the medical clinic and/or the line support at our location and that we weren't supporting her. Of course, my Sq/CC and I would eventually hear about these "issues" as they inevitably worked their way back down the chain. She once even arranged a short-notice meeting with our USAF/SG office while on TDY to DC in order to lay out how she wasn't getting enough US support for her NATO mission. This prompted me to send a lengthy memo to the USAF/SG so he would have both sides of the story, a potentially risky move, but I felt I had to do something.

Please note that while all this was going on concerning my clinic and mission set, she was also bragging about "firing" the host nation one-star in a "very public forum" for not doing his job (quotes are her words), she told her O-6 US Liaison officer to "shut up" during a meeting in which I and many others were present, and she threatened my psychologist with an LOR and barring her from the base for not (illegally) sharing HIPAA information with her. (My psychologist and I were in the right with this incident, as we took it all the way to AF-level legal for guidance and were told we handled the situation correctly.) I don't have the time nor the space to detail all the horrible things that happened during my time in this position; that's not what this handbook is for, but these incidents are just a few examples of what we suffered through under this GO's "leadership" for two years.

Moving forward a few months during our Trusted Care visits from AFMOA and our AFIA visit/inspection, the interviews conducted during these inspections revealed enough information that AFIA inspectors filed an IG complaint on our behalf, which eventually resulted in several findings against the GO.

After this assignment, the individual was removed from her follow-on job after being accused of fostering a "toxic work environment" in the office and screaming at senior

military officials.

Well, here I am today, a Sq/CC. I survived, though her influence did cause my career to take a hit that I've hopefully recovered from. Even though my time overseas was a success in every sense of the word, overcoming the influence of a very senior toxic leader has consequences.

I guess I was fortunate in that her toxicity didn't just focus on me, but rather everyone in my chain of command, all the way up to my Wing CC. We all commiserated together. Behind the scenes, I had their support, though I wish it had been more public. I still don't understand why we didn't band together and approach more senior leaders and tell them what was happening. I asked this one time during a t-con with the MDG/CC and was told that "one general isn't going to slap the hand of another general." That's disappointing, because I wonder how many others suffered under her previously. I think had this assignment been my first assignment, it might've been my last after being exposed to this type of leadership and thinking that I had to live with it.

So, what do you do if you experience this? You do the best you can every day and use your resources, your mentors, and your support network to get through it. You take care of your people and shield them from this however possible. You continue to do what is right...always. If you have to, you go to the IG, although again, this is risky. You better be right. Our core values are even more important, if possible, during times like this. As a leader, I tried to deal with it all so my staff could continue getting the mission done. It took a toll on me, but again, I survived, and what doesn't kill you only makes you stronger.

### **1.3.3. WITH SUBORDINATES**

**Col Mary Ann Garbowski, Director AF Medical Logistics, Ft Detrick, MD**

Do an analysis of the situation, are there any root causes?

In your next counseling or feedback session, discuss candidly but professionally what you are seeing that is toxic, accept feedback as well.

Set parameters for your expectations of what needs to change, monitor behavior and set a timetable for discussions until resolved.

Don't ignore and tolerate; this will negatively affect the team and outcomes.

**Maj Jason Glitz, Resource Management, 88<sup>th</sup> Medical Group, Wright-Patterson AFB**

Bottom-line: You have to eliminate the toxicity or it will crush your team's effectiveness and morale.

First, it is important to understand what toxic is not. It is not someone who isn't a great worker, or someone who is lacking in skill or will. A toxic team member can be very effective at their job...in fact that is often why people tolerate them for so long. What we

are referring to is a team member that lowers the effectiveness of a team and overall environment through negativity, dissention, and disruption. Their behavior can spread like a cancer to the rest of your team if you do not take action to correct it.

The goal is not to get rid of the toxic team member, but rather to improve the situation, ideally through behavioral change.

Direct and honest feedback is critical to correcting the situation. You cannot expect a team member to understand the impact he is having on others unless you explain it to him plainly.

#### **1.4. TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITIES**

**Maj Jason Glitz, Resource Management, 88<sup>th</sup> Medical Group, Wright-Patterson AFB**

Team building is one of the key components of running a healthy team. A cohesive team is significantly more effective than a disjointed group of individuals. The simplest way to foster cohesiveness is to do virtually anything enjoyable outside of the normal day to day work activities.

Team building doesn't have to be an elaborate event. It can be as simple as sitting around a table enjoying a meal together (even with a big team).

Small, low threat activities (that happen frequently) seem to work better than the ones where people have to step dramatically outside their comfort zone, or mandatory fun events where they are forced to engage in activities they don't enjoy or want to do.

Failing to take the time for this because you feel like you don't have time, or have too much work, robs your team of a critical opportunity to build better relationships needed to run an effective team to accomplish all that work.

##### **1.4.1. 4 LENSES**

**Maj Jason Glitz, Resource Management, 88<sup>th</sup> Medical Group, Wright-Patterson AFB**

Knowing how someone thinks, how they perceive information, and then communicate will allow you to better interact with them, assign them specific tasks, and accomplish your mission more effectively.

Here is a simple example of why knowing this can help. Let's say you are great at vision casting and task execution but don't really enjoy organizing team building events. Find someone on your team who has "Orange" as their primary lens and ask them to take this on...these things are usually something they love and will do an outstanding job at.

##### **1.4.2. MYERS BRIGGS**

**Maj Jason Glitz, Resource Management, 88<sup>th</sup> Medical Group, Wright-Patterson AFB**

The same can be said for the Myers Briggs test as mentioned above for the 4 Lenses test. Myers Briggs (MB) is arguably the gold standard and while this test can be time consuming (and expensive for an entire team) it can be extremely useful to learn more about yourself.

Taking the time to better understand yourself, how you act/react, what your strengths and weaknesses are will allow you to focus on what you are most effective at and delegate what you are not to someone who has those strengths.

### **1.4.3. OTHER FUN ACTIVITIES**

#### **Lt Col Ray Vincent, Commander, 375th Medical Support Squadron, Scott AFB**

The relationships you form as a MSC will, if done correctly, foster relationships with your entire staff and help improve the morale and cohesiveness of your unit, which is a force multiplier.

Upon taking squadron command, one of my main goals was to build a solid, cohesive, high-morale team of professionals. While this is an ongoing goal because of the transient nature of our staffing, I've found two sure-fire ways to continue this endeavor without missing a beat.

First, I invest heavily in my Booster Club (Yes, financially and personally!). I attend the meetings and assist with planning events, but I do NOT run the meetings or dictate the agenda. I only advise. As such, my Booster Club has taken ownership of their awesome responsibility...to help me with keeping morale high. They do this by raising money, planning events both during the duty day (think jersey day, chili cook-offs, etc.) and in the evenings and on the weekends.

Our goal is to raise enough money that all of our events are free, to include child care for the events that are adults only. Remember, it's not free if your Airmen are paying \$25-\$40 for childcare. Over the last 17 months, we've been wildly successful with fundraising and promoting events. Because we continue to hit it out of the park with our activities, our staff continue to show up and get to know each other. This relationship-building helps break down silos and foster communication, which in turn helps with mission accomplishment. But the bottom line is if the events aren't fun, you'll lose them.

Second, I don't "manage by walking around," I lead by walking around. I have to admit that I thought I'd be able to get around to all of my staff more often than I do, but I make it a point to walk around the entire squadron a minimum of twice a week. Many times during my command I've felt like a task master and/or a higher-level action officer versus an actual commander, so I take my walk-arounds and my time with my staff seriously and make the most of it. It's the best part of my day. One of the worst things I've ever heard was from one of my junior enlisted pharmacy techs. I guess it had been awhile since I visited, and while we were talking, he ask "Where've you been, sir? I haven't seen you in a while." It caught me off guard, and I lamely stated something to the effect that I had been busier than normal with admin and tasks. I felt a little better when he said "Well, I hope it

gets better for you. We like when you visit us.”

When I walk around, I’ll kick boxes with my loggies, file paper work in the records room, speak with our patients, etc., but more importantly, I get to know my people. I want them to know that I genuinely care about them. I learn their children’s names, what their hopes and plans are, their hobbies and favorite sports teams, their concerns and thoughts about the job and what they’d do if they were in charge for a day. In essence, I learn a lot from these visits, and it makes me a better commander. We’ve been able to start meal trains for single members with children and with families in which both spouses work when someone has had surgery or a death in the family. There are many times when this has paid off for me, but one instance in particular I’d like to share...

Last year before our Christmas/Holiday party, I walked around and asked people if they were going to attend. After the party, I walked around again and asked people that attended if they enjoyed themselves and how we could make it better. One of my GS employees in TOPA told me that in 18 years of working here, she’d never been to an event.

She said “Colonel Vincent, do you know why I went this year?”

I responded “No, ma’am. Why?”

She said “Because you asked me to go. And I had a blast. I’ve walked by some of these same people for 18 years and never said a word. I got to know some of them at the party, and now we say good morning to each other and have conversations. Thanks for asking me to go.” SCORE!

The ultimate goal of any squadron command is to create a highly-effective team that is working together for the same reasons...to get our mission done on time, every day. I don’t see how you can accomplish this without investing your time in getting to know who’s on your team and genuinely caring about your people.

#### POLICY REFERENCES:

- AFI1-1, Air Force Standards

#### RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Brown, Brene. “Dare to Lead”
- Banso, Justin. “EQ Applied: The Real World Guide”
- Coyle, Daniel. “The Talent Code: Greatness Isn’t Born. It’s Grown. Here’s How.”
- Ellis, Lee. “Leading With Honor.”
- Maxwell, John. “Everyone Communicates Few Connect.



Key Contributors: Col Mary Ann Garbowski, Col Antonio Love, Maj Allison Bain, and Maj Taylor Dorsett

BLUF: Until you understand and define your value and worth, you will not value others and what they bring/offer.

## **2.1.**

- Value the diverse thinking
- Value the diverse decision making
- Value the diverse actions/behaviors

Include and involve your team at ALL levels as you lead them and make decisions.

Purposefully, include & add members to your team who:

- Share different viewpoints than you
- Think differently than you
- Make you re-evaluate
- Pose challenging questions

These diverse thinkers stretch and mold you into becoming a greater leader...it is how you grow and learn.

As leaders, we are also responsible for building and developing future leaders. And finally, checking our biases will improve the success of our organization at every level, by having an array of people with different experiences, opinions, and skillsets at the table.

We need to ensure inclusion of multigenerational ideas from enlisted, officers, civilians, and contractors, across all disciplines. This allows collaborative, creative ideas to be brought forward and enhances optimization of our workforce.

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Be the catalyst for change and as a team work to develop new leaders

**POLICY REFERENCES:**

- AFI 36-7001, Diversity & Inclusion

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**

- Leadership Promises for Everyday by John C. Maxwell

**APPLICABLE WEBSITES:**

- <http://www.nationaldiversitycouncil.org/>
- <https://www.deomi.org/>

## **Chapter 3**

### **Supervising “Nuggets”**

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BLUF: Though the “system” is different, leading Civilians is similar to leading Airmen – provide expectations, give feedback, and course correct where necessary. Value their experience, but don’t be afraid to “lead” and promote change where necessary.

#### **3.1. CIVILIANS**

##### **Major Jennifer Chenoweth, Deputy Chief, Sustainment Branch, AFMRA**

Consider supervising (and all its related tasks) your highest priority, not your lowest, because first and foremost, you have been put into a position of supervision.

Supervising civilians is a whole different set of rules than supervising Airmen. Learn the rules upfront by familiarizing yourself with civilian AFIs (mainly series 36 AFIs) and clearly communicating expectations, in writing and with the employee’s signature of acknowledgement, so that no one can say, “I didn’t know you wanted x, y, or z.” This should be different than the employee’s Performance Plan and should encompass non-performance issues, such as regular duty hours, who to contact when calling in sick, professionalism, and requesting leave, among other items.

By not holding under-performing civilians accountable, you are doing a disservice to the employee’s coworkers, the section and the mission. It does not matter how long or short your duration as a supervisor, do all you can to ensure optimal performance of the entire section, and take corrective action where necessary. If you don’t, you perpetuate the problem, and make it more difficult for the next supervisor.

Trust but verify. It does not matter how long the employee has been there. You are the supervisor and you are entitled to and responsible for checking the work done by your subordinates, whether they are Airmen or civilians.

Disciplinary action is different than performance-based action. You need to know the difference between the two, and which route you are going to take when you have a problem. Read AFI 36-1001, Chapter 5, and AFI 36-704, Chapter 3, to understand the differences.

##### **3.1.1. CIVILIAN PERSONNEL OFFICE**

Supervisors of civilians should definitely get to know their Civilian Personnel Office's Employee Management Relations Specialists. At the first sign of issues with an employee, these are the folks to talk to about how to approach situations and how to properly document in case the issues continue and need to be elevated.

Civilian hiring actions follow a long, and usually sequentially-stepped process which starts with your unit. The process heavily relies upon, and must wait for, actions within the Civilian Personnel Office. Be proactive when you know someone is leaving a position. Ensure the Position Description is up to date before the position goes vacant and do not wait to initiate hiring actions, whenever possible.

### **3.1.2. UNION**

If there is a collective bargaining or labor agreement, READ IT! It's going to be a lot less scary and probably less detailed than you think. Knowing what is in the union agreement will actually protect you, as the supervisor, if you need to take action against an employee. Stay within the AFIs, and stay within the union agreement. And yes, allow your employee to exercise their rights by meeting with union officials if the need arises. Following proper procedures will help you. Your base's Civilian Personnel Office has a Labor Relations HR specialist. They work for the Air Force, so if you have questions or issues pertaining to the union agreement, or want them to clarify anything, definitely reach out.

### **3.1.3. APPRAISALS**

The better your employee's Performance Plan is written, the easier it will be to hold that civilian accountable. And no, the Performance Plan elements are NOT a copy and paste from the duties in the Position Description. They should be SMART goals that account for the main tasks that the person performs, not every task listed in a Position Description. Do not write Performance Plan elements so detailed that you can't possibly track how the employee measures against it.

Do not inflate the system. A "3" rating means they came to work and did their job in a "Fully Successful" manner, plain and simple. And that's okay! You can still give them an award, if they have earned it.

Not all employees earn an annual award. It is EARNED, not deserved or expected. You need to set some expectation management early on with employees that do the minimum and expect "5" ratings. And you need to give "5" ratings to employees that truly go above and beyond what their Performance Plan elements state as the standard.

### **3.1.4. FEEDBACK**

Honest feedback goes hand in hand with the performance plan and annual appraisal, when pertaining to performance. Let employees know when they are doing great, and when things need improvement. No employee is perfect, but they are also not above reproach. Document POSITIVE and NEGATIVE oral feedback on the 971 in the employee folder when the feedbacks take place. This documentation will be invaluable if needed for

backing up “5” ratings and awards, or to prove a pattern of problem behaviors.

**Lt Col Courtney Day, Instructor of Management, USAF Academy**

I like to think of feedback more as guidance because people are more open to guidance.

It’s not mean, it’s clear and clear is kind.

If your feedback is based on being humble and helpful, then it’s more likely to be received positively. Feedback should also be timely and in-person.

Feedback is not measured at your mouth, but at the other person’s ear.

Praise in public and give criticism in private.

**Lt Col Jason Richter, Commander, 31 Medical Support Squadron, Aviano AB**

The final appraisal should not be a surprise. Make sure to communicate performance feedback against expectations you set to your civilians during the rating period.

Medical typically ties its overall cash award budget to the Wing’s rate. Often this is 1.5%. You are allowed to give a cash award for an individual employee up to 6%. Reward your best people, and do not feel any obligation to reward those that are below average. While employees can file a grievance based on appraisal ratings and comments, they cannot file a grievance against the cash or time off bonus.

### **3.1.5. RECOGNITION/AWARDS**

Work hard to take care of your civilians in the same way you take care of your Airmen. To do this, you must know how civilians can earn awards, and how you can recognize them. Use AFIs 36-1001 and 36-1004, quarterly awards, and annual awards, along with other less formal appreciation, such as being coined by a visiting General Officer.

It is easy to forget civilians, because they were there when you arrived and will likely be there when you leave. But you would be surprised by how many high-performers have never been formally recognized. Ask them when was the last time they were submitted for an award, and if they earn it, submit it.

**Lt Col Jason Richter, Commander, 31 Medical Support Squadron, Aviano AB**

Civilians (GS and Local Nationals) can receive decorations similar to those given to active duty members. We need to recognize more of our outstanding civilians in this manner.

- Work the action from your RMO through the Civilian Personnel Office (CPO)

- Achievement and exemplary service medals can now be signed by the squadron commander, while meritorious service medals can be signed by the deputy group commander or group commander

#### Time off awards

- First-level supervisors can give an 8-hour time off award
- Second-level supervisors can give awards over 8 hours
- No more than 40 hours can be given at a time. These are often given to superior performers for the appraisal
- No more than 80 hours in a year can be given

### **3.2. ACTIVE DUTY (OFFICERS/SNCOS/NCOS/AMN)**

#### **3.2.1. ENLISTED PERFORMANCE REPORTS (EPRS)**

##### **Lt Col Joshua Miller, Commander, 379 EMDSS**

**Enlisted and Officer Evaluation Reports:** This is typically broken up as two very distinct conversations; however, they are not. The concepts, principles, and elements of importance of the bullet are the same and is the focus here.

All the ‘shall’, ‘must’, and ‘wills’ are outlines of AFI 36-2406. This guidance is updated regularly so check it often. Your wing probably has a local writing guide as well.

The evaluation report has always been important, but with the rise of new processes like Enlisted Force Distribution Boards and 2-Line PRFs; it becomes critical to craft, purposeful, and well-developed evaluations that can be understood by our Line of Air Force (LAF) counterparts without losing the medical relevance of the accomplishment. Evaluations are how you speak to the board. The top lines and bottom lines will gain the most attention and leave the hardest hitting stuff for the senior rater section (if applicable).

It takes courage to evaluate someone fairly and honestly. We have the idea that we do not want to hurt our troops by not giving them a “five.” This is just flat out false.

You are hurting your troops more by not being honest with them, through feedback and evaluation. We have over several hundred thousand total force Airmen; some just meet expectations—the exception exceed most. If you can honestly say all of your Airmen are exceeding expectations...set new ones. Expect great things from your Airmen, build them up, give them an honest assessment, and they will not disappoint.

Do not shortchange someone because he or she are not eligible for promotion or In the Zone. Write what needs to be written about the person. If they are great, write they are great. If they are average, then write as if they are average. It is much more difficult to write for non-performance or average than high performance—practice it.

Bullet writing can be challenging. See my excerpt in Bullet Writing 101

### 3.2.2. OFFICER PERFORMANCE REPORTS (OPRS)

<Volunteer author needed! Contact the corps office to volunteer.>

### 3.2.3. FEEDBACK (INFORMAL AND FORMAL REQUIREMENTS)

**Lt Col Joshua Miller, Commander, 379 EMDSS**

As much of life is stating the obvious, let me start with this...feedback is hard! Formal feedback has all kinds of timelines, forms, and rules outlined in AFI 36-2406. Informal feedback...when in world do you do that?

The first thing to remember is feedback is not a task or checking the box. This is an opportunity for you, your Airman, and your organization to be better. Good feedback is a real test of leadership. You all may have your leadership mantra or philosophy; mine is simple. Leadership requires **Courage**, **Competence**, and **Caring** and because I am a simple person, I do not complicate it—I take those same three things into any feedback I give. With this consideration of feedback delivery, it is important to know yourself. We all have blind spots which can affect our ability to communicate effectively. If we are more aware of them, we can either further exploit our strengths or work on our weaknesses in order to mitigate the personality factors we have which may sabotage the virtuous act of feedback.

Formal feedback is fully governed by AFI 36-2406 and Chapter 2 goes into all of the details regarding when, who, and why. The formal feedback forms are a great outline for guiding a discussion. At the end of the feedback, there should be no confusion as to what the expectations are and where that person stands in regards to these expectations. I end every feedback with a “If I had to close out an eval on you today, here is where I would rate you...and why”.

Informal feedback is more organic and naturally occurring. It should be constant and consistent and have a purpose.

Remember when giving any type of feedback, keep it HOT! Honest, Open, and Two-Way. Both parties will get more out of the conversation when it is two-way. There is a time for direct, one-sided feedback; however, from my experience that is the rare exception and often not as effective as we would like them to be. Feedback can be premeditated where you have thought about what you are going to say, or it can be spontaneous. I have had better results with the latter. The formal is good for setting the baseline, but impromptu feedback gets the results.

Some of the most important feedback comes from failure. I generally do not celebrate failure, but I encourage it a whole lot. Let them try. Let them try the “We’ve tried that before” ideas and the ones where you see holes. As long as there is not mission failure, the lessons will be invaluable and if you follow that up with a conversation (feedback), the learning potential is incredible. Feedback is nothing more than a good, productive communication that is the key to learning. It is free education!



**Beware:** “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” –George Bernard Shaw

Finally, remember we do not treat everyone the same, but there is equality in the system. Each Airman will require something different, will desire to be spoken to in a certain way, and will react to different situations differently. Forget the Golden Rule, go for Platinum—do not treat others how you want to be treated, treat others how they want to be treated. Know your Airmen, give them direct, concise feedback often and constructively in a manner they understand, and your team will be successful. More importantly, your people will grow and develop.

**Maj Joy Spillers, Administrator, 47th Medical Group, Laughlin AFB**

## **KNOW YOURSELF**

It sounds cliché, but this simple truth can unleash the power we have inside us to be our best self. It starts with knowing ourselves, then we build from there based on the choices we make with that knowledge.

Why is this truth important for feedback? Feedback requires us to do the following: (1) if we receive feedback, we look from within through introspection to try to understand the gap between what we know and what others tell us about ourselves and (2) if we give feedback, we evaluate internally to determine if our actions/behavior played a role in how an individual is progressing/regressing and how we can help him/her achieve their goals/objectives.

Where do we start with knowing ourselves? We can start with understanding our personality, our motivation/drive, our beliefs/leadership philosophy, our biases, and how these relate to work performance, impact others, and more importantly, how they manifest through our behavior.

Sometimes, we don’t realize that we can be part of a problem. That’s why it’s best to know yourself and find ways to improve based on that knowledge.

## **KNOW THE INDIVIDUAL YOU’RE GIVING FEEDBACK TO**

“You don’t even know me” can sometimes be the default response by someone we give feedback to, especially when we’re addressing an issue. Evaluation/correction isn’t the time to get to know someone. Develop those relationships from the start. We don’t have to memorize everything about them at day 1, but we gradually get to know the person the more time we spend with them making small talk. Soon enough, we’ll know their favorite sports team, their kids’ names, their dreams, etc.

An Airman who I supervise directly shared with me that he wanted to learn how to speak Italian. I got curious because he’s originally from South Korea, so I asked him why. He said, “I love coffee so much that I want to be a barista and own a coffee shop one day.

Because Italy is famous for having the best coffee, I want to learn the language too”.

Why does this matter when it comes to giving feedback? When we build the relationship early on, it can be more accepting and easier for the individual – generally speaking – to receive feedback instead of going straight to correction where he/she can shut down. It’s also less tense for us to have that difficult conversation if we established a relationship with the person out of respect for one another.

## **DEVELOP A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INDIVIDUAL**

Let’s recall a time when we had a supervisor who we would follow to war and we would go above and beyond for. What was it about this person that we were willing to give our life to or go the extra mile for? How did that supervisor make us feel? Now let’s recall another time when we couldn’t wait to PCS because we had the most horrible boss ever. What was it about this individual that make us cringe the moment we think of him/her?

I think the relationship with someone plays a key role in this dynamic. A professional and genuine relationship is the foundation of an effective feedback. It greases the wheel to potential, improvement, empowerment, and self-accountability.

Let’s challenge ourselves to make time and develop a genuine relationship with the ones we supervise before waiting until something “bad” happens where we have to address/correct it (it would be a tough pill to swallow at that point).

## **BE IN THE RIGHT MINDSET TO GIVE FEEDBACK**

As an Arbinger Institute facilitator, I learned about being in an outward mindset, which means taking others into consideration that they matter like I matter. Giving positive feedback isn’t the problem; we tend to get hung up on giving negative feedback.

I sometimes get feedback as an SGA from the executive team on poor work performance of the other MSCs. Someone shared with me that Lt Duffy didn’t give her the report she needed in time even after telling the individual it was extremely important. Not wanting to ruin the reputation of our MSC competency, specifically mine as their mentor, I spoke with Lt Duffy on the situation and to ensure it didn’t happen again. After going through the Arbinger Institute courses, I later realized that I wasn’t taking Lt Duffy into consideration in my feedback; I didn’t ask him why he delivered the report late. I was only concerned about my reputation and that of the MSCs as a whole. I learned a lot from that experience and am now mindful where my mindset is when I give feedback – is it just focused on me or is it on the individual to help him/her improve?

None of us is perfect. We all have our biases, weaknesses, and quirks that we have to be aware of (“Know yourself”) that could unintentionally seep in during the feedback. Perhaps we may not like the person we’re giving negative feedback to and that in itself can be a challenge. Check our mindset because it will set the tone for the feedback.

## **SET THE EXAMPLE**

It's tough walking the walk, isn't it? However, it's definitely a requirement because accountability happens during feedback. In order for us to hold others accountable, we have to be self-accountable. Self-accountability doesn't mean perfection and no wrongdoing; it means holding yourselves to a standard and having the courage to admit that you fell below that standard and that you promise to do better.

Setting the example empowers others to do the same or do better. We can't just say "Physical fitness is important for readiness!", but no one has ever seen us during our scheduled squadron/group PT time or at the gym except when it's time to do the fitness test. It's hard to give feedback to someone who has trouble passing his/her fitness test on working out more when we aren't placing the same importance in our own lives.

## **WHEN THE INDIVIDUAL IGNORES/REFUSES TO LISTEN TO FEEDBACK**

Despite doing all of the things mentioned previously, there will always be someone who will ignore or refuse to listen to feedback. We definitely can't force someone to listen to us. Don't take it personal; perhaps they're just not ready to listen to feedback at that time. Continue having that open dialogue, the transparency, and honesty with the individual. If the feedback is related to his/her upcoming EPR/OPR/performance appraisal, discuss the impact of him/her continuing with current performance if no change happens.

We may have to revert to formal procedures such as disciplinary action if it needs to come to this point depending on the situation. However, let's do our best in exhausting all resources instead of going straight to this option.

### **3.2.4. DISCIPLINE**

#### **Lt Col Theodosia Hill, Commander, 72d Medical Support Squadron, Tinker AFB**

We establish expectations for members in our chain of command in writing via regulations and unit policies. If a member fails to comply with the AF standards, then it is our responsibility to exercise verbal counseling due to the member deviating from the AF core values, and policies.

A few reasons to give a member in your organization a verbal warning are as follows (not an all-inclusive list): 1. Member fails to complete a tasker on time because of procrastination and poor planning 2. The first time a member fails to report to their duty or meeting section on-time, unless the member provided a reasonable alibi.

We must provide informal and formal feedback to our members to ensure that good order and discipline is being maintained.

Commanders must ensure good order and discipline.

Always evaluate civilian employees during probation period; separate those who do not meet your expectations. However, you must document, document, document with evidence that establishes misconduct.

#### **3.2.4.1. VERBAL COUNSELING**

##### **SAMPLE CONVERSATION STARTER FOR VERBAL COUNSELING**

“(Rank Last Name), I am appalled by your rude/disrespectful behavior, and your undependable actions reveal that you do not respect yourself nor me. Consider this your verbal counseling. If your actions become a negative pattern understand that I will be forced to document your performance via a LOC or LOR. Your performance dictates the outcome if further disciplinary actions will occur. I expect you to perform and comply with Air Force instructions. Can I count on you to do that?”

(If the member is a civilian member, advise them that you will file the discrepancy in their civilian personnel folder.)

##### **Maj Jason Glitz, Resource Management, 88<sup>th</sup> Medical Group, Wright-Patterson AFB**

Don’t ease into the tough part of the conversation with small talk. When you have an issue to bring up it is obvious to the team member that there is a purpose to the conversation. Get to the point immediately.

Eliminate emotion from the discussion. Conducting a verbal counseling session when you are angry is really more about you venting frustration than correcting a team member’s actions or behavior and is not beneficial to you, them or the team. Wait until you are able to discuss the issue calmly and rationally.

Use clear and concise language when you are discussing the issue. Make sure you are talking in unambiguous terms. Don’t beat around the bush—explain what the problem is plainly and what change or outcome you want to see.

After the conversation make sure you follow up with them a few days later to ensure they are moving forward in the right direction. This is also a good opportunity, if they have embraced the directed change, to give them credit for the effort made.

Even though this is a verbal counseling you should still document what was said in an email to them or on a memo for record. It is better to draft this prior to sitting down with them. This serves a multitude of purposes: it gives you time to get your thoughts in order prior to the counseling session; it provides your team member with a written statement of your expectations; and serves as a formal record should further action need to be taken later.

#### **3.2.4.2. LOC vs. LOA vs. LOR**

##### **Lt Col Tara Lovell, Commander, 45th Medical Support Squadron, Patrick AFB**

All three are disciplinary tools and have their time and place. The right level of discipline should be based on the amount needed to correct the behavior. It is also important to note that sometimes based on the severity of the offense, it requires a higher level of discipline.

Remember that discipline is meant to be progressive; if you have issued multiple LOCs for a member who continues fail to meet standards, then it's probably time to either increase the level of paperwork or the level of authority at which it is issued.

An LOA (aka LOC on steroids) is not commonly used by enlisted members. However, I have found it helpful when disciplining officers. An LOR for an officer usually results in a referral OPR, which can be career ending; so an LOA is a useful tool for offenses higher than an LOC, but not quite at the level of an LOR.

#### **3.2.4.3. "DESK DRAWER" VS. PIF**

**Lt Col Tara Lovell, Commander, 45th Medical Support Squadron, Patrick AFB**

There are rarely times when disciplinary items should be maintained in a desk drawer. Depending on the reason for giving paperwork, if it was important enough to administer paperwork then it probably needs to go into the member's PIF. Supervisors shouldn't be intimidated by putting something in the member's PIF, it can always be removed as long as the issue is no longer a problem or an appropriate amount of time has passed.

I have encountered several instances where the supervisor never documented disciplinary issues, and it prevented being able to take the appropriate action - like marking the EPR "Not-Ready Now" or recommending Administrative Discharge. Ensuring timely and accurate documentation helps protect not only the member but the supervisor/commander's actions as well. Don't be afraid to document issues – they typically never get better if left unchecked. Also leaving a problem to fester will also start to cause morale issues within the flight or squadron.

#### **3.2.5. RECOGNITION/AWARDS**

**Lt Col Tara Lovell, Commander, 45th Medical Support Squadron, Patrick AFB**

There are several ways to recognize good performers: coins, quarterly/annual awards, civilian monetary awards, time of service decorations, civilian decorations, etc. Recognition can also be highlighting members in front of leadership or giving people credit for projects or hard work in front of leadership.

Be the boss who praises your staff in public. I never realized the impact of making those types of lasting impressions until it was time to pick a Project Officer for a change of command, submit a name for an exec position, or even when discussing officer stratifications – those praises become subliminal messages when people at the table thought about those members.

I had a boss that would always introduce me to his boss or boss' boss as "Colonel XXXX, I want you to meet my superstar (place name here)" It might not even seem a lot at first, but you are connecting the person with a positive impression that lasts long after meeting the person.

I have had several "career" civilians who had been in the same job for more than 10-20 years, and never wanted to be submitted for a quarterly award. They had a closet full of them. When it was time to put them in for an award, it was always hard to get them to provide bullets. Instead, they wanted time off or cash awards.

It's important as a leader to understand early on that not everyone is motivated by the same thing-- figure out what motivates each one. Bottom Line: Recognize your people, often and properly!

### **3.2.5.1. IMPORTANCE OF SUBMITTING YOUR PEOPLE**

#### **Lt Col Tara Lovell, Commander, 45th Medical Support Squadron, Patrick AFB**

I can't over emphasize the importance of submitting your people for an award. If you have a person who is deserving, you should be getting with them early in the award period to talk about competing for an award. Winning an award at the group or wing level doesn't just happen overnight. Preparing the person to win sometimes takes a little strategy and a lot of effort. If you have a person who has done something significant (like completing a degree or their CCAF or winning an Airman Leadership School award), it may be a perfect window of opportunity to set them up for an award. This may mean giving the member extra projects or allowing them to volunteer outside the duty section, in order to strengthen their package to win. `

I also have found that simply approaching someone in the flight and asking "Hey you've done a lot of good stuff this quarter, let's look at submitting you for an award this quarter" pays dividends. It not only shows appreciation for person, but that you recognize their hard work and contributions. Submitting your people is also a direct reflection on you as a supervisor, flight commander, etc.

Also, learn to write awards/bullets – it's a craft, constantly seek to develop it. Get your hands on copies of winning packages. Every time I had a package that lost, I would ask for feedback from the board and if I could get a copy of the winning package. Seek to understand whether it lost based on the strength of the bullets or because of the material-- don't just assume that it was the material. A good exercise is to grade the bullets yourself first and then compare them to others. It will help get you comfortable with identifying stronger bullets. When writing bullets, if I don't personally grade it as an 8-10 (out of 10 scale), I try to either strengthen it or ask for another bullet.

### **3.3. CONTRACTORS**

**Maj Benjamin Wilson, Chief of Logistics Operations – JBSA-Kelly**  
**Capt Jacob Williams, Procurement Fellow, Ft Detrick**

Contractors (or contracted employees) are employees of a company that the government has a contract with to perform work for the government.

Contracted employees are valuable members of your team. They are either programmed as part of your manning, or they are considered an unfunded requirement (UFR).

Contracts can be used to “bridge” a manning gap from fiscal year to fiscal year, “ramp” up to a future fiscal year’s requirement, or to “gap-fill” a current programmed requirement for which you do not have adequate manning.

Contracts do not get awarded overnight, they can take from six months to a year to get awarded depending on the dollar amount and the complexity of the requirement.

The Contracting Officer (CO) is ultimately responsible for all contracting matters. They can delegate some responsibilities to a contract officer representative (COR).

The main difference between a personal and non-personal contracted employee is the government’s relationship with the employee. Most medical providers are personal service because the government may grant privileges to and/or assume liability on the individual who works for a contracted company.

### **3.3.1. CAN I GIVE A CONTRACTOR FEEDBACK?**

**Maj Benjamin Wilson, Chief of Logistics Operations – JBSA-Kelly**  
**Capt Jacob Williams, Procurement Fellow, Ft Detrick**

Remember, the contract employee works for their company and not you. Any official feedback comes through the CO to the company to the employee. However, they are both co-workers and members of your team and should be treated as such. Be a good wingman and leader, regardless of their employment status.

Feedback is given to the CO about the company’s performance on the contract and just like any other feedback you give, it should be honest, actionable and tied to a performance expectation.

Never have a contract employee sign something agreeing to any performance or duty expectation. The contract company will set any expectations with their employee. Our expectations are outlined in the PWS and other contract documents.

Directing an employee to do something or sign something, while likely done with good intentions, could have unintended consequences that make you financially liable for committing government funds without authority to do so...aka ratification.

Regardless of employment status, an employee doing something egregious, illegal, or dangerous should be removed from the facility immediately. If that person is a contractor, immediately contact the CO afterwards.

**Maj Regina R. Beinhaur, Medical Logistics Flight CC, 633rd MDG, JB Langley**

Short answer, yes... but it depends on the type of feedback. Imminent situations causing dangerous, high risk, life safety concerns will require immediate face-to-face feedback. In most cases, contractor employee feedback is needed when we observe the contractor employee is not carrying out the duties within the standards outlined in the contract. The contractor company is responsible for executing the obligations under the government contract. They are responsible for communicating quality, timeliness and costs directly to the contractor employee; not the government. The government is responsible for ensuring that services and supplies are acquired for the contractor employee to conform to the quality and performance standards written in the government contract.

AVOID interfering or providing feedback with contractor relations in the following matters (this goes for FREDs too):

- Hire or fire a particular employee
- Reassign or discipline an employee
- Grant or deny leave
  - “Sure! You can join us at the Squadron Picnic!”
  - “It counts as duty hours because it’s an alternate duty location; you do not need to take personal time off leave.”
- Change employee duty hours
  - “Thanks for working overtime. I will adjust your timesheet to reflect so maybe the company will pay you for it even though you are 0730-1630.”

If there are concerns you want to address to the contractor company of a contract employee’s performance, utilize a Performance Assessment Report (PAR) to document the issue and solicit feedback. The PAR is routed and coordinated to base contracting, then to the contractor company to respond to the issue.

**3.3.2. TIPS AND TRICKS FOR FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS EVALUATOR DESIGNEES (FRED)**

**Maj Benjamin Wilson, Chief of Logistics Operations – JB SA-Kelly**  
**Capt Jacob Williams, Procurement Fellow, Ft Detrick**

When in doubt, contact the Contracting Officer (CO)!!!!

The FRED is out there to monitor, not to direct the contractors to do specific work not in their contract. If you direct contractors to do something not in their contract, you could be held financially liable.

Any facility closure that is not in the contract as a scheduled closure is an unscheduled closure regardless of the reason: picnics, weather, morale, broken pipes, etc. The contract should address unscheduled closures.

Unless the contract says something different, contractors should not work on the scheduled



closures stated in the contract.

If a contractor wants to work on a day that most of the staff will not be there and their contract allows them to be there, a government employee should be there to at least let them in, be responsible for emergency situations, and/or validate hours worked.

A personal service surgeon would not just clock out during a surgery because their duty day is done. A non-personal service admin clerk would have no good reason to stay beyond the hours scheduled.

The FRED should be a subject matter expert in the area which they are evaluating a contract employee.

The FRED is appointed by the Commander to evaluate the performance of a contract employee for the COR who is evaluating the performance of the contract company for the CO.

All duty hours are set by the performance work statement (PWS) or similar contract document. These documents can be changed by the CO as long as all parties agree with the change (keep in mind that changes could cost money).

Some positions have very specific labor laws that must be adhered to regarding lunches, breaks, total hours, sleep, etc. CONS is the resource for all these questions.

The CO has the final say on all interpretations of the contract documents and labor laws.

The Performance Work Statement (PWS) is part of the overall contract between the government and the contract company. The contract employee should contact their company for a copy of what is expected, employees should not be given a copy of the PWS by the government.

Your Medical Logistics Flight or the COR is required to keep a copy of ALL PWSs. If they cannot get the PWS, they can contact CONS for this document.

Performance measures are the most important parts of the PWS; the PWS states what level of performance the government is expecting to get for the money they are spending.

Duty hours, duty location, scheduled closures, etc. are very important parts of the document when it comes to managing the contract employees.

Know who your COR is and communicate with them; they might be at AFMRA, or they might be in your facility.

**Maj Regina R. Beinhaur, Medical Logistics Flight CC, 633rd MDG, JB Langley**

Advise FREDs that Contract Services are available to support them and make their lives easier. Most FREDs are challenged with keeping up with the requirements of their FRED

duties, such as conducting monthly surveillances (timesheets and performance documentation) and assisting in writing performance work statements (PWS) for their respective contract.

Creating tools is a way to support FREDs and prepare them to meet their appointed duties. The following are a few ideas:

- Provide easily accessible FRED training slides for future referencing (i.e., share drive, SharePoint)
- Develop a PWS Template/Questionnaire to enable clear communication of their requirements. This allows Service Contract Managers (SCM) to copy/paste the requirements into the PWS document. This is a time saver for everyone!
- Create a “Next Steps” flow chart on what to do when a contract is ending

Share invites with FREDs to attend training that base contracting hosts. Having FREDs understand the roles and responsibilities of SCMs, Contracting Officer’s Representatives (COR) or Contracting Officers, advises the FRED how intricate and significant they are in the contracting system process.

### **3.3.3. CAN I GIVE A CONTRACTOR AN AWARD?**

**Maj Benjamin Wilson, Chief of Logistics Operations – JBSA-Kelly**  
**Capt Jacob Williams, Procurement Fellow, Ft Detrick**

You should NEVER give a contractor a coin, letter of appreciation, or personal award without explicit permission from the contracting officer.

You can’t award a contracted employee for exceptional performance, but their company can.

Providing feedback to their company by submitting a personal letter or letter of appreciation to the company through the CO is a great way to have an employee rewarded by their company for performance.

Feed your folks! You can reward performance of your whole team by bringing in food or doing something fun for the whole team (contractors are part of your team, too).

**Maj Regina R. Beinhaur, Medical Logistics Flight CC, 633rd MDG, JB Langley**

Short answer, yes... but it depends on the type of award recognition. There is no statutory authority for contractors like there is for government employees. Therefore, contractors are unable to receive appropriated fund type awards (i.e., commander’s coin).

The government cannot use certificates to recognize a contractor company or contractor employee as it could obscure the process of future contract source selections.

Contractor employees may be recognized through a letter of commendation from the

government to the contractor company, and the company may choose to recognize the individual contractor employee. Be sure to coordinate with the Contracting Officer first!

A PAR can also be utilized as documentation to recognize a contractor employee for praise or outstanding performance. This document may be the simplest as it coordinates through base contracting to the Contracting Officer.

Overall, if you focus on the DO's and DON'Ts in the DoD COR HANDBOOK Appendix F and align yourself with the conditions above, management of a contractor employee will become less complicating.

#### **POLICY REFERENCES:**

- AFI 33-332, AFI 36,2608, AFI 51-201, AFI 36-704, 5 USC, CHAP 75
- AFMAN 41-209, Medical Logistics Support, para 4.21.6.3.
- Department of Defense, COR HANDBOOK, 22 Mar 2012
- DAU Course CLM 003, Overview of Acquisitions Ethics (Prior to Commencing COR/FRED Duties)

#### **Civilians**

- DODI1400.25V431\_AFI36-1002, PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND APPRAISAL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION IN THE AIR FORCE
- AFI36-401, CIVILIAN TRAINING, EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- AFI36-704, DISCIPLINE AND ADVERSE ACTIONS OF CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES

#### **Contractors**

- AFMAN 41-209, Medical Logistics Support, 4 Jan 2019, Section 4B
- AFMAN 41-120, Medical Resource Management Operations, 28 Aug 2019, Chapter 11
- AFI 63-138, Acquisition of Service, 30 Sep 2019

#### **RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**

- 101 TOUGH CONVERSATIONS TO HAVE WITH EMPLOYEES
- RADICAL CANDOR BY KIM SCOTT

#### **APPLICABLE WEBSITES:**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28N2p3smEsw>
- Federal Acquisition Regulation: <https://www.acquisition.gov/>
- COR Handbook: [https://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/cpic/cp/docs/USA001390-12\\_DoD\\_COR\\_Handbook\\_Signed.pdf](https://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap/cpic/cp/docs/USA001390-12_DoD_COR_Handbook_Signed.pdf)
- DAU Course CLM 003: <http://www.dau.mil>

- Performance Assessment Report: PAR

#### WEBSITES FOR CONTRACTORS:

- <https://info.health.mil/sites/DOP/CO-MQS/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- <https://identity.dau.edu/EmpowerIDWebIdPForms/Login/VirtualCampus>
  - Course: CLC 011, “Contracting for the Rest of us.”
  - Course: CLM 003, “Overview of Acquisition Ethics.”
  - Course: CLC 013, “Services Acquisition.”

## **Chapter 4**

### **MSC Feedback**

Key Contributor (s) to this Chapter: Col Kevin Seeley

**BLUF:** The feedback you give AND receive can make or break careers and shape future performance and leadership ability. When providing feedback, start with why (the purpose and desired outcome of feedback), build trust, listen, be honest, be sincere. Requestors should be clear about why they are requesting or getting feedback, and be receptive to hearing from the giver.

#### **4.1 TIPS FOR REQUESTING FORMAL / INFORMAL FEEDBACK**

##### **FROM LEADERSHIP**

Acknowledge requests for feedback whether in person, on the phone, or via e-mail.

Affirm importance of the getting or giving feedback, and clarify the specific purpose of any formal or informal feedback.

Commit to help your peers, subordinates, and when appropriate, leadership by requesting feedback. Give feedback when solicited. Never ignore a request, it builds trust.

“Formal” feedback should be scheduled and done in writing.

“Informal” requests should be followed-up in a timely manner. Consider the timing and/or urgency to the individual and suggest a time to follow-up, if not immediate.

Opt for face-to-face whenever possible so non-verbal cues come through in communication. Try not to perform formal or informal feedback over e-mail.

Informal requests, such as a peer or subordinate catching you in the hallway should be seized and can often be related to a specific issue. Make time to step out of the hallway and find a place to talk.

##### **FROM PEERS**

Just ask. Think of feedback as an opportunity to mentor whether formal or informal.

With peers, requesting informal feedback over lunch or cup of coffee may work best.

It takes courage and humility to ask a peer for feedback. Don’t be afraid, and be sensitive that requests are a key moment of trust that says, I value what you may have to tell me.”

## **FROM SUBORDINATES**

Seek feedback from your supervisor. When you voluntarily ask for your boss's expectations on your performance and quality of work you help build trust and demonstrate your maturity and appetite for growth.

Feedback can be very informal and it doesn't have to be from people with impressive job titles.

If you request feedback, be specific about what and why you are looking for feedback and provide a specific performance element or product.

Feedback is best pro-actively solicited rather than imposed (except for the supervisor-subordinate situation). As a receiver you are more likely to be receptive to solicited feedback framed in questions (i.e. Can I get your thoughts? What do you think?)

## **4.2 TIPS FOR GIVING FORMAL / INFORMAL FEEDBACK**

### **FROM LEADERSHIP**

Gauge the experience and maturity level of the receiver and ensure you are in the right frame of mind. Deliver appropriately, understandably and as simply as possible with tangible, identifiable, recognizable measures of success/outcome.

Establish standards and expectations and provide meaningful feedback on how well the peer or subordinate is meeting those expectations.

Listen critically and empathetically. Again, clarify where needed. Remember there's a sender and receiver and both should understand the information presented.

Effective feedback is consistent, objective and sensitive to the stated purpose. Make eye contact. You can be critical in private, but not demeaning.

Formal written feedback should always come with a self-assessment in advance of scheduled feedback. "How well or poor do you think you're doing and why? What do you think you should be better prepared for in the future?"

Perception of the interaction is key. Establish trust. Think through feedback. It should be given in the right frame of mind...out of empathy and your desire to help others improve.

Don't sugar coat everything. Feedback can be "tough love," tactfully delivered. Talk about what's going right, what's going wrong, and what can and should improve. Remember, people always remember how you treated them and will judge whether to follow or ignore your feedback based on that treatment.

Use explanatory and practical examples, or stories to explain why you are advising the way you are to get your point across. Avoid sensationalism.

Avoid judgmental language as it places people on the defensive. Remember, feedback should be directed at a person's work or behavior, not at the person.

Stay on topic, be specific even if you have to tease out the specifics to get to best value for time spent on the feedback session.

Be tactful and patient, and listen carefully to the requestor during feedback session.  
Honesty does not mean fear, feedback is not punishment

## **FROM PEERS**

Establish trust by initially providing suggestions, or examples. You don't need to have the same boss, but if you do, don't let feedback devolve into complaints about your boss's expectation.

Be open and prepared for bi-directional exchange.

Recognize when peers open the door to feedback. A thoughtful and tactful approach to formal or informal feedback is as simple as initiating with a question, "Do you mind if I provide you my observations on xyz?" "Can I share with you some lessons I learned?"

Share a story of why you did something the way you did, or a lesson you took to heart to improve yourself, "Somebody once told me xyz, I didn't believe them but I found out the hard way it was true."

You are the "foundation of expertise" and help guide your peers to avoid pitfalls and understand the context of their comparative performance.

## **FROM SUBORDINATES**

Prep for formal feedback. Approach with an attitude of "opportunity for self-improvement."

Keep your bearing and think through how you will respectfully receive and respond to what you may hear. Keep emotions in check.

Listen, learn, and take notes to capture your bosses' expectations during initial and follow-up feedback.

Discuss, don't defend. Ask clarifying questions. Be cognizant of when something is open for debate and when it should be taken at face value from an authoritative source.

Repeat back the key phrases to acknowledge you understand the feedback being provided. Ask clarifying questions if you don't understand.

I'll summarize with a reflective story. When I worked as an action officer for an Air Base

Wing IG as a young Lieutenant, I learned early in my career that my job was to find facts by interviewing others, documenting what I uncovered, and facilitate judgement that produces optimal outcomes with all things considered. I quickly found that the best way to resolve issues was to ask short clarifying questions and listen. This has served me well throughout my career. The same is true for giving and receiving feedback. Finding facts is the most important way to find truth in matters of helping others with performance and personal improvement.

#### POLICY REFERENCES:

- AFH 33-337, The Tongue and Quill
- AFI 36-2406, Officer and Enlisted Evaluation Systems

#### RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- The Trusted Advisor – David H. Maister, Charles H. Green, Robert M. Galford
- Leadership in turbulent times – Doris Kearns Goodwin
- The Servant: A Simple Story About the True Essence of Leadership – James C. Hunter
- Start With Why – Simon Sinek



## **Chapter 5**

### **STRATS/PUSH LINES/AWARDS**

Key Contributors: Lt Col Tara Lovell and Lt Col Jason Richter, Col Scott Farmer, Lt Col Denise Preston and Maj Charlene Rueben

BLUF: “If I do my full duty, the rest will take care of itself”. - Patton

Don’t work for strats, but do understand their value and what different types of strats mean.

#### **5.1. TYPES OF STRATS (I.E., BY POSITION, GRADE, PEER GROUP, ETC)**

**Lt Col Jason Richter, Commander, 31 Medical Support Squadron, Aviano AB**

Not all good performers will get a strat.

Almost any wing strat for a MSC is a good strat.

The line views the best strats as those against rank (i.e., Capt, CGO), instead of function (i.e., MSC, Flt/CC).

You can still get promoted if you don’t earn strats early in your career, as long as you have other competitive achievements (i.e. AFIT, EWI, CGOQ, CGOY, etc.) I did not have a single strat until I was a major, and still was selected for two AFITs during that period.

#### **5.2. WHAT GOES IN A PUSH LINE (EXAMPLES)**

**Col Scott Farmer, Lt Col Denise Preston, Maj Charlene Rueben, AFPC, Randolph AFB**

Since OPR/PRF writing styles change over time, be sure to check with your local leadership and/or Wing guidance. The strongest OPR push lines typically contain three items: 1-Stratification, 2-Push for DE (PDE/IDE/SDE) and 3-Push for a leadership position.

Example: - #1/20 Majs; MDG FGOY/tm won 3 Wg awds--IDE now, Sq/CC next!

#### **5.3. HOW IMPORTANT ARE AWARDS**

**Lt Col Tara Lovell, Commander, 45th Medical Support Squadron, Patrick AFB**

I was once told that awards are like icing on a cake. The cake may be good, but the awards

are what people first notice.

Awards can help identify high performing officers to hiring officials, promotion board members, group/wing leadership, etc. Although not the only tool used, awards typically are used to set people apart in the discussion regarding stratifications and other job opportunities.

Even if you are humble and/or don't believe in competing for awards; it is an important aspect of your career. Awards enhance your OPRs. One of my early OPRs had "#5/20 CGOs" this wasn't bad as a first lieutenant competing against Captains; but I think what also helped the push line of the OPR was having Gp CGOQ x2 and AFSPC Resource Management Officer of the Year on the same line. It sends a message to the reader that the person is obviously performing exceptionally well, even if they weren't #1 or #2. (NOTE: This was prior to when the AFMS changed to the single Young Healthcare Administrator Award)

Ideally it would be wonderful if all supervisors went out of their way to recognize your hard work, but that doesn't always happen. Don't be afraid to write yourself an award package if you are deserving; more times than not officers tend to draft their own.

#### **5.3.1. DON'T RUIN RELATIONSHIPS OVER AWARDS**

**Lt Col Tara Lovell, Commander, 45th Medical Support Squadron, Patrick AFB**

A common MSC saying is "your reputation precedes you;" this is typically true the longer you stay in or the more assignments you have. In terms of awards, it is important not to come across as an "award-shark" or someone who is simply chasing awards. In order to do that, make sure that you are choosing the right time to submit yourself and be mindful of the possible negative perception with your peers, as well as your subordinates, if you are submitting yourself for numerous awards.

Sometimes officers will openly discuss award rotations and submissions; others may feel that this is taboo. There is nothing wrong with asking if other peers within your squadron are submitting for an award, it may help you decide not write a package if you know that a peer has done more than you for that time period (saving you time)...but don't ever under sell yourself for others. A good rule is to allow someone to shine if more deserving.

#### **5.4. TYPES OF AWARDS**

**Lt Col Tara Lovell, Commander, 45th Medical Support Squadron, Patrick AFB**

Common awards are quarterly, annual and the Air Force Medical Service awards. However, make sure you review the criteria for not so common awards (i.e., General Horner Tiger Award, Lance P. Sajin Award, Lisa Disbrow Civilian of the Year etc.); many of these awards are available to medical personnel, and typically don't get much attention. I have seen people win one of these types of awards based on the lack of packages submitted.

Winning one award often has a way of gaining momentum towards other awards; meaning if you win a quarterly award at the wing, it can roll into a command level AFMS award, which turns into an annual group (or wing) award. Look out for these opportunities.

Team awards are also just as important as individual awards. As an officer, having a flight that wins a team award reflects leadership, especially if shown as consistent throughout the career.

## Chapter 6

### **OPRs/PRFs/BULLET WRITING**

Key Contributors: Col(s) Scott Farmer, Lt Col Jason Richter, Lt Col Denise Preston, Maj Charlene Reuben

BLUF: Good writing is an art and a science. You leverage your skills as an MSC by understanding how to write well.

#### **6.1. “GOOD” OPR VS. “BAD” OPR**

**Lt Col Jason Richter, Commander, 31 Medical Support Squadron, Aviano AB**

	Strong	Weak
Push Line	Strat, push for an appropriate next job, significant award, and PME	No strat, weak push statement from rater and additional rater, no push for PME. Note: strat is not absolutely necessary if member has separated from peers in other ways with awards
Impact	MAJCOM or higher impact on a project or process; cited as a best practice at MAJCOM, AF, or DHA	All local impact only
Bullets	Quantify the impact of actions. Don't simply state improved by 50%. From what to what? Cut appt wait time 50% to 4 days/best in USAFE.	Fail to quantify work and include fluff statements (deployment ready, poised for success, increased morale)
Leadership	Includes success of members in unit (i.e. #BTZs, Sq OTQ, Sq OTY, Gp OTQ, Gp OTY, Wg, MAJCOM, team wins)	Fails to demonstrate unit's success

#### **6.2. NEW 2-LINE PRF GUIDANCE**

**Col Scott Farmer, Lt Col Denise Preston, Maj Charlene Rueben, AFPC, Randolph AFB**

The first two line PRF for the AFMS started in 2019. We highly recommend members reference AFI 36-2406 Chapter 8 for specifics and guidance.

Narrative-Only (N-O) PRFs: The losing senior rater completes these on all lieutenant colonels and below (**EXCEPTION:** Not required for majors who are lieutenant colonel selects) departing PCS for a school (e.g., Developmental Education, AFIT, or other AF-

level training programs as described by 8.3.5.2) or PCA/PCS to patient status. Complete N-O PRFs regardless of promotion zone. Do not complete PRFs on lieutenants or captains who will have less than four years TIG as a captain upon completion of schooling.

**EXCEPTION:** For Medical Corps/Dental Corps officers only, complete N-O PRF regardless of their current grade, DOR or promotion selection status, due to the possibilities of their continual long term training status. See paragraph 8.1.5.6. **NOTE:** In the rare cases where a PRF is required for colonels and colonel/lieutenant colonel selects while in a student status, the senior rater prior to the officer's departure to DE will write the PRF.

Regular PRFs. An eligible officer's senior rater completes the PRF no earlier than 60 days prior to the CSB for which the officer is promotion eligible (PRF cutoff date).

### **6.3. BULLET WRITING 101**

#### **Lt Col Joshua Miller, Commander, 379 EMDSS**

Writing a bullet can be challenging, so let's get some ground rules out of the way:

1. Qualify or quantify the impact with the Capability, Efficiency, or then Compliance...in that order
2. GPA is not an impact!
3. Receiving a coin is not impact, nor is it a result that fits rule #1
4. Show diversity in jobs, and growth from evaluation to evaluation
5. Use the right verb for your rank/position
6. Avoid the hyperbole, but do not limit the scope of your impact
7. Know your audience: We are promoted by the LAF, do not let the technical lexicon associated with your highly specialized career limit your promotion.
8. Don't abbreviate yourself out of a bullet, your bullet must be understandable to people beside you
9. When in doubt defer to rule #1!

Bullet can be two or three part, Action-Impact or Action-Impact-Result...there is little difference when you really get down to it. In fact, do not think about that think about the basics: What specifically did the person do and at what level was his/her contribution? Make sure you understand at what level the action truly affected.

Take a Blood Bank Mission:

Master Lab Tech! Revamped donation center process—collected 100% of quota

This bullet tells what the person did, but wasted a lot of space with fluff at the beginning and limited the scope of Tactical Action. Think, where is the blood going? Did you enable a mission to happen? Save donors time? A quota is not an impact/result worth noting, as there is no context.

Spearheaded donation center process improvement; cut collection time by 63% for 200 donors—sustained AOR mission

This bullet focuses on the Tactical Action, and an Operational Impact. However, the attempt for a Strategic Result is at best ambiguous.

Spearheaded donation ctr PI; cut collection time by 63% f/200 donors—secured AOR blood supply

This last attempt shows a prudent use of abbreviations and more clearly defined Strategic Result. If this were real, I would look to find out how many operating locations, units collected, etc. All with the goal of being specific on the action for which we are writing about.

There are incredible forums, papers, and experience to learn from you out there. One of the best resources I found is the book by CMSgt(r) Eric Jaren called Brown Bag Lesson: The Magic of Bullet Writing; this should be part of your electronic library. You should also take key parts from it and make them part of your Professional Development Series (PDS) at your unit. This book is available through Air University Press.

## **Chapter 7**

### **HPERB (Health Professions Education Requirements Board)** **OPPORTUNITIES**

Key Contributor: Col Joe Dell

BLUF: HPERB opportunities are a great way to expand your knowledge depth in many different areas. Know what is out there and work with your mentors to gauge what might be a good opportunity/timeframe for you to apply.

#### **7.1. What is the HPERB?**

The purpose of the Medical Service Corps HPERB is to invest, train, educate and provide specialized experiences for motivated and qualified officers. The program is established to derive the highest level of knowledge, skill, and performance to ensure the Air Force Medical Service provides high quality support to air, space and cyberspace power in support of the national defense strategy. HPERBs provide streamline training investments to fill skill and knowledge gaps while using a process on selecting the best and brightest at the appropriate time in MSC officer's professional development.

#### **7.2. What Types of HPERB Opportunities Are Available?**

##### **Military Fellowships**

Description: Military fellowships are 10-12 months in length and provide an excellent opportunity to increase and/or gain vital expertise at the staff level. HQ USAF, MAJCOMs, FOAs, and other Air Force agencies host fellowships and typically place graduates in positions of greater responsibility and increased visibility within their organization or agency. The program's objective is to involve the Fellow in day-to-day operations of the host agency and attend formal training as outlined in the training plan. The Fellow is not used as extra manpower, but rather as a valuable team member-in-training with responsibilities and involvement at all levels of the organization based on well-developed objectives. Likewise, the Fellow is responsible for fully integrating themselves into the organization's operations and learning the specifics surrounding current topics in that functional area. Finally, the staff-level experience gained during the fellowship offers a perspective crucial to development as a leader in the Air Force Medical Service. Currently, the active duty service commitment is 36 months following the fellowship completion date.

##### **Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT) Graduate Degree Programs**

Description: This exceptional program is designed to provide an opportunity for an advanced degree and learning while on active duty. Graduate degree opportunities typically

exist for master's degrees in Hospital Administration (MHA), Business Administration (MBA), Medical Information / Cyber Security Systems (MIS), Logistics, and clinical engineering. A Ph.D. sponsorship is also offered on a 3-year rotation as preparation for a faculty position in the prestigious Army-Baylor program at Ft Sam Houston, San Antonio. AFIT degree programs typically require students to attend a civilian institution. MSC officers are typically sponsored at the Army-Baylor program and Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences program (USUHS).

While enrolled in an AFIT, program requirements for traditional military activity will vary. For example, if enrolled in the Army-Baylor program an individual wears the uniform unless told otherwise. While at a civilian university, however, the uniform is usually worn one time per week with a weekly requirement to check in with the ROTC unit or the senior AFIT student at that institution. AFIT will send you information from the field periodically. However, it is best to network with a peer or mentor and have them send you information to keep you current with the latest hot topics in the MSC field as they arise. Most students acknowledge they can lose touch during the two years they're gone if they don't network.

Length: Typically, Master's degrees are completed in 2 years. However, students must be enrolled for classes during the traditional summer semester and thus will usually graduate in 20-21 months. Follow-on assignments are made by AFPC during the second year of the program. Currently, the active duty service commitment is 36 months for first 12 months of training and 6 months for 6 months thereafter.

### **Education with Industry (EWI) Programs**

Description: EWIs are a unique educational program offering MSC officers the opportunity to experience first-hand how major American companies are adapting to the changing healthcare delivery system. This program is managed by AFIT in cooperation with several major American companies and organizations. The EWI fellow becomes a company employee who experiences the same responsibilities, opportunities, and frustrations the middle manager encounters. It is in this environment the EWI payoff is realized. This "learn by doing" program drives home an understanding of the corporate environment. MSC officers are expected to return innovative and transforming knowledge, ideas, and solutions back into the Air Force Medical Service upon completion of the EWI. Companies have indicated Air Force officers assigned to them are normally on par with their best and brightest!

Length: EWIs are 10-month PCS assignment. Typically, the EWI fellow begins the program with a short, top-level overview of the company. The next four weeks are spent understanding many of the significant functional areas within the organization. The core of the program commences after the orientation with the EWI fellow entering the work phase. In this phase, the fellow works with company senior and middle management to solve company problems and achieve organizational objectives. Currently, the active duty service commitment is 36 months following the EWI completion date. Follow-on assignments are coordinated prior to approval of the EWI experience and typically announced in the call for applications.



### **7.3. What Types of Professional Development Opportunities?**

#### **Developmental Education (DE)**

Investing in future leaders is a critical component of sustaining a high-quality corps of professional officers capable of assuming senior leadership roles. Developmental Education opportunities are the cornerstone of leadership development efforts. This section provides a summary of the varied educational and training opportunities available to MSC officers, as well as the appropriate eligibility criteria. MSC officers can refer to this chapter throughout their careers when considering options and timing considerations necessary for entrance in to educational and DE programs.

**There are 3 tiers of DE covered in this section;**

**Tier 1:** Basic Developmental Education (BDE)  
Squadron Officer School (SOS)

**Tier 2:** Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE)  
Air Command & Staff College (ACSC)

**Tier 3:** Senior Developmental Education (SDE)  
Air War College (AWC)  
Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF)  
National War College (NWC)

Air Force Officers participate in a 3-tier DE process. Each course is designated to develop professional military competence through a program of education designed to broaden your perspective, increase your knowledge, and prepare you to assume higher levels of command, staff duties and responsibilities.

#### **Tier 1: Basic Developmental Education (BDE)**

##### **Squadron Officer School (SOS)**

Description: SOS is the second school in the Air Force's BDE program for officers. It is offered by correspondence or in-residence at Maxwell AFB, AL.

The in-residence SOS course brings company grade officers (captains) together in a team environment with peers from other career fields with a mission to develop dynamic Airmen ready to lead air and space power in an expeditionary war-fighting environment. It combines academics and athletics to foster friendly team competition among flights and squadrons. Completing SOS by correspondence does not disqualify you from applying for in-residence training. Students electing to complete the course by correspondence complete a planned reading program with multiple-choice examinations. Contact your local education office to enroll in the correspondence program.

Length: Five weeks in-residence, or up to 18 months for the correspondence program option.

**Qualification Guidelines:**

1. Each candidate must be in the grade of captain, on or before the class start date.
2. In residence qualifications include meeting Total Active Force Commissioned Service (TASCS) requirements, which include more than 4 years and fewer than 7 years of total active federal commissioned service. To enroll in the course by correspondence, you must be in the grade of captain. Be in good physical condition and meet current Air Force fitness standards. Application Procedures & Selection Process: Medical personnel compete for SOS quotas at the base level or may receive training quotas from the MAJCOM/SG. Contact your MPF Formal Training Section and MAJCOM to obtain local procedures.

Other opportunities for CGOs include:

Joint Medical Executive Skills Institute (JMESI) Health Management Seminar (HMS)

**Tier 2: Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE)**

Description: ACSC, the Air Force's IDE school, prepares field grade officers (primarily majors) to assume positions of higher responsibility within the military and government arenas. Geared toward teaching the skills necessary for command, ACSC focuses on shaping and molding tomorrow's squadron commanders. The college's academic environment stimulates and encourages free expression of ideas as well as independent, analytical, and creative thinking. ACSC, keeping pace with our sister service DE schools, is Phase I Joint PME (JPME) accredited.

Length: ACSC may be completed in residence, or by correspondence. The residence program is a 10-month PCS assignment to Maxwell AFB, AL. You must have enough retainability to serve at least 3 years following school attendance to satisfy the resulting active duty service commitment for the in-residence program.

**Qualification Guidelines:**

For the in-residence program, officers must be serving in the grade of major and must have less than 15 years' TAFCS as of 1 January in the year of graduation from ACSC. Although ACSC is not the only form of IDE that you may be eligible to attend, it is the most prominent for Medical Service Corp Officers.

Other opportunities for Majors include:

Joint Medical Executive Skills Institute (JMESI)

Intermediate Executive Skills (IES)

**Tier 3: Senior Developmental Education (SDE)**

Description: AWC, ICAF, and NWC are the Air Force's SDE schools. The mission of the SDE is to educate senior officers to lead at the strategic level in the employment of air and

space forces, including joint operations, in support of national security.

#### IDE Equivalency Credit

AF Medical Service (AFMS) Executive Development Programs

All programs require completion of AWC distance learning accordingly.

Length: AWC, ICAF, and NWC are available to Lt Cols and Cols in-residence. AWC is held at Maxwell AFB, AL, and ICAF and NWC are held at Ft. McNair in Washington, DC. Each school is a 10-month PCS assignment, usually beginning in August and concluding in June of the following year. There is a 3-year ADSC upon completion of the course.

Air War College is also offered by seminar and by correspondence. The correspondence program allows up to 3 years for completion. Contact your local base education office for additional information and enrollment guidelines. Detailed course descriptions and eligibility criteria are in AFI 36-2301, Developmental Education, and the ETCA database.

#### Qualification Guidelines:

1. Eligible candidates are Cols, Lt Cols, or Lt Col selects (Lt Col selects must pin on before the in-residence class start date).

2. For in-residence programs, an officer must have less than 21 years TAFCS as of 1 January in the year of graduation and enough retainability to serve at least 3 years following school attendance in order to satisfy the resulting active duty service commitment.

#### IDE and SDE In-Residence Selection Process

Candidates will complete AF Form 3849, DE/AFIT/RTFB Officer Worksheet, and forward to HQ AFPC/DPAMS through their senior raters as directed. HQ AFPC/DPAPE, Developmental Education Office, will forward information regarding annual timelines and submission requirements through Military Personnel Flight Formal Training Sections. 2. In general, officers must meet PCS eligibility requirements in order to be considered by the Selection/Designation Board. For CONUS candidates and nominees, time on station may be waived by a maximum of 12 months. For OCONUS candidates and nominees, officers must be able to establish a DEROS within 90 days of class start date. 3. The DE Selection/Designation Board meets annually to select attendees and designate school attendance. Quotas are allocated through Air Staff. Competition is extremely keen for the spaces allocated to medical officers. Traditionally, 3 Majors are selected for IDE and 3 Lt Cols for SDE in-residence. 4. Senior raters will receive announcement of selection and designation through HQ AFPC/DPAPE.

#### PCS Educational Programs

##### Air Force Intern Program (AFIP)

Description: AFIP provides a unique and prestigious opportunity for Air Force Captains with 4 to 7 years of total commissioned service to further their knowledge of leadership. This fast paced, 12 to 22-month program is designed to develop young officers'

understanding of air and space power and to broaden their perspectives through personal observations of senior DoD leaders making strategy and policy decisions. This program is designed to develop tomorrow's leaders utilizing a combination of hands-on experience as an intern in JCS/OSD/Air Staff & the Air Force Secretariat, coupled with academic graduate courses in leadership and management. Interns that don't already have a master's degree will be required to attend George Washington University (GWU) in Washington, DC, to earn their master's degree in Organizational Management. Officers who already have a master's degree won't have the option to earn a second one from GWU. All GWU matriculation fees, required course work and books will be fully funded by the Air Force.

Length: 12 to 22 months, depending on whether the intern completes the master's degree. Application Procedures & Selection Process: Selection for AFIP is by an annual central board at Air Force Personnel Center. The board considers nominations from wing commanders or equivalent (senior raters) that may nominate up to 10% of their company grade manning in the respective years of service. Senior raters are notified of the people eligible within their chains of command. Each wing commander has a minimum of one nomination allocated if they elect to use it. MAJCOMS may round up at the mid-point for nominations (e.g., 15 eligible officers' equals two nominations). Eligibility for each board is line officers, non-line officers (except physicians and dentists), and all captains three to five years away from the primary zone for major. Fifty officers are selected each year, with a reporting date of summer (dates vary) each year. Traditionally, the selection for the AFIP programs is the beginning of February. Officers may not be nominated if they have less than one-year TOS effective 1 July prior to the summer start date each year. Officers may not be nominated if they are currently in the weight management program, have active unfavorable information files, referral OPRs, etc. AFPC/DPAPE, Professional Military Education office, will send a detailed message to Military Personnel Element Formal Training offices each year.

Officer quality determines selection and is the paramount consideration during nomination deliberations. Those officers clearly possessing the very top leadership potential and demonstrating the most potential for increased responsibility are the best candidates for this program. Nominated officers complete an AF Form 3849, PME/AFIT/RTFB Officer Worksheet, for use by the AFIP selection board. Under preferences, officers should put 'AFIP'. Remarks by the nominee (desires, OPD goals, how AFIP applies to future goals, etc.) and the senior rater (quality statements, future leadership potential, and recommended areas for internship, etc.) must be included on the AF Form 3849. The purpose of the AF Form 3849 is to provide direct communication between the nominee, the senior rater, and the selection board.

#### **7.4. What Stage of My Career Should I Apply?**

##### **Major Sean Rotbart, Fellow, Medical Service Corps Office, DHHQ**

“Mann tracht, Un Gott lacht” is an old Yiddish adage meaning, “Man plans, and God laughs”. In a way, I think that is a good answer to the “at what stage should an MSC apply for an HPERB” question. Generally speaking, the HPERB guidance tells you when you should apply. That guidance exists for a reason. Whether it is a fellowship, school

program, or EWI, the HPERB opportunities are meant for officers with a depth of experience that will be able to go from their HPERB in to a follow-on that is career appropriate. The best laid plans can run afoul when life happens though. Be prepared to adjust fire, and reconsider your timelines as you progress.

As we plan our careers, it is important to consider the opportunity cost of each decision. Perhaps applying for an AFIT master's program will prevent you from scoring that dream overseas assignment as a CGO. Or maybe doing a fellowship in one functional area stops you from doing a large flight in a different functional area because your skillset is needed elsewhere.

Ultimately, your Squadron Commander, SGA, and Senior MSC can give you guidance on when is the best time to apply given any unique personal circumstances you may face. Also understand that competition for these opportunities is fierce, and a "no" one year does not mean you should not reapply the following year.

## **Chapter 8**

### **THE MSC DEVELOPMENT TEAM (DT) VS. SENIOR MSC COUNCIL**

Key Contributor: Col Greg Cullison, Lt Col Stephanie Ku, Maj Sean Rotbart

BLUF: The DT works to select officers for opportunities and the Senior Council acts as a Board of Directors to steer the strategic direction of the Medical Service Corps.

#### **7.1. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE DT?**

Our Development Team (DT) works to select candidates for opportunities to include Squadron Command, IDE/SDE in-residence (School), IAI, Capstone, HPERB Opportunities, SGA, AES/DO, and Specialty Matching. The DT, which is organized by the MSC AFPC team. The DT meets in the spring and the summer which are listed on the MSC Calendar on the KX.

#### **7.2. WHO IS ON THE TEAM?**

The DT and Senior Council consists of your MAJCOM Administrators, Associate Corps Chiefs, 3 At-Large Members, the Corps Chief and Corps Director. We also have advisors to include the AFPC MSC Utilization Branch Chief and the MSC Associate Corps Director. Current members of the DT are posted on the KX.

#### **7.3. WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER THE DT?**

Before the DT, it's important for you to ensure your record is up to date and your MyVector is updated. Depending on the opportunity, you will fill out the appropriate application and paperwork, usually sent out via AFPC. During the DT, your records are loaded into EBOSS by AFPC. This system contains your SURF, career briefs, medals, and fitness scores.. This is an objective look across your peer group which gives the DT an ability to rack and stack (provide an order of merit) MSCs for different opportunities. After our DTs, AFPC validates our selections and works the assignment process to ensure everything is good to go before they announce who the DT selected for each opportunity.

#### **7.4. WHOSE RECORDS ARE REVIEWED?**

Records are reviewed if you are applying for one of the opportunities mentioned above, or through normal career vectoring timelines. It's always a good idea to speak with your MSC MTF leadership or mentors to include your MAJCOM SGA and functional MSC Associate Corps Chief in evaluating when to apply for different opportunities throughout your career. You may also call the Corps Office at any time, we are here to serve you.

APPLICABLE WEBSITES:

- [HTTPS://KX.HEALTH.MIL/KJ/KX5/AFMEDICALSERVICECORPS/PAGES/HOME.ASPX](https://kx.health.mil/kj/kx5/afmedicalservicecorps/pages/home.aspx)

## **Chapter 9**

### **PME**

Key Contributor: Colonel Lauren Byrd

BLUF: We have the privilege to be members of the profession of arms; it is our responsibility to understand how we support the employment of air power to fight and win our nation's wars.

#### **9.1. WHEN SHOULD YOU COMPLETE PME?**

What separates us from our counterparts in civilian healthcare organizations is the oath we take to support and defend the constitution. PME is part of our development as officers in how to uphold that oath. Therefore, PME should be completed at the earliest opportunity as a demonstration of your commitment to the organization.

For the purposes of being competitive for promotion to the next grade, rank-appropriate PME should be completed at least six months prior to when your IPZ board meets. This allows you time to ensure your record is updated and for your senior rater to know you have it completed prior to making a determination about a "P" or "DP" promotion recommendation.

"As a junior MSC, I was mentored to enroll in the PME the day I got my line number for the next rank and to get it done as soon as possible."

#### **9.2. DO I HAVE TO GO IN-RESIDENCE? WHAT ARE MY OTHER OPTIONS?**

With the exception of Primary Development Education (PDE) or Squadron Officer School (SOS), the opportunity to attend PME in residence are very limited. Only three to five MSCs attend Intermediate Developmental Education (IDE) and two to three MSCs attend Senior Developmental Education (SDE) each academic year.

Therefore, significantly more MSCs will complete IDE and SDE via distance learning than in residence. In accordance with AFI 36-2656, para 3.2.2., 100% of MSCs in the rank of Captain will have the opportunity to complete SOS in residence.

"Completing IDE and SDE via distance learning is a discriminator for selection to attend in residence."

#### **9.3. WHAT CAN I EXPECT IF I GO IN-RESIDENCE?**

SOS is a 6.5 week TDY to Maxwell AFB AL from your permanent duty station. IDE and SDE in-residence opportunities are 10-month programs for which you will receive PCS orders to the location of the program.



In each case, the completion of the program is your full-time professional responsibility. In most cases, you'll attend the program with hundreds of students, but will spend the majority of your time in smaller cohorts that are comprised multiple AFSCs and will include international and sister service students at IDE and SDE. IDE and SDE students can expect to be in the classroom Monday-Friday for approximately half of the traditional duty day and completing assigned reading and writing assignments the other half of the day when not in class. Homework in the evening and on the weekend for IDE and SDE students is not uncommon.

“One of the greatest benefits of attending in residence is having the opportunity to learn from and with your fellow service members that share the same professional values while bringing completely different experiences to the classroom.”

#### **9.4. WHAT CAN I EXPECT IF I COMPLETE PME VIA CORRESPONDENCE?**

Most MSCs will complete IDE and SDE via distance learning (DL). Completing PME via DL will require you to balance the demands of your full-time job and home life while still finding time to complete your assignments. While enrolled in DL, you can expect to spend significant off-duty time completing your assignments. Once enrolled, the DL programs must be completed within a specific amount of time before you will be disenrolled and required to begin the program again (regardless of how much or how little you completed). The basic concepts of each program are the same in both the in residence and DL versions, however you will interact with your instructor and classmates in the asynchronous environment rather than face-to-face.

“PME helped me understand how healthcare can be used to enable the employment of air power and how to find an operational solution to meet warfighters' needs.”

NOTE: For specifics on PME opportunities, see Ch. 7.3.

#### **POLICY REFERENCES:**

- AFI 36-2656, Developmental Education

#### **RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**

- Officer Professional Military Education Student Handbook, Version 19-3, 1 October 201. (The Air University eSchool of Graduate PME)

#### **APPLICABLE WEBSITES:**

- <https://mypers.af.mil/app/categories/c/549/p/9>
- <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/ACSC/Academics/>
- <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/AWC>

## **Chapter 10**

### **FUNCTIONAL ROTATIONS**

Key Contributor: Col R. Lynn Johnson, Lt Col Zeik Malone

BLUF: Dig into the job you are working and know it inside and out.

#### **10.1. HOW DO I BECOME A FUNCTIONAL SME?**

**Col R. Lynn Johnson, Medical Support Division Chief, ACC/SG2**

Dig into the guidance (AFI, DHA-PI, DoDDoDI), learn what all of your flight members do, rely on them to teach you, and be willing to learn from anyone regardless of rank.

Do not be afraid to ask questions to anyone.

Take advantage of the TDYs the AF offers to learn, grow, and network.

#### **10.2. WHO IS MY REACH BACK?**

**Lt Col Zeik Malone, 345<sup>th</sup> Medical Group Administrator, Eielson AFB**

“Build those networks of personnel from your HSA class, the HSA instructors, any of the instructors/students from formal classes, the MAJCOM, AFMRA, DHA, as well as our Sister Services.”

“The Associate Corps Chiefs are tremendous assets available in the functional community and they know who has the answer if they themselves do not have it.”

#### **10.3. WHAT TYPES OF INSPECTIONS WILL I HAVE?**

**Lt Col Zeik Malone, 345<sup>th</sup> Medical Group Administrator, Eielson AFB**

Inspection types will depend upon the area you are working, but most of us will encounter self-assessment via MICT, The Joint Commission, and section-specific inspections that are often facilitated by the Wing. Unit Effectiveness Inspections look at how units execute the mission, improve the unit, manage resources, and lead people.

## Chapter 11

### **BOARD CERTIFICATION**

Key Contributors: Col Ron Merchant, Col(s) Scott Farmer, Lt Col Denise Preston, Maj Charlene Rueben

BLUF: Achieving a board certification demonstrates your dedication to being a member of the *profession* of arms and a healthcare *professional*.

#### **11.1. WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?**

The list of board certifications accepted are on your MSC KX page.

#### **11.2. WHEN/WHY SHOULD I BECOME BOARD CERTIFIED?**

**Col(s) Scott Farmer, Lt Col Denise Preston, Maj Charlene Rueben, AFPC, Randolph AFB**

There are two required actions for a member to update their record with a board certificate. It is highly recommended that members have a current board certificate in their record prior to meeting their Lt Col Board.

The MSC KX page has the MyPers link to upload Board Certificates. Only the certificate can be uploaded into your record, it will not accept emails documenting that a certificate was awarded. Once the member submits the certificate, AFPC will approve if it meets requirements listed on the KX and upload into member's record.

Members must complete AF 2096, via their local CSS, to have the "M" prefix added to their record (SURF).

AFPC does an annual audit to ensure member's board certificates are current. If board certification has expired, the member will be contacted through email to update. If not updated, AFPC will remove the "M" prefix.

#### **11.3. HOW DOES BOARD CERTIFICATION AFFECT PROMOTION BOARDS?**

O-5 is the first board where your board certification is considered. You must maintain an active certification and update your file to ensure you do not have an expired board certification for your O-6 promotion board.

## **Chapter 12**

### **Deployments**

Key Contributors: Col Colin Smyth, Lt Col Lea Calderwood, Lt Col Theodosia Hill, Lt Col Christine Sanders, Lt Col Thomas Naughton, Maj Andrew Gawlikowski, Maj Adam Brown, and CMSgt Melissa Murphy

**BLUF:** What you will read below are some excellent comments, insights and specific advice about what to do once you are tasked to deploy, and while you are deployed. First and foremost, though, my advice to you is to get your mind, body and attitude right.

#### **Col Colin Smyth, Chief, Expeditionary Policy and Ops Division**

Some of you have deployed before and know basically what to expect, and how to prepare, but many of you have not. All of you will be faced with the reality of missing a significant amount of time in your families' lives, while putting your own life on the line for your country – and make no mistake, no matter where you deploy in this world in service to this great nation, you are putting your life on the line. That fact is not lost on your family, even if it is unspoken, and that is what I mean by “get your mind right.” Understand that risk, accept that risk, and take the appropriate steps to mitigate that risk. Get your training done. Pay attention to the training. Take it seriously. Your life, and the lives of your teammates and patients depends on it.

Additionally, when I say “get your body right,” I mean take some extra steps to up your fitness. You may think you are in shape and that you know what your job is going to be, but I guarantee you, no matter what you think, it will be more physically stressful and demanding than what you do day-to-day in-garrison. Get your minor medical issues addressed before you go. Get your medication updated, and anything else that might be a distraction while you are deployed.

Finally, get your attitude right. Even if you are not excited about your tasking, or if your family is having trouble coping with the realities of your deployment, it is critical that you adopt the right attitude to accomplish the mission. Seek assistance from your unit and the resources the Air Force has made available in order to ensure you can focus on the task at hand. You must have the right attitude, or your deployment will be 100% worse on you, your team and your family. Remember, you are not the first Airman to face the challenges of deployment, and you are not alone. If you need help in preparing – beyond the standard prep and paperwork your Unit Deployment Manager (UDM) will help with – then ask for it!

Our mission is too important! And you – our Airmen – and your families are too important!”

## **12.1. I HAVE JUST BEEN TASKED TO DEPLOY! WHAT NOW?**

**Lt Col Lea Calderwood, Deputy Chief of Medical Readiness, HAF/SG**

### **DEPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS**

Follow your Readiness Office/UDM guidance for prep. Do trainings/requirements early. By knocking out such requirements early, you can focus on other areas without the added stress of fitting everything in at the last minute.

### **PREPPING FOR YOUR DEPLOYED DUTY**

Engage with the person you are replacing to get their insight and overview of your responsibilities and have them send you a continuity guide/turnover information ahead of time. This way you can digest it without the fog of travel.

If you'll be working in a section you don't currently work in, spend some time in that section prior to your departure to familiarize yourself with updates/changes.

Ship as much as you can to your FOB/deployed location. You will get gear at Qatar/Kuwait and will need the space if you are going to the 'Stan. You should only have 72 hour bag, large checked bag and weapons case. Seasonal gear, bed spread, extra clothes, etc. needs to be shipped.

### **PREPPING YOUR HOME STATION SECTION**

Prep your duty section for your absence. They will be carrying the load while you are out.

Ensure program turnover is accomplished and new POCs know the battle rhythm they are responsible for.

### **PREPPING YOUR HOUSEHOLD/FAMILY/PETS**

Have a communication plan and set expectations if you are going to a base that has Wi-Fi or will be out at FOBs with limited communication.

Have your head downrange and your heart at home. Communicate to your spouse and family that you will drop off of comms while in transit. You may get Wi-Fi, but it will likely be spotty.

Plan for how you are going to pay bills; if you live alone, schedule someone to check in on your house.

If you have a family (even though they will say they don't need help), **SET UP HELP**. Coordinate ahead to have someone come and watch the kids for an afternoon every other week, mow the grass and/or walk the dogs. They will appreciate it.

If you have children, leave notes behind for them to find or receive throughout your deployment. Also you can have candy jars for a “kiss” a day that has the number of candies in it that you will be gone. They get to see the jar go down as it gets closer to when you come home. To be safe, add a few extra to the jar.

Don't make plans or promises of when you are getting home. There are always challenges in airflow, depending on AOR priorities, therefore it is difficult to get home exactly at 180 days.

If your base/school has an active group for children with deployed parents, get your children involved as soon as you are tasked.

## **RE-INTEGRATION**

In both home and work, take it slow. They learned to do things without you and may have established new routines/processes.

If you didn't provide an after action report before you redeployed, do one now and provide it to your Readiness Office.

### **Lt Col Christine Sanders, Commander, 56 MDSS, Luke AFB**

Once you are tasked, preparing for the deployment can become a fulltime job. With numerous computer-based trainings, hands-on courses and TDYs you may find yourself struggling to keep up with your day job. Especially in the last couple months before you exit. Keep everything in perspective and depend on your team.

Do not procrastinate. Even if you are notified six months before your Report No Later than Date. The months will erode quickly and you'll find yourself desperately looking for a signature or certificate at the last minute. That is the time you should spend with your family.

Do not be surprised if you find yourself saying “am I the first person to ever deploy”? Despite our best resources and greatest minds developing taskings and pre-deployment checklists, something will be wrong. Regardless, everything will get done and the next thing you know you'll find yourself in a C-17 or C-130 or even a helicopter soaring over some unfamiliar land.

Make sure family concerns are handled before you go. Things can pop up after you leave and you are going to have to trust those you left in control to do what is best. This is extremely difficult from halfway around the world so do your best to set your family up for success.

Find out who you are replacing and reach out to them. That person will have the best intel on what you do or don't need to bring with you. Just remember, anything you can't live without, along with your body armor and weapon will be carried, by you, long distances,

across gravel, up flights of stairs, after many hours without sleep. Pre-ship if you can or just don't take "it".

### **Maj Adam Brown, Systems Instructor, Health Services Administration School**

You wear this uniform for a variety of reasons, and no one but you can say what motivation you have for putting the uniform on. Now that you have it on, your charge is to support and defend the constitution; this is indicative with our unique task to deploy as a professional military member and medic.

### **TAKE A BREATH**

When a deployment tasking comes down there are times it's expected, and there are times when it is not. The first thing to do is take a breath, comprehend what is about to take place, and then start to get yourself mentally/physically/spiritually ready for the task ahead.

It's perfectly normal to have your mind racing and wondering what next... the following words hopefully will help you get to that next step. But first, take a breath.

### **READINESS IS YOUR FRIEND**

The readiness flight will be sending you a lot of information on the location/timing of your pending deployment. **READ EVERYTHING!** There are many different deployments out there, and they all have a varying level of differentiation to them. Past deployment experience helps if you have it. Many new officers that are tasked cannot pull from their own experience and should strive to pull from the experience of others. It is too easy to get lost in the minutia of required training and tasking changes between the initial notification and your actual deployment day.

Talk with readiness often and keep them up-to-date with all completed tasks required for your deployment tasking. If you have questions, they are a wealth of information. Realize the readiness flight deploys folks all the time; they have the answers.

Readiness gets a bad rap sometimes from deployers that are stressed. However, I can assure you they are doing everything they can and not withholding any information; trust them and use their knowledge. But remember, they are also not the SMEs on your deployed location, deployed job, etc. That is why it is important to establish comms with who you will be replacing and your deployed chain of command.

### **PREPARE YOUR FAMILY/LOVED ONES**

All too often we focus on the direct family members, spouses and children, don't forget about your other family members: Mother/Father, Aunts/Uncles etc...

As nervous or excited as you might be, your family is just as nervous. Many don't truly understand what you are about to go through, and they are concerned with so many things running through their mind. Reassure them you are doing what you were called to do;

many have done this before you, and many will after you. Quell their fears so you can also have some peace of mind as you're preparing to "go out the door" knowing your family back home is at some level of comfort as you depart.

Check your SGLI, make sure all the financial paperwork is in order. I know your deployment checklist will tell you to get your will done and all those other important documents. Don't put that off! If you already have a will completed and your SGLI taken care of, still ensure everything is in order.

## **PREPARE YOURSELF**

Do your research. Talk to others that have deployed. Seek advice. Every deployment is different, every person is different, everyone prepares different. Know what works for you and humble yourself enough to accept the help from those trying to aid in your preparation.

If you are going to a location that is less built-up than others, pack enough materials to last a few months; shipping/mail could take a while to get to you. If possible, reach out to your forward location for an address that you can even mail some things to yourself so you don't have to carry everything, and it also will give you an idea of how long it takes to get things to your location from the states.

Pack, unpack, repack, unpack, and repack again. Check, double check, and then check all your gear one more time. The last thing you want is to get to your location and realize you forgot something you needed back at home, trust me... I have done that myself.

## **12.2. "PEARLS" FROM THOSE WHO HAVE DEPLOYED**

**Lt Col Theodosia Hill, Commander, 72d Medical Support Squadron, Tinker AFB**

Deployments are rewarding and challenging.

### **STRATEGY**

Set professional and personal goals before your deployment.

Research the mission, vision, priorities of the task force/unit that you'll be assigned to.

Review the official biographies of your new chain of command.

Make contact with the incumbent and ask about the challenges, deliverables and battle rhythm for daily operations. Establish the habit of understanding your Commander's priorities.

Create a deployment packing list including your favorite personal toiletries for 2 months; send these items to the incumbent 15 days advance of your arrival.

If you're a single member, consider packing your household goods if you want to save



extra money. Note this is an expense you'll have to assume as it's not a government entitlement.

## **ON THE GROUND**

Understand the AoR and COCOM challenges and opportunities; ask for a mission brief.

Workout at least 3 times a week; this will support your resiliency skills.

Build in time to maintain contact with your support system via phone/email/Skype/WhatsApp while you're deployed.

### **Lt Col Christine Sanders, Commander, 56 MDSS, Luke AFB**

Be prepared to share a room with one or more people. Consider noise-cancelling headphones, eye masks.

Not everyone likes the same music as you.

FaceTime is great. Keep it to yourself. You don't want your roommate ignorantly changing in front of your spouse. This may or may not have happened to me.

Take care of the space you have. It will be limited and can get cluttered quickly increasing stress levels for you and your roommate(s).

Just say no to cookies or just food in general. Your family will want to send you care packages especially if you are deployed during the holidays. The packages can take a couple weeks to arrive and homemade cookies don't travel well. The DFAC will feed you more than you will want. Not to mention that most all deployed locations, even the remote corners of Afghanistan, have an exchange. Some have bazaars. If all else fails, Amazon delivers.

Bathroom etiquette is very important. Clean up after yourself. Wipe sinks, counters and yes, even the toilet.

If you have young children there are great resources online to help them understand and cope with your absence. Military OneSource has multiple links. Another great resource is "Seasoned Spouse" has tons of links for just about everything you or your family may encounter while you are deployed.

If you have time, use it to complete training and/or school. My intention was to complete Air War College while deployed but systems and time constraints made it impossible.

Your deployment will be a "once in a lifetime" experience. Take it all in. Both the good and the bad. Use those experiences to make you a better leader, mentor, family member...

I loved my deployment. The team I worked with became a family and I honestly miss

them every day.

**Lt Col Thomas Naughton, Base Support Branch Chief, AMC/SGX**

As officers in the United States Air Force, we support the Military Instrument of National Power, requiring support to operations around the globe. With this in mind, it is crucial to take care of your deployers before, during and after deployments. Each phase of a deployment will create significant challenges at home and work. As leaders, we can help reduce stress and provide support (to members and families) during these challenging and potentially dangerous experiences. It can be easy to forget about personnel who are deployed; this is a quick way to lose the respect and confidence of your team.

**Maj Adam Brown, Systems Instructor, Health Services Administration School**

**MY GROUND SURGICAL TEAM (GST) EXPERIENCE**

There I was, in Tampa, FL, on leave when the phone rang. It was my commander, Col Victor Weeden on the other end of the phone asking if I wanted to deploy. I was at a point in my career where I didn't think I would deploy again. When I was enlisted, I had two combat deployments in Kirkuk and Balad, Iraq working with the 101st Airborne and the 82d Airborne respectively at those locations. I had acted as a convoy gunner in Kirkuk driving all over Iraq, and then walked the streets of the towns outside Balad with my M-16 by my side every day for 6 months.

Those days long behind me, my MSC career moving forward, I never thought, for whatever reason, I would get the call again. I wasn't mentally prepared for that question as simple as it was. I also wasn't prepared for the potential tasking I was being asked to fill.

It took me a day or two to get back to Col Weeden while I got my mind right and provided an answer that would send me to a faraway land, doing a job I never thought I was going to do in my career.

I know why I lace up my boots every day, I know why I joined the service and continue to serve 16 years later, and I also know that my job is to deploy and serve my country when it calls me to serve. I knew that there was no acceptable answer except yes, I wanted to, and was ready, to deploy again.

I was tasked to deploy as a member of the Ground Surgical Team (GST). I sort of knew what I was getting myself into. A good friend of mine had gone on a similar deployment and upon return told me all about it; needless to say, I was at the very least aware of the challenges that were in front of me.

Doubt, fear, and anxiety all crept into my mind as I contemplated the now different future than I had previously envisioned for myself. "How was I going to be effective?" I wondered. "Could I do it?", was also was another question that kept seeming into my thoughts. My previous two deployments were on the extreme opposite end of the spectrum; kill or be killed. Now I was charged to deploy with a team as the administrator

and another “set of hands” to save lives.

I am by trade and training an IT guy, through and through. I don’t do blood at all. If you have seen the movie, “Edge of Tomorrow” with Tom Cruise and Emily Blunt, he is talking with the General of the entire military operation and explains that he does what he does to avoid the front lines, as even the sight of blood makes him queasy. Well, that was me and you can imagine my concern with a tasking where I was going to be directly involved in surgical cases.

I trusted in my readiness shop to get me the right training, and then I trusted the training I was going through would prepare me for the task ahead. Having literally zero medical experience in my life to that point, I went to a surgical course that taught me some basics. I started getting familiar with the bag set that my team would be operating out of. I dedicated myself to the team and their craft so I could be an effective set of hands if the time came.

I prepared my family for the impending deployment. I made sure they were aware of what was about to happen and made sure they felt as comfortable as possible with what I was about to go do. It was important to me that they understand the tasking to the level I was able to explain. When I left, my mind could focus on the task and not worry about my family back home and how they perceived the mission. I then prepared myself as best I could.

I was going to deploy to a forward operating base (FOB) that had little to no creature comforts. I knew going there was going to be difficult even with the simple things like getting packages in and out. My previous deployment experience helped in getting my bags ready and knowing what works and doesn’t work for me. I went ahead and took care of the things I could on my end trusting that readiness was taking care of the things they needed to on their end. I finally went out the door and felt completely comfortable with the preparation I had put in for myself and my family; I went off to complete the mission I was being sent to do.

Being flexible is key! Just getting to our initial destination was a challenge. The manifest that had myself and my team moving from the states to our final location was different. The five other members of the GST team I was on had them going one way on one flight and then me another. On one leg of travel, they didn’t even know we existed so we had to get creative with the aircrew and were able to get loaded onto a manifest as cargo instead of actual passengers. The important thing here to remember is we are MSCs, we do whatever it takes to get the job done, and as the administrator on the team it was my job to find solutions to those problems and act on them to be successful. The travel into country wouldn’t be the last time I had to get creative and think “without the box”.

Nothing prepares you for a deployment like actually being on the deployment. You can go through as much training as possible to have some idea of what to expect, but until you get to your location and settle in, you don’t really know what you’re getting yourself into. My FOB was in the middle of nowhere, close in proximity to nothing, and had zero creature comforts. We had a substandard workout area and that was about as luxurious as it got.

I knew I was deployed when our first patient rolled through the door within days of arrival; cardiac arrest. This would be the first time I was physically involved in the actual care of a patient, and I was super nervous. I didn't know what to expect or better yet, even though the training went well preparing for deployment, I didn't know how I would respond to a real person on the table and me there trying to help in any way possible.

With patient one out of the way, and it being a relief to know my training kicked into gear right when it needed to as I trusted it would, I was ready for anything that might come my way. Deployments are funny because what you do there is not what you do stateside. All the things you think you know help but don't fully give you all the answers. To give you one last thing to take away reading this it would be:

Embrace the mission. Embrace the deployment. Take it at face value and appreciate the opportunity to go and do what you signed up to do. Why you signed up is important to you, but what you do now is important to the entire country.

#### POLICY REFERENCES:

- AFI 41-106 MEDICAL READINESS PROGRAM MANAGEMENT, AFI 10-403

#### RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Extreme Ownership, The decision making guide: a simple guide to better choices in life and work, you are not alone

#### APPLICABLE WEBSITES:

- [MilitaryOneSource.com](http://MilitaryOneSource.com)
- [Searonedspouse.com](http://Searonedspouse.com)
- [Themilitarywifeandmom.com](http://Themilitarywifeandmom.com)
- [HTTPS://WWW.EXPEDITIONARYCENTER.AF.MIL/](https://www.expeditionarycenter.af.mil/)

## **Chapter 13**

### **Assignments**

Key Contributors: Col(s) Scott Farmer, Lt Col Denise Preston, Maj Charlene Rueben

BLUF: Everything you need to know from AFPC.... The main instruction we use for guidance is AFI 36-2110, we also keep the most current information in regards to documents and PSDMs on the MSC Knowledge Exchange.

#### **13.1. TALENT MARKETPLACE 101**

##### **NAVIGATION**

There are three key roles in Talent Marketplace (TM). You are either the VML Officer, Bidding Officer or the Losing Commander. TM offers both visual slides and tutorial videos on how to navigate through TM for each key role. The AFPC MSC Assignment Officers also host multiple webinars throughout the year that are published on the KX.

##### **BIDDING PROCESS**

During each assignment cycle, there is a window that allows Commanders the opportunity to bid on officers on the VML to fill their projected vacancy. Bidding Officers can bid on any officer, this includes officers that preference their location or not. There is no guarantee that a 1/1 bid will confirm assignment location.

##### **WHAT DOES AFPC DO ONCE THE BIDDING IS COMPLETE?**

AFPC will run a system algorithm once the bidding window closes. This creates a starting point for AFPC to match officers to their future assignment location. Matching priority is: 1-Mission, 2-Officer Development, and 3-Officer Preferences. FGO assignments are matched with the Associate Corps Chiefs, Corps Office and AFPC. CGO assignments are matched by AFPC.

#### **13.2. HOW DO I PCS EARLY?**

CONUS assignments are 48 months and overseas assignments are 24-36 months (unaccompanied/accompanied). There are multiple options to PCS early. Please make sure to read the specific guidance for Time on Station, requirements and rank specific guidance for each opportunity below. AFI 36-2110, HPERB guidance, and PSDMs provide specific guidance for each opportunity.

HPERB: Criteria to apply for these opportunities can be found on the MSC Knowledge Exchange, guidance is published annually.

SGA/DO: Criteria to apply for SGA/DO can be found on the MSC Knowledge Exchange,

guidance is published annually.

Command: Requirements to apply for Command are listed in the PSDM that is pushed by AFPC annually and posted to our MSC Kx.

DE: Officers can apply for Development Education (IDE/SDE) during the Fall DT. Criteria for Development Education opportunities are listed in the PSDM released annually by AFPC.

Hot Jobs: AFPC may have Hot Job opportunities throughout the year. AFPC will push out a job advertisement which will include job criteria/requirements. Officers must have their leadership approval to apply. If selected, the officer may or may not be backfilled.

### **13.3. HOW DO I EXTEND FOR AN EXTRA YEAR?**

Officers interested in an assignment extension need to discuss options with their leadership and get approval. The Commander or equivalent can request a reclama through Talent Marketplace during the approved window. Once all extensions (reclamas) have been submitted and the window closes, AFPC will review and approve/deny requests. Please make sure to be specific in the comments section of the reclama to validate/support the request for extension.

### **13.4. HOW DO I APPLY FOR A “JOIN SPOUSE” ASSIGNMENT?**

Guidance for Join Spouse assignments can be located in AFI 36-2110. Officers must have 12 months on station to PCS in join spouse status. There must be a valid and vacant position at gaining location for the officer to PCS. AFPC assignment officers work together to coordinate a join spouse assignment that has a valid and vacant position at the gaining location.

### **13.5. HOW DO I FIND JOINT/eMSM ASSIGNMENT OPPORTUNITIES?**

With the increased transparency of Talent Marketplace, members can view job opportunities for both Joint & eMSM assignments during cycle windows. Jobs that are available to MSCs will be listed for member preference.

### **13.6. HOW DO I GET AN OVERSEAS ASSIGNMENT?**

Members are eligible per AFI 36-2110 to apply for overseas opportunities at 24 months on station. Members can request to be added to the VML with Sq CC/equivalent approval. Once the commander approves the request, the commander/equivalent will send email notification to AFPC to be added. The vulnerable to move list allows the member to preference overseas locations for potential relocation. Being on the VML does not guarantee an overseas assignment.

### **13.7. SHOULD I APPLY FOR JOBS BASED ON POSITION OR LOCATION?**

We recommend applying for a job based on position. However, we understand due to family circumstances you may need to shift your focus to location. Members can request a career counseling session from AFPC at any point. We offer individual sessions at most conferences, but also can do a teleconference if requested. AFPC will help guide you to a job that is at the right time in your career. AFPC will ensure the mission is met, the member is placed in a career developing position and will attempt to match the preference as well.

### **13.8. DO I NEED TO APPLY FOR A STAFF JOB?**

Our Corps values experience in various staff-level positions (e.g. MAJCOM, HAF/SAF, Joint/OSD, AFPC, DHA, AFMRA, DLA etc.). The majority of staff positions are geared toward Majors and Lt Cols.

### **13.9. HOW DO I APPLY FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL DEFERMENT?**

The High School Senior Deferment application is available on vMPF. The details are outlined in AFI 36-2110. Once application is approved, a code will be placed on the member's record to prevent them from moving from their duty location during that year. If the member was scheduled to move, the member will be removed from the VML to allow the member to stay in place. The member should send a courtesy email to the AFPC Assignment Officer to help coordinate in advance, but it is not required.

#### **POLICY REFERENCES:**

- AFI 36-2110

## Chapter 14

### Your Record

Key Contributor: Maj Troy Novak

**BLUF:** Review your SURF annually, before promotion boards and before career vectoring to ensure that it is correct. The databases that feed the SURF do not flow instantly, so it is imperative that corrections are completed when found.

#### **14.1. HOW TO CORRECT INACCURATE SURF DATA**

Additional details are available at **AFI 36-2608, Table A5.1.**

**Personal Data:** Incorrect data is updated at the Military Personnel Section (MPS) Customer Support Element with supporting documentation. Some actions can be completed virtually via the vMPF.

**Restrictions:** Several organizations control the data that populates in this field. Start with the MPS if you suspect a problem.

**Duty Status:** Incorrect data is updated at the MPS with supporting documentation.

**Service Dates:** Incorrect data is updated at the MPS or Career Enhancement with supporting documentation.

**AFIT Information:** Incorrect data is updated at the MPS with supporting documentation.

**PME Information:** Incorrect data is updated by the school or base education office with a certificate of completion.

**Projected Training:** Must be updated by the base education office. Typically this is not populated.

**Other Information:** Incorrect data is updated at the MPS with supporting documentation.

**Acquisition Information:** Generally not applicable to medical officers.

**Language Info:** Incorrect data is updated at the MPS with supporting documentation.

**Security Date:** Monitor this date and work with your unit security manager to update your clearance when necessary.

**AFSC information:** Update by submitting an AF FORM 2096 to your Commanders Support Staff (CSS).



**Academic information:** Must be updated by the base education office. You will need to provide official transcripts.

**Special Experience IDs:** Are approved by the Associate Corps Chiefs. Updates are made through the MSC Education and Utilization branch.

**Rated Information:** Generally not applicable to medical officers.

**OPR Data:** Incorrect data is updated at the MPS with supporting documentation.

**O/S History:** Incorrect data is updated at the MPS with supporting documentation.

**Deployment History:** Incorrect data is updated at the MPS with supporting documentation.

**Decorations:** Incorrect data is updated at the MPS with supporting documentation.

**Duty History:** Correcting problems with duty titles, office symbols and position numbers can be completed by submitting an AF FORM 2096 to the CSS or the MPS.

Updating older problems with duty titles must be completed by submitting a “Duty History Change Request” at MyPers (<https://mypers.af.mil/>)

**Joint Service Information:** Generally not applicable to medical officers.

The SURF breakdown is attached below. This document provides a definition and applicable AFI reference for each data point on the SURF.




DPA-12003\_2595\_A  
MS SURF Breakdown

## **14.2. WHERE DO I FIND MY PREVIOUS OPRs/TRAINING REPORTS?**

Previous OPRs and training reports are found in the Personnel Records Display Application (PRDA) at the Air Force Personnel Center.

You can access this website at the following address:

<https://w45.afpc.randolph.af.mil/AFPCSecureNet40/PKI/MainMenu1.aspx>



Available Applications...		Top Viewed Sites
Click Here...		Application Title...
<a href="#">ADP</a>		Airmen Development Plan (Having problems connecting directly to ADP? The AF Portal link may resolve the issue. Click HERE)
<a href="#">AFFMS II</a>		Air Force Fitness Management System II
<a href="#">AMS</a>		Assignment Management System *Active Duty Personnel Only*
<a href="#">EPROM Release</a>		Virtual Enlisted Promotion Release Web
<a href="#">HPERB</a>		Health Professions Education Requirements Board
<a href="#">PASCodes</a>		PAS Code Information Provider
<a href="#">PERSTEMPO</a>		Personnel Quality-Of-Life Measurement Tool
<a href="#">PRDA</a>		Personnel Records Display Application (Having problems connecting directly to PRDA? The AF Portal link may resolve the issue. Click HERE)
<a href="#">RAW</a>		Retrieval Applications Web
<a href="#">Reserve Vacancies</a>		Reserve Vacancy Finder
<a href="#">TEMPO_TrackingNET40</a>		TEMPO Management and Tracking System Dot Net 4.0
<a href="#">VMPE</a>		Virtual Military Personnel Flight Suite of Applications
<a href="#">vPSC RBA</a>		Virtual Personnel Service Center - Role Based Access

Once you have accessed PRDA, select the category “Performance Reports”, click “Select All”, click “Get Documents”, and a zip file will be created for you to download.

#### POLICY REFERENCES:

- AFI 36-2608, MILITARY PERSONNEL RECORDS SYSTEM

#### APPLICABLE WEBSITES:

- [HTTPS://MYPERS.AF.MIL](https://mypers.af.mil)
- [HTTPS://W45.AFPC.RANDOLPH.AF.MIL/AFPCSECURENET40/PKI/MAINMENU1.ASPX](https://w45.afpc.randolph.af.mil/afpcsecurenet40/pki/mainmenu1.aspx)

## **Chapter 15**

### **Flight Commander**

Key Contributors: Lt Col Josh Curtis, Lt Col Theodosia Hill, Lt Col Randall Shiflett, and Lt Col Gloria Walski

BLUF: We are leaders. Lead well. Treat others as you want to be treated, and you will see success.

#### **15.1. GOOD VS. BAD FLIGHT COMMANDERS**

**Lt Col Josh Curtis, Commander, 355<sup>th</sup> Medical Support Squadron, Davis-Monthan AFB**

“Good” Flight Commanders:

- Are the example for their subordinates and peers to emulate; expect more of themselves than they do of others
- Are humble and let their work speak for itself
- Publically give the positive attention/kudos to their staff and publically own negative attention themselves
- Put the mission and their staff members’ success ahead of themselves; Senior Leadership will quickly see who is developing their staff, putting their subordinates out in front, and giving credit to the staff versus who is stepping on others to get recognition for themselves
- Communicate up, down, and across the organization regularly to ensure everyone is aware of what their function is doing and how it will impact the organization as a whole
- Get involved with their staff members to know them, understand their needs, and care for them on personal and professional levels
- Use their own knowledge/experience and the subject matter experts within their flight to mitigate issues before they arise, or to solve problems
- Develop relationships with their peers and employ those relationships to solve problems at their level while communicating with their leadership
- Go the extra mile and spend the extra time to ensure the details are covered rather than expecting others/leadership to take care of things for them
- Dig into guidance and governing documentation (DoDIs, AFIs, AFMANs, DHA-PIs, etc.) to know what the rules and expectations are
- Listen and can accept constructive criticism to improve themselves
- Assess issues and gather expert opinions to make the best decision possible to address the problem; able to be decisive
- Are on time and thorough when providing information to leadership

“Bad” Flight Commanders:

- Do not set the example and have higher expectations of their staff than they do of themselves; think their position and/or rank makes them less accountable to standards
- Are in it for themselves, focusing their efforts on making themselves look good at the expense of their peers and subordinates
- Work within a vacuum and do not communicate issues and actions with their staff, peers, or leadership
- Do not take the time to get to know their staff and care about their wellbeing or their development
- Are purely reactive to problems
- Do not read and do not personally seek to better themselves; instead, rely upon everyone else to solve problems for them
- Do not develop relationships and work alone to try to address issues
- Do just enough to get by or fail to meet the minimum expectations
- Think they are all-knowing, are infallible, and have nothing left to learn; do not listen to or accept feedback that would improve or help them
- Are afraid to make decisions and are paralyzed when leading their flight
- Do not meet deadlines and/or responses are poorly developed

**Lt Col Gloria Walski, 7th Medical Support Squadron Commander, Dyess AFB**

## **THE FIRST 90 DAYS**

### **NEW FLIGHT COMMANDERS**

On my first day at my first assignment, I sat in my office within the Patient Administration section filling out in-processing paperwork. A long line of frustrated patients had formed right in front of my door, waiting to speak to the Patient Travel administrator. Someone in the line peered into my office and said, “Hey, LT, aren’t you going to do something about this line?” I never felt more helpless in my life and the best I could do was say, “It’s my first day.” He just shook his head and looked away. It’s a terrible feeling to have and to this day, I’m not sure what advice I would have offered to myself at that moment other than: Learn the job quickly and learn it well, so you’re not the limiting factor.

Whether this is your first time or the tenth time serving as a Flight Commander, the flights, the people, the successes and challenges you experience will be unique in their own ways. Yet, the one common thing among all the teams for which you are the flight commander is you. You are the one who gets to set the tone and direction. You are also in control of how quickly you can get spun up and keep the momentum going. **You may not have control over the team you inherit or the successes and problems it comes with, but you do have control over how you maintain the successes and resolve those problems.**

As a new Flight Commander, do you want to be part of the solution or part of the problem?

Have you ever heard that you have 90 days to learn, observe and identify solutions for

problems in an organization to which you are newly appointed? After that, you become part of the problem. That may seem daunting, but as a new set of eyes in the flight, you are in the best position to offer solutions. But if you have identified a problem and did nothing to fix it, then you, as a new Flight Commander, are implicitly condoning that problem.

MSCs in the early parts of their career may find the role of Flight Commander to be intimidating. This may be the first time they are “in charge” of people and programs, and for some, it may be the first time they are in the active duty Air Force. I was intimidated with the idea of taking over a new flight in a functional area that I felt like I knew nothing about. I had a boss that used to say, “You don’t know what you don’t know,” which sums up how I felt about every new section I ever took over. Rest assured, with time and experience, each transition in your career will become easier to navigate.

A book that I found very helpful in addressing how to tackle a new flight (or any new job) is *The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting Up to Speed Faster and Smarter* by Michael D. Watkins. I base many of my strategies for getting through new flight command transitions from ideas presented in this book. It was written with the civilian sector in mind, but I found it applicable to Air Force officership, specifically flight commanders. Ninety days seems reasonable, but I would argue that due to the transitory nature of our jobs, we should be getting up to speed in 45 days. Consider a standard 180-day deployment – 90 days is half of the time you’re there! Do you really want to spend half that time getting up to speed?

## **PREPARE YOURSELF**

Do your research. Understand what it is expected of you as a Flight Commander. These expectations should come from your immediate supervisor and your flight chief. You must also understand what your Flight’s role is in the Medical Group and Wing and how it fits into the mission. If you can’t articulate this, how can you expect your flight members to understand why they do what they do?

If you are fortunate enough to be in a position to overlap with your predecessor, learn from them as much as you can. If you are PCSing to a new base and have been told you’re going to a flight for a functional area you’ve never worked in before, shadow the flight commander for that flight at your current base before you leave. Read up on the base you’re going to and get an idea of what mission you will be supporting.

Capitalize on your training. This can encompass your commissioning source, HSA, PME or any other professional development course you have had the fortune of attending. I also encourage you to read a variety of books on leadership. There are literally thousands of titles out there, and chances are, there’s one out there that resonates with you.

Be self-aware. No one is perfect, so be honest with yourself and assess your vulnerabilities. Then determine how to compensate for them.

As a Flight Commander, you may find yourself outside of your comfort zone. Perhaps the thought of public-speaking makes you break out in sweat and you are terrified of having to

run a staff meeting, or you hate to be the bad guy and the idea of correcting someone on an error makes you very anxious, or, you dislike confrontation, so avoid it at all costs. Avoiding your vulnerabilities can be detrimental to your growth and your flight's success. Find ways to push yourself and learn to make your discomfort zone more comfortable. This will take self-discipline and practice.

While you are working on overcoming your vulnerabilities, you can assess your team and see if there are others in the flight who can cover your vulnerabilities. For example, if you are not great at mediating conflict, perhaps someone else on your team who is good at conflict mediation can do this with you.

Do not be afraid of seeking advice and counsel from your supervisor, mentors and peers.

Be aware, what made you successful in the past could be a vulnerability for you as a Flight Commander. For example, if you were an OIC who exercised great attention-to-detail on everything you submitted, that great attention-to-detail may translate to micromanagement when you take on the role of Flight Commander. Just be cognizant of your behavior and its impact on others.

## **PLAN TO LEARN**

Take time to observe (but not too much time!)

Don't show up with a "know-it-all" attitude. Even if you've had 15 years of civilian health care administration experience or 15 years of prior enlisted experience as a 4A0, no one likes a know-it-all. Avoid saying, "At my last base..." and try to understand why things are the way they are before suggesting any changes.

You may feel pressure to prove yourself, but you will build more credibility and influence by showing a genuine desire to learn. Take time to shadow the members of your flight and ask them to teach you about what they do so you can understand their processes. Ask about crazy-makers and if they have recommendations for how you can help.

"Effective leaders strike the right balance between doing (making things happen) and being (observing and influence)." - The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting Up to Speed Faster and Smarter by Michael D. Watkins

## **MICT**

My go-to strategy for getting spun up quickly in a new section is to review MICT. The checklists that the Functional Area Managers upload to MICT are considered operationally important. That is not to say everything outside of MICT is unimportant, but if you were limited in time and had to prioritize, look at MICT first.

I highly recommend accomplishing 100% of the assessments yourself during your first 45 days. If used correctly, MICT is a great continuity tool. It contains perspectives from your predecessors of how they met requirements, it provides historical documentation of how

and what was accomplished, and hopefully it identifies any limitations to operational success. This is an opportunity for you to dig deep and ask questions.

Comb through AFIs and other regulations, and if it doesn't make sense for your flight to do it that way, check and see if you can get a waiver for it. Some things are not waivable at all, but other things can be waived at the MDG or Wing level. It might require some work on your part, but if approved, should be worth it. Your chance for getting a waiver approved if you never ask is zero, so go ahead and ask, and see what happens.

Finally, don't be afraid of open observations. If you discovered an error in your paycheck and realized the Air Force owed you money, would you ignore it and hope it resolves itself, or would you make sure the right people were aware of this problem and track it until it was fixed? Use MICT as a tool to track a problem until it's fixed, like you would an error in your paycheck. Make sure you've identified limitations to operational success and propose solutions for fixing them. If the fix is outside of your span of control, then MICT is a great way to alert those who can fix the problem for you.

### **NEGOTIATE SUCCESS**

Engage with your boss and earn credibility. Be proactive and get clarity on his or her expectations early and often to avoid misunderstandings.

Give your boss reasons to trust you – micromanagement tends to stem from a place of insecurity and lack of trust. If you feel like you're being micromanaged, do a quick self-assessment. Have the products you submitted been as accurate as possible or have they been inconsistent, therefore giving your boss reasons to mistrust your abilities?

Don't let your boss get blind-sided. If there's something that your boss may have to answer to, make sure they're prepared. With time and experience, you should be able to assess what your boss considers important. When in doubt, ask. If you should be providing updates to your boss for on-going projects, provide it without being asked, but just make sure the updates add value.

When you go to your boss with problems, bring courses of actions or plans for how you hope your boss can help you with addressing the problems. Make sure you have a preferred solution.

Finally, **it is up to you to adapt to your boss's style.** There is always a learning curve when you get a new boss. Learn their expectations, habits and preferences, adapt your approach to work with your boss's preferences, and understand how your boss will be graded for success. If your boss is getting graded on closing out EPRs in a timely manner, make sure your EPRs are getting submitted on time.

Submit 90-100% of the finished product to your boss. Don't make your boss have to do your work for you. This will reinforce your credibility and trustworthiness. Set your boss up for success.

I learned this lesson the hard way as a ROTC cadet. My detachment commander asked me to submit a draft letter for her signature. I did exactly that – everything in the letter was grammatically correct, but its format wasn't written IAW the Tongue & Quill, it didn't have her signature block, nor was it on official letterhead. I probably printed it on repurposed paper, with my math homework on the reverse. I honestly thought she wanted a draft copy and would fix the rest. She signed it exactly as I submitted it. I had to accomplish the letter again, this time ensuring it was perfect, but I sure hated having to explain why I needed her to sign it again.

Anticipate questions and have the answers ready. Ask yourself, "If I were the boss, what would I ask?" The boss may never ask you those questions, but it's always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. Be willing to make a decision and/or provide a recommendation to your boss with good supporting reasons.

Pay attention in staff meetings, even if the topic of discussion is unrelated to your functional area. You never know when an MSC rotation might happen, and sometimes it happens sooner than you expect.

Be able to execute and communicate your boss's mission, vision and direction, even if you have to agree to disagree. Don't try to establish rapport with your flight by saying something like: "I tried to point out that it was a stupid idea, but I was overruled. This is going to be terrible, but we just have to deal with it." Better might be: "I discussed this with the boss and this is the direction we have decided to go." If you understand your boss's reason behind the decision, it will be easier for you to convey the message to the members of your flight.

Be willing to make decisions without someone having to give you the green light. Too often I see people afraid to make a decision, or they want someone else to shoulder the responsibility of making that decision for them (gaining permission before doing something). Along those same lines, some people make fear-based decisions, where they are more concerned about whether they'll get in trouble or they fear their subordinates or boss will no longer like them for making that decision. Don't wait for approval to make a decision you feel is right. This is what is meant by it being better to get forgiveness than permission.

Ask yourself this when considering a decision that makes you think twice: 1) Is it illegal, immoral or unethical? 2) Does this fall outside my scope of responsibility? 3) Will this negatively impact patients or other areas of the MDG, or will my boss get in trouble for this?

If the answer is no to all three questions, then go for it.

### **SECURE EARLY WINS**

Secure early wins with your flight and your boss. What are early wins? Early wins are positive changes or things that sustain success for the flight. These can be as simple as establishing direction for a flight that lacked leadership before your arrival, or supporting



and implementing a new process proposed by the First-term Airman in your flight.

“Early wins excite and energize people and build your personal credibility.” -  
The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting Up to Speed Faster and Smarter  
by Michael D. Watkins.

The idea is not to come in and make sweeping changes with the expectation of immediate success or positive influence. These wins should happen naturally and in line with your flight’s mission. Focus on securing early wins in areas important to your boss, and your boss will be pleased. Focus on securing early wins with your flight and you can build momentum and help members develop confidence in themselves and pride in their work.

Define goals. Your flight wants to know what direction they are headed. Focus on your boss’s priorities, organizational strategic vision and the values your flight brings to the mission. By doing so, you should be able to establish the direction your flight needs to go.

### **ACHIEVE ALIGNMENT**

Clarify your expectations to the flight. This can include administrative things like duty hours, fitness program, or their obligations to adhere to military standards as members of the Air Force. But you should also consider the flight’s mission, vision and strategy.

Mission: What the flight will achieve.

Vision: Why the flight should be motivated to perform.

Strategy: How the flight will accomplish the mission.

Assess your resources. Review your unit manning document and know who you have assigned to your flight, who is PCSing in or out, who is going on an extended TDY or deployment, or on maternity leave. Unexpected gaps in manpower are rare. Have a plan for overcoming any manpower deficiencies and avoid using “lack of manning” to explain underperformance because you would not be unique in having this problem.

Assess your capabilities. Do your flight members have the skills, training and knowledge to do what they are supposed to do? Do they have the resources to do what they are supposed to do? If not, explore ways to get them the skills, training and knowledge. Some flights may be fully manned, but they are fully manned with brand new inexperienced personnel. This is not the fault of the personnel, but it is up to you to get them up to speed as quickly and reasonably as possible.

If what you require is to send personnel to training, you should ask. The worst that can happen is you’re told no. The more supporting information you can provide to justify the benefits of the training, the more difficult it becomes for the answer to be no. An Information Systems Flight Commander determined their 4A0s would benefit from attending a week-long course to train and test for their SEC+ certification, due to upcoming DHA changes. These courses were costly, but each individual passed and earned their

certification and now they have the capability to support the MDG in ways they didn't before.

## **BUILD YOUR TEAM**

Building a team entails making sure the flight is postured for success. This may mean having the right people in the right positions, having the people trained and performing to the tops of their abilities, enforcing good order and discipline, and keeping everyone motivated.

Balance stability and change. Some people embrace change while others resist it. Too much change at once can be detrimental to the flight.

“Building a team you’ve inherited is like repairing a leaky ship in mid-ocean. You will not reach your destination if you ignore the necessary repairs, but you do not want to try to change too much too fast and sink the ship.” - The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting Up to Speed Faster and Smarter by Michael D. Watkins.

Change is also best received when people know it's coming. Being transparent about upcoming changes, even if you believe them to be irrelevant to your flight, can help your team navigate the changes a whole lot easier than when they feel surprised by those changes.

Changes can be anything as large as our recent squadron realignments or the transition to DHA, or something at the operational level where you move personnel around within the flight to gain different experiences.

Cultivate a strong partnership with your OIC (if you have one) and/or Flight Chief and build the team together. You may see strengths and weaknesses in the flight differently than they do. Consider all perspectives to make the most informed decisions.

Always be developing your replacement. This could be someone who will cover a meeting for you, fill in for a couple of days while you're on leave, or simply be doing your job five years from now. Unless there is a legal or security reason, you should try to be as forthcoming about information as possible with your OIC and/or Flight Chief. If this person knows and understands your thought process, it makes it that much easier for them to make decisions in your absence.

Learn what drives your flight members so you can inspire and motivate them.

“The best predictor of what people will do is what they are incentivized to do.” - The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting Up to Speed Faster and Smarter by Michael D. Watkins.

Some ways to determine what motivates people include asking them, getting to know them, or having natural conversations. This is easier for some people to do, and maybe more

challenging for others. You need to find the method that works best for you. This is all about establishing rapport, and you will never be able to do that if you are approaching it in a manner that feels unnatural to you.

Understand the training requirements for the people in your flight. This can include any CDCs, upgrade training, additional duty training or PME. Your Flight Chief should be able to help clarify these requirements for you. Consider other opportunities for professional development, such as those offered at the squadron, group, wing levels or civilian organizations.

It is important to ensure you have the right people in the right positions to build your strongest teams, but also consider whether those are the right experiences for those people. If you have a stellar 4A0 who has been doing the same job for the last two years, it can be difficult to move this person because of their expertise. But is it the right for this person's career development to keep him/her in the same position for the next two years?

As you assess your team and decide how you will build it, find ways to leverage individual strengths. You may have a person in your flight who is the unofficial leader. Be aware of this – this person could be a problem for you if you don't see eye-to-eye; on the other hand, this person could be an asset to you.

Cultivate a trusting environment that allows people to take ownership and pride in what they do. Be willing to delegate and don't micromanage. Listen to your flight and ask for their input. Truly consider their input and have discussions about it. Let new changes be their ideas. Empower your flight to be innovative and make decisions within their scope of responsibility.

Don't feel insecure or threatened by those in your flight. Some might have more experience than you, and there is nothing you can do about that. Everyone will have different experiences from you and you should embrace that. It's possible your senior enlisted member knows your job better than you do, but that is no reason for you to feel inadequate.

Provide feedback often, not just when it's required. Telling someone they messed up three months after it happened is not helpful. The OPR, EPR or annual appraisal should not be a surprise. Be respectful when you're delivering your message and ensure the message was received. **Learn how to have difficult conversations – hold people accountable!**

Ensure you understand the differences between personnel and disciplinary/rehabilitation actions. As the Flight Commander, you are not expected to be the expert on these things, so make sure you talk to your advisors.

Active Duty Members: consult a Shirt or Superintendent

Civilian Members: consult the Civilian Personnel Office

Contractors: consult Medical Logistics or Base Contracting Office

When you are taking over a new flight, draw your own conclusions. In my experience, people tend to be quick about sharing their opinions with the new Flight Commander on whether a person is a superstar or a dirt bag and essentially establish reputations for you before you even have a chance to meet them. This is very unfair behavior and unnecessary. **Give the people in your flight a chance to prove wrong or confirm the opinions passed on to you.**

You can't change the past, but you can control the future. Consider outside opinions, but keep an open mind. Perhaps there was an underperforming member of the flight, but all they needed was a fresh start to get back on track. You will be in a position to provide that fresh start for the member.

### **CREATE ALLIANCES**

Develop your networks. These networks can consist of your fellow Flight Commanders within your squadron, group and wing, other personnel throughout the base, or personnel at other bases. I don't suggest that you go out and work a room if that's not your thing, but in your own way, develop relationships with other people in a way natural to you so that you have a network of people who can rely upon to help you through challenges. Just remember to be willing to provide that support in kind.

Flight Commanders: Your peer group may have experienced something similar to issues you are working through, or they may have years of experience that they can draw upon to help you out.

Squadron or Group Superintendent: The senior enlisted member in your organization has a wealth of experience and knowledge that you can learn from. They know a lot about how to develop enlisted personnel and their careers and you would be remiss not to tap into this great resource.

First Sergeant: This person is an available resource for enlisted and officers on anything from good order and discipline to morale and resiliency concerns.

Exec Officer: They know things and tend to have a pulse on upcoming strategic events. They also have a good feel for what the boss's preferences and what they may or may not support. Don't ignore this person's advice.

Squadron and/or Group Secretary: Similar to the exec officer. Also, realize this person is not your secretary. Do not expect this person to proof-read your work for you. Everything submitted through the secretaries should be as perfect as possible.

Learn the politics of your organization. Office politics exist everywhere, as much as we like to think they do not. Observe interactions at meetings and learn who you can and cannot trust.

I have never been assigned to a MDG that did not have drama. People's work and personal

lives are often intertwined and sooner or later, you will likely have to do deal with this. Remain neutral and do not get involved with drama. Do not allow drama within your flight to fester. It is infectious and counter-productive. Handle it immediately. Control drama outside of your flight to the greatest extent possible – do not allow members of your flight to get involved. Once they do, it becomes a problem you have to deal with.

## **MANAGE YOURSELF**

Maintain a healthy work-life balance. Model this for your flight and they will follow. If you say your family is a priority, but your flight sees you at work 10-12 hours a day, you are showing that work is your priority.

Define your boundaries with people and stick to them. Taking care of your Airmen is important, but when it becomes a 24/7 job, who is taking care of you or your family? You have resources available to help you and don't be afraid to utilize them.

Define your boundaries at work and stick to them. Hard work is often rewarded with more work. It can feel good to know that others see you as the one they can count on to take care of business, but after a while, you need to draw a line. Volunteering to finish projects or tackle initiatives is great, but not when you're doing it all the time at the cost of never going home.

There are times when you have to work 12-hour shifts or 7-day weeks. But as MSCs, those are not often. Your family will be more understanding when you have to work crazy hours when you aren't already doing it all the time.

As my husband likes to remind me, it's Service before Self, not Service before Family: If you aren't taking care of your family, then are you exhibiting Excellence in all you do?

For the single folks out there, you still have to take care of yourselves, pets, plants, homes or friends. If your goal eventually is to have a family, establish those healthy work-life balance habits now.

Enforce regular routines on yourself.

Set aside time to plan and review your schedule for the next day and week and determine a game plan for how and what you want to accomplish.

Set time to self-reflect and evaluate your work-pace and ability to accomplish tasks. Determine how you are doing overall. Are you happy with your accomplishments or do you feel like you're drowning in unfinished tasks? Is it time to take a break or re-prioritize?

Set time aside for physical, spiritual and emotional fitness. This can be a regular fitness routine, religious services, meditation or even meeting up with friends on a regular basis to relax and hang out.

Build a trusted support system. Work is stressful. Being in the Air Force is stressful. Being an MSC is stressful. Personal lives can be stressful. Having someone to talk to about it who understands can help you decompress, process things and manage that stress in a healthy manner.

### **WAYS TO CRUSH MORALE**

...Don't do these!!!

Make change just to make change. Avoid the temptation to leave an imprint just to say you did something. Understand why processes are the way they are before implementing changes. Consult your Flight to see their perspective on your ideas.

Promise your boss more than you can deliver. This can lead to overworking your flight members, which will frustrate your flight members and leave you with a disappointed boss. Be reasonable and realistic, and help manage expectations for your boss.

Set impossible expectations. Be realistic and able to be satisfied. No one likes working for someone who is impossible to please. People become unmotivated and start thinking, "Why bother? The boss isn't going to like it anyway."

Make decisions too quickly or don't make one at all. Put thought into a decision, but be willing to live with it. Indecisiveness is frustrating and prevents people from moving forward.

### **LEADERS SET THE TONE**

Display, expect and enforce respectful behavior. Sometimes it can be difficult to enforce or change negative behavior in your flight, especially if you don't like to be the "bad" guy, but every day you do nothing is a day you condone it. What kind of work environment do you want to cultivate?

Do not bad-mouth your predecessor.

Never ask anyone to do something you are unwilling to do yourself. (I will make an exception if it's a spider that needed to be dealt with.) Just because you are an officer does not make you too good to do certain tasks.

Set the example and be consistent. If you expect everyone in your flight to pass the AF Fitness Assessment, you must ensure you can pass it yourself. Don't play favorites, but understand how perception of your actions can cultivate the feeling of favoritism.

Your patients, customers, peers and people who don't know you will not care if you have been a flight commander or the rank of Captain for a day or for two years. They will see you, your rank and your position of authority and expect comparable service or execution. You only get one chance to make a first impression. The only people who might get a pass are Second Lieutenants, but do not use that as a crutch.

Put yourself in their shoes. Make reasonable requests, set reasonable suspenses and meet their suspenses for you. If they need your signature on something, don't wait until the last minute. **Be the Flight Commander that you would love to work for.**

### **YOUR LAST 90 DAYS**

Establish a continuity book/binder/document/spreadsheet. List out all the recurring meetings, dates/time/locations that you attend and an explanation of what this meeting is and what your role is as an attendee. List every recurring due-out/report and to whom it gets sent. Provide an electronic example so your successor doesn't have to start from scratch. Provide a status of ongoing projects that you will not be able to close-out before your departure.

If you are lucky enough to overlap with your successor, sit down with that person to go over the basics. You can explain your methods and why it helps you, but don't be offended if your successor doesn't adopt your way. Let your successor make it their own. Do not bad-mouth members of the flight, but be transparent and factual (leave your personal opinion out of the conversation) if you have someone undergoing an investigation, getting an Article 15, etc.

Close up loose ends. No one wants to be handed a pile of junk to sift through when they get to a new job.

Be all in, all the way to the end. Don't get PCS-itis, become ROAD (retired on active duty) or display any other behaviors that will allow others to think you have already mentally moved on. This manifests itself in showing to work late, missed suspenses, inattention-to-detail, or just an all-around feeling that you just don't care.

#### **15.1.1 THE BOSS'S PERSPECTIVE**

##### **Lt Col Josh Curtis, Commander, 355<sup>th</sup> Medical Support Squadron, Davis-Monthan AFB**

The Squadron Commander's role is to maintain the good order and discipline of the unit, guide and direct squadron operations to align with the mission priorities and goals of the Group and Wing, and to support Flight Commanders by providing guidance, mentorship, and top cover. The Squadron Commander works with Flight Commanders to develop them into expert tacticians and adept leaders through the challenges and experiences that flight command offers. The Squadron Commander applies varying management and leadership techniques to each Flight Commander based upon their maturity, experience, personality, and tenure. In some circumstances, the Squadron Commander will give a Flight Commander extensive latitude to lead their flight and to make decisions with minimal oversight, while maintaining a watchful eye on operations to ensure sustained synchronization with the mission. In other cases, the Squadron Commander will empower a Flight Commander with the responsibility of leading their flight, but will be more directly engaged as they grow as a leader, gain experience, and learn the tactical details of MSC disciplines. The Squadron Commander expects Flight Commanders to apply the same

leadership techniques to their subordinate staff members so as to grow the next generation of Airmen. Furthermore, the Squadron Commander will challenge Flight Commanders to think and work beyond their comfort zone. Doing so will test their metal and make them grow; in some cases, further than they thought was possible. The goal is to forge experienced, broad-thinking, mission-focused, adaptable MSCs that meet challenges head on and that will be prepared to one day be a Squadron Commander themselves.

Here are some quick tips for Flight Commanders:

- Set the example for your flight and your peers
- Strive to become the expert; seek out challenges and opportunities to grow, don't wait to be told to do something
- Figure things out for yourself; don't rely on the Squadron Commander to solve everything
- Get to know your peer Flight Commanders across the Medical Group and the base; develop relationships with them and work with them directly to solve problems
- Bring leadership thought-out, developed solutions/courses of action (including risks) with a problem
- Don't be afraid to make decisions using thoughtful risk management while communicating your plan to your leadership
- Own your mistakes and openly communicate them with your leadership; use mistakes/failures as opportunities to learn and grow
- Care about your staff members and be empathetic toward them
- Put your staff out in front to guide and mentor them for growth and recognition
- If you disagree with your leadership, do so in private; always be in lock step/agreement in public and demand the same from your subordinates

**Lt Col Theodosia Hill, Commander, 72d Medical Support Squadron, Tinker AFB**

## **SERVANT LEADERSHIP**

Your boss is your customer ....

Understand your boss' priorities ask for a face to face meeting within 72 hours of starting your new assignment. Listen, ask questions, and take notes.

Seek to maintain a positive, productive, respectful relationship with your boss.

Understand and make contributions to the major graded areas (leading people, improving the unit, managing resources and executing the mission).

Before you leave your office for the day, stop by your boss' office and ask, Sir or Ma'am is there anything that I can do to support you before I leave for the day?

Your boss is counting on you to serve your Airmen listen to their concerns and coach them through difficult choices. Remind them about the power of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> order effects.



Learn how to master the art of triaging issues and taskers. Tackle those issues/taskers/projects with the largest negative consequence first.

As the flight commander, if your members have issues with passing their AF fitness testing, you need to be at the track either pacing or cheering for your flight members.

People don't care about how much you know; they are about how much you care. Take care of your members. They can tell your priorities by observing where you devote your time. Establish boundaries so you take care of business while simultaneously taking care of yourself and your family. Do not burn yourself out, make time to recharge daily. Schedule time to relax, especially if you are Type A.

## **15.2. DIFFERENT LEVELS OF FLIGHT COMMAND**

### **15.2.1 SMALL MTF**

**Maj Jason Glitz, Resource Management, 88<sup>th</sup> Medical Group, Wright-Patterson AFB**

Take the time to really get to know your team members. Understand what motivates them, what they enjoy, what their goals are. You should do this on every team. However, at a small MTF with a smaller team, you can do this much easier.

One of the most important things your team is looking to you for is prioritization (not micromanagement). Communicating what the most important things are will allow them to focus and feel a sense of accomplishment...because they are actually getting the most important work done and not just the urgent.

### **15.2.2 LARGE MED CENTER**

**Lt Col Randall C. Shiflett, 81<sup>st</sup> Medical Group, Keesler AFB MS**

Before I took Information Systems Flight Command at Keesler, I thought I had a pretty good handle on what the job might entail. I had 4 years of enlisted Comm experience, had worked corporate I.T. for 6 years, had done a rotation in Systems at a smaller MTF, and had worked DHA for 3 years following an IM/IT EWI. Then I saw Peter Harris's office whiteboard. Peter was our I.T. contract manager at the Med Group who has since retired, and on his whiteboard were all of the different I.T. systems that were run at Keesler. CHCS was familiar. AHLTA was familiar. I knew what Essentris was, but had never worked with it. There were also at least 20 different applications I had never even heard of before. And what the heck is a Genetics Lab, and what exactly do they do down there? It was at that moment when I fully appreciated that Systems at a small MTF and Systems at a Medical Center were two very different jobs.

One of the first things that took getting used to; inpatient services don't close for business. Where I might be able to schedule system or network downtime after hours during the week or on the weekend at a small MTF, that luxury doesn't exist when the doors to the hospital are always open. It takes coordination with the Emergency Room, Inpatient

Ward(s), Intensive Care Unit, Labor & Delivery, and the inpatient ancillaries before you bring anything down for maintenance that could directly impact patient care and patient safety.

Another area I've found very important and helpful is really getting "in the weeds" with your spend plan and manpower, especially as it relates to contracts. When I did Systems at a smaller MTF, I had exactly one contract and a single contractor that was locally managed. Our other contracts were all centrally funded from the Air Force. At Keesler, a good portion of our flight are contractors, and most are not centrally funded contracts. As the first Air Force hospital to move under DHA, we've been expected to know what we're spending down to the line item, when, how much, and justification is very important. As we transition to DHA having operational oversight of all MTFs, this will become common practice moving forward. Not just in maintaining day-to-day operations, but also planning for future year spending and manpower needs.

One nice difference between a small versus large MTF is our team tends to be much more specialized, and we have the staffing that can focus on their primary function. Where in the past I may have had a single staff member doing some Information Assurance/Cyber, some Help Desk, and some PC support, at a larger MTF you tend to have individuals or even teams that focus on a particular functional area within your flight. This is not unique to Systems. In RMO, where you may only have a single Budget Analyst at a smaller MTF, at a larger facility, there may be 2-3 working on the budget. Same with Logistics, where you may only have a single Contracting Specialist; at a larger facility, there's a dedicated section in Logistics that handles contracts. Where you might be the only GPM at a smaller facility, it's more likely to be a team at a larger facility, with a Senior GPM leading that team who has done a rotation as the GPM previously. This level of experience is common in most flights, as the Flight Commander is usually an FGO with at least one rotation at a smaller MTF, and in some cases, staff experience at AFMRA, DHA, or MAJCOM. The senior enlisted/Flight Chief will also likely have previous experience in the flight they're helping lead, and in some cases will have already been vectored to that particular functional area. This may also be your first time supervising a fellow officer, as many flights at larger MTFs have a CGO Deputy Flight Commander.

In closing, while the same basic functions exist in flight command at a small MTF versus a large MTF, there are significant differences in healthcare delivery capability and overall scope of responsibility. Fortunately, we've got an outstanding team of experienced professionals to help us as Flight Commanders, including our own peers who have a proven record of success in their particular functional area. As we transition as an enterprise to DHA, I would strongly encourage those going into flight command at both large and small MTFs to get to know their reach-back at DHA. As with any transition this scale, this will take time, and many of those communication lines are still being established. Keep your Executive Staff updated and informed, even when the news isn't always good. They're getting asked tough questions as well, and need to have their fingers on the pulse of what's going on in the trenches. There are definitely daily challenges, but be patient, as the end product will be a robust and efficient care delivery system that benefits our patient population, including our own families.

#### RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting Up to Speed Faster and Smarter by Michael D. Watkins
- The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership by John C. Maxwell
- Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World that Can't Stop Talking by Susan Cain
- Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead by Sheryl Sandberg
- The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

#### APPLICABLE WEBSITES:

- Harvard Business Review: <https://hbr.org>

## **Chapter 16**

### **SGA**

**Key Contributors:** Lt Col Andrew Herman, Lt Col Jeremy Braswell

**BLUF:** Trusted Advisor and Servant Leader to All

#### **16.1. HOW DO I BECOME A SGA?**

**Lt Col Jeremy Braswell, 97th Medical Support Squadron Commander, Altus AFB**

Besides command, SGA is the greatest position in which we MSCs are our honored to serve. As the Administrator, we hold trusted influence guiding and leading MTF operations throughout the organization. If you are a standalone SGA, you have the unique opportunity of flexibility to successfully drive, influence, and execute your Commanders' strategic visions.

Build your MSC Core skills to the best of your ability as a CGO.

Do your best at every position you are put into.

Be a Servant Leader who teaches and listens to others, who understands that knowledge/wisdom can be gained not just from the experience of age, but also from youthful eyes who are full of innovative ideas.

#### **PREPARING YOURSELF FOR SGA**

**Lt Col Andrew Herman, 374 Medical Support Squadron Commander, Yokota AB**

#### **PERFORMANCE**

SGA is a competitively selected opportunity. The MSC DT selects only those who, based on an outstanding record and reputation, demonstrate future potential in that role. What does that mean for you? 'Excel in your current job.' As with any competitive selection, this adage holds true. The best predictor of future successful performance, is current and consistent successful performance.

#### **EXPERIENCE**

As the SGA, you are expected to be the SME on all things MSC. Try and rotate through as many MSC functional areas as possible. This isn't to say you need to rotate through all of them or you won't be competitive. However, you may be less competitive in the matching process if your experience is too narrowly focused, or if you do not have enough MTF experience.

Do not worry if you are missing rotations in a few of the functional areas. If you have the chance, sit down with the MSCs over those functional areas and learn as much as you can. Pay attention during group and squadron meetings to issues affecting those sections. Ask questions. Shadow your fellow MSCs. Attend a formal training course. These are just a few examples of ways you can fill in any knowledge gaps you have.

As the SGA, you are expected to support and weigh in on issues outside of your typical MDSS construct. Volunteer for roles and opportunities that take you outside of your squadron. The more experience you have supporting and understanding broader issues affecting the medical group, the better positioned for success you will be. Serving as the PROJO for UEI or TJC surveys, POC for DV visits, leading MDG CPI events, serving as WIT or MCRP team chief, or serving as an Executive Officer are just a few examples of ways to gain broader MDG experience. Additionally, staff experience can also help you gain a broader knowledge base.

As the SGA, you will be a part of the Executive Committee, the governance structure of the organization. Start attending as many Executive Committee meetings, as well as the various other committees, functions, and working groups your current SGA attends. Learn how information flows and decisions are made within the Medical Group. Understand what major initiatives, guidance changes, etc. are coming down from the Wing or higher headquarters and how it is affecting the organization. Observe and learn from effective and ineffective meetings and briefers.

Just like the promotion process, although it isn't about checking the boxes, do not self-eliminate. Complete your PME. Obtain your Masters. Get and maintain your board certifications. Plan ahead and give yourself plenty of time to complete these things before you are in the window to compete. Also, remember to check your record for accuracy and update your career preferences (ADP, Talent Marketplace, etc.) regularly.

## **THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **Lt Col Andrew Herman, 374 Medical Support Squadron Commander, Yokota AB**

It is important to note that the SGA selection process is always evolving. Stay up to date on the process by checking the MSC Utilization and Education KX page frequently. Each year, the selection and matching process may change.

Prior to the start of the application process, it would be a good idea to have conversations with your current Squadron Commander, SGA, Group Commander, or equivalent senior member on staff. It is also a good idea to reach out to your Associate Corps Chief and/or MAJCOM SGA to let them know your intent and to ask for any advice or mentorship they can provide. They may let you know if you are competitive, or if the timing is right for you in your career.

Review the SGA application guidance carefully to ensure you qualify and meet all suspenses. Start the process early as your Statement of Intent (SOI) must be coordinated

through your Senior MSC and/or Group Commander.

Before applying, talk it over with your family. This is an all-in process. If you are not ok with going to any one of the openings, to include OCONUS, then you should not apply. You do not want to withdraw with prejudice or worse yet, decline your assignment. Obviously humanitarian or EFMP clearance issues may arise later, and those issues are handled separately.

The first step in becoming an SGA is for the DT to select you as a candidate. The DT will review all of the applicants' records and select the top candidates. Typically, the DT selects roughly 1.3 to 1.7 candidates per SGA vacancy. This is to ensure greater choices to those hiring, to provide a buffer if anyone falls out, or to account for more vacancies arise should they arise.

The second step is the matching process. This has varied year to year, however, it follows the basic process. The DT racks and stacks the MTFs based on complexity or other factors. The DT also racks and stacks the candidate list. Our AFPC MSC Assignments team then starts from the top ranked MTF. Once that MTF makes a selection, AFPC goes to the next MTF.

During the selection process, most MTFs will interview their top choices. Some MTFs, however, will hire directly off the list of names without any interview or notification to the candidate. Do not be too worried if the matching process has started, and you haven't received any requests for interviews. You may have already been matched and pulled off the list.

If you are contacted by a MTF for an interview, graciously thank them for the opportunity, then I would highly recommend you start doing your homework. Determine what the unit's mission is, what their Wing(s)' mission(s) are. What is their overall size and capabilities? What issues are they facing? Can you find the MDG/CC's BIO? Possibly reach out to MSCs currently stationed there.

Start thinking about how your skills and experience would benefit the mission, but be genuine. Don't rattle off 27 specific stats to prove you have researched every possible website (which may not be accurate or up to date). The MDG/CC does not want to know how well you can pull stats off their public website. They want to know how well your personality will integrate into their team and how you analyze and address problems (real or hypothetical) facing their organization.

Expect all types of interview questions. I have been on both sides of the interview and have seen all types of questions and answers. There are the textbook job interview questions, questions about your past experience, and the "what would you do" scenario-based questions. I have even been asked questions that still have me scratching my head, such as what my favorite color was. Remember, the MDG/CC conducting your interview may very well not be an MSC and may ask questions from a different Corps perspective. Take off your MSC goggles. Be able to explain how as the administrator, you can provide support to the other Corps and all functions in the MTF. Most importantly, be humble, be a

team player, and be yourself.

In the end, don't take it personally if you are not selected. They may have interviewed someone more suited for the position, and you may be more suited for the next. This may not be your year. If you receive any feedback from the interviews, look for the areas you may have fallen short and work on those.

## **16.2. A DAY IN THE LIFE...**

### **Lt Col Jeremy Braswell, 97th Medical Support Squadron Commander, Altus AFB**

A typical day is always fluid, but always consists of checking up on the core support functional teams of RMO, Readiness, TOPA, Logistics, Systems, GPM, and Facilities... not in a micromanagement way, but in a mentoring way of seeing how they are doing with tasks given and what support they need. It is important to go to the flight staff most often as a servant leader rather than requesting them to go to you. Often times you will find yourself as a conduit of synergistic communication from the flights/sections to the Commanders and vice versa on various topics.

In a stand-alone SGA position, you often become one of the most sought after executive members in the MTF from all levels of the organization. Because:

- 1) You are a trusted advisor who can foster communication on issues between different sections not only in the Medical Group, but the Wing.
- 2) You are not in the direct chain of command; in other words, you do not have that scary command badge.

### **Lt Col Andrew Herman, 374 Medical Support Squadron Commander, Yokota AB**

## **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

Some would say you are partly responsible for everything that happens within the MDG, but control nothing.

You are the advisor to the Medical Group Commander on all things related to the administration of healthcare. This not only includes the tangibles, such as money, manpower, facilities, equipment, and supply, but also the intangibles, like processes, culture, strategy, information, coordination, and communication.

As the SGA, there is no problem or process within the MDG that cannot benefit from your attention. There are no artificial boundaries or walls. The greatest compliment a new Group Commander gave me was "Wow, your hands really are in everything. You are literally involved in everything that is going on."

SGA differs from Flight and Squadron command, where your focus is traditionally more vertical. As the Administrator, your focus will be horizontally across the medical group

and across squadron lines. Unlike traditional supervisory or command positions, as the SGA, you are a functional leader.

## **MEETINGS**

You will spend a significant portion of your time in meetings or preparing for them. This is where decisions are formally made within the MDG. You will be a key member required to attend, and in many cases, you will be the chair.

Mandatory meetings include the Executive Committee (EC), Medical Readiness Committee (MRC), the Executive Committee of the Medical Staff (ECOMS), Environment of Care (EOC), Access to Care, ERAA, and Compliance. Depending on your meeting structure, you will likely also attend the Data Quality, Space Utilization Function, Information Management Function, Performance Improvement, TRICARE/MCSC, Business Operations, or any other combination or variation of these meetings. You will also have squadron and group staff meetings and may represent the MDG at various Wing meetings and functions.

## **FUNCTIONS**

Your role will be to support and advise the MDG/CC and the executive staff on the administrative and business functions of the Medical Group. This means you are the SME on the traditional MSC functions, such as GPM, RMO, IM/IT, CSS, Logistics, TOPA, and Readiness. You will likely also be responsible for, or have significant input into non-traditional functions, such as committees and functions, front office operations, internal and external communication processes, strategic planning, developing support agreements with external entities/units/mission partners, unit compliance, coordination with HHQs, business and operational planning, and process improvement, to name just a few.

As the SGA, you will also be the MSC functional. You will spend much of your time mentoring and coaching and developing your junior MSC Officers. As the MSC functional, you will be responsible for ensuring your MSCs are fully trained to carry out their functions. You will also be responsible for ensuring their proper rotations into different functional areas within the MDG. Also, do not forget about your support to the 4A0, 4A1, and 4A2 AFSCs as well. You should play a significant role in their guidance and development as well.

## **DAILY SGA LIFE**

The greatest thing about being an SGA is that no two days are the same. The environment and issues affecting the Medical Group are constantly changing, meaning if you are doing your job correctly, you should never get bored.



### **16.3. TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS**

#### **Lt Col Jeremy Braswell, 97th Medical Support Squadron Commander, Altus AFB**

You always have too much work and not enough hours in the day; the best approach I find is to categorize work into a Quad Chart of Urgent-Important, Not Urgent-Important, Urgent-Not Important, Not Urgent-Not Important. You do this by asking yourself if X is not accomplished today, then what are the effects on the mission and the team?

Focus your time on your commanders' priorities and what tasks have the best positive affect on the Team and the mission.

#### **POLICY REFERENCES:**

- All 41 series AFIs and related DHAPIs

#### **RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**

- Lincoln On Leadership by Donald T. Phillips
- Failing Forward By John C. Maxwell
- The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People By Stephen R. Covey

## Chapter 17

### **DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS (DO)**

Key Contributors: Lt Col Ron Eller, Maj Gillian Taylor-Dorsett

BLUF: It is the best ‘hidden’ MSC job within our Corps! The DO must always be willing, able, and ready now! “Keep your **go-bag** packed for a 24-hour response time and be ready for any contingency, natural disaster or war time scenario.”

#### **17.1. HOW DO I BECOME A DO?**

**Lt Col Ron Eller, Detachment Command, Travis AFB**

The Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron (AES) Director of Operations is a competitive opportunity; individuals who have expressed interest are vetted by senior leaders on the MSC Development Team. It is a boarded position like SGA and Squadron Command; therefore, eligible candidates interested in applying for DO opportunities must complete a Statement of Intent (SOI), which can be found on the Knowledge Exchange SharePoint site under the MSC Utilization & Education Section.

To be competitive for this senior level position in an AES, senior Majors or Lieutenant Colonels must be ready to lead a large dynamic organization. Grasp hold of leadership opportunities as you progress up the ranks because growing a strong foundation of leadership skills is the most important aspect of the job. Every other decision you make in the seat as a DO has organizational-wide impacts across the unit or influences someone somewhere, either in their professional or personal life. Often your decisions must be expedited, but should not be made without weighing all options and mitigating certain risk factors. Gain leadership experience in both deployment operations and in home station positions that will keep you mentally sharp and operationally focused.

As young Lieutenants and Captains; jobs in Logistics, RMO, Systems, Readiness, TOPA and AE are all beneficial functional areas for preparation to become an AES DO. You will find yourself applying aspects from each of these core competencies when in the DO role.

Other valuable jobs as mid-level Captains or junior Majors can be found in the 618<sup>th</sup> Air Operations Center – Tanker Airlift Control Center (TACC) or at one of USTRANSCOMs Theater Patient Movement Requirement Centers (TPMRCs) located in Germany, Hawaii, and CONUS locations. Working operational aspects of Patient Movement in a joint environment or at the MAJCOM and COCOM levels will give you a leg up on the competition and will sharpen your understanding of how the DOD moves patients from point of injury to definitive care.

**Maj Gillian Taylor-Dorsett, Director of Operations, 18th AES, Kadena AB**

Operate in excellence. You did not become an MSC to be mediocre, so excel in ALL jobs you are assigned.

Make improvements everywhere you work, leave a positive legacy.

Know and meet your career requirements; you want to become a DO? Know the requirements!

Learn, know, and understand operational military medicine. You will be the decision making SME at a table filled with flyers.

Exhibit trustworthiness and build confidence within your unit. Your leadership, peers, subordinates, and mentees need to know they can count on you.

Express your interest in becoming a DO; shadow a DO and/or the MSCs at an AE unit.

Interview well.

Understand the “WHY” for what you do.

Take responsibility for ALL your actions.

Remain bold, brave, and positive!

**17.2. A DAY IN THE LIFE...**

**Lt Col Ron Eller, Detachment Command, Travis AFB**

In flying units, the DO is also seen as the Deputy Commander and second in charge behind the Squadron Commander. In the Squadron Commander’s absence, the DO makes decisions both for operations and handles Commander-level responsibilities. This very well can be the case more often than not, as the Squadron Commander is often away from home station flying operational missions.

When the Squadron Commander deploys, a local decision by the Operations Group Commander could be made to place the DO on G-Series orders for the duration of the Squadron Commander’s deployment. In this capacity, the DO will handle administrative actions such as non-judicial punishment/Article 15s for a specified period of time. In my case while DO at the 43 AES, Pope Army Airfield, I was placed on G-Series orders for a 4-month period after the retirement of the Squadron Commander created a gap before the arrival of a new inbound Squadron Commander.

During day-to-day operations, the DO handles a wide range of responsibilities across the AES from interfacing with other flying units to arranging new or continuing flying opportunities to engaging with various offices of responsibility at HQ Air Mobility

Command. You will need to ensure appropriate support agreements are established for Aircrew Flight Equipment (AFE) and maintenance or repair of oxygen systems used by patients and aircrew members. Also, vitally important is ensuring your staff have restricted area badges and receive training for flight line drivers' licenses for access to and operations on the flight line apron.

Working in conjunction with the AES executive team, the DO functions as a critical advisor, not only on operational issues but also on typical support functions, such as facility management, logistics, resource management, systems, and readiness. On a typical day any number of issues can and often do arise, ranging from allocating one of your staff members to fill a short notice deployment tasking, planning for an upcoming exercise or working with Civil Engineering to fix a broken HVAC unit. The DO has a dynamic platform to speak to and act from and can use this platform to influence day-to-day Squadron operations while making sure all Airmen in the unit are well taken care of, trained, and resourced to do their jobs.

### **Maj Gillian Taylor-Dorsett, Director of Operations, 18th AES, Kadena AB**

Every day brings new challenges and is a new adventure! You never know what awaits you!

Attend daily huddles within the various sections of AE, this is a necessity for mission success.

As DO, you need to understand every facet of the mission! This includes broad understanding of the core MSC competencies, as well as the inter-workings of flying operations.

Your presence within the unit is highly visible; you must be the voice of reason, the decision maker, and the balance between executive leadership and members of the unit.

You will be the liaison/primary communicator for operational military medicine within the flying community at both the Operations Group and Higher Headquarters.

Depending on the organizational structure, you may also fill the Deputy Squadron Commander position.

Lead boldly! Recognize and acknowledge your mistakes, fix them, and press forward with executing the mission.

### **17.3. TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS**

#### **Lt Col Ron Eller, Detachment Command, Travis AFB**

When taking on large projects, break it down into manageable chunks. Use your delegation authority to assign subject matter experts to different parts of the project. As DO, bring all the pieces together into a final completed product (sounds easy enough, but might not be for

someone that has a difficult time of letting go). Utilizing your team in this way will save you lots of time and also serves as a way to get buy-in from other areas of the organization. This method can result in longer program sustainment for new initiatives than if you plan, program, and roll-out a project from working inside a vacuum.

Don't be shy about delegating, just be sure the final product is shaped to your liking as it ultimately has your name on it. Another tip, take the time to teach others! Although teaching takes more time and effort at the forefront, it pays off in the long run and will save you loads of time. Once you empower and show someone how to do a task they will do their best to give you a top notch product every time. Getting quality products the first time saves lots of time and can prevent re-dos or expensive mistakes. Oh, and keep those MSC coffee mugs full of fresh hot coffee...

**Maj Gillian Taylor-Dorsett, Director of Operations, 18th AES, Kadena AB**

Pick your daily focus and stick to it no matter what! Unless it deals with personnel issues, those supersede all others.

Know your leadership's priorities and work those first.

Know your lines of effort! For example, what will cause mission degradation? Place emphasis of effort there.

Learn when to say no.

Understand your limitations and communicate those honestly.

**POLICY REFERENCES:**

- JP 4-02
- USTRANSCOM HANDBOOK 41-1
- AFI10-2912
- AFMAN11-2AEV1
- AFMAN11-2AEV2
- AFMAN11-2AEV3ADDENDA-A
- AFI11-2AEV3
- AFI11-202V2
- AFI11-421
- AFI48-307V1

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**

- Leadership Promises for Everyday by John C. Maxwell

**APPLICABLE WEBSITES:**

- <https://trac2es.transport.mil/>
- <https://gdss.maf.ustranscom.mil>

## Chapter 18

### Command

Key Contributors: Lt Col Josh Curtis, Lt Col Theodosia Hill, Lt Col Ray Vincent

BLUF: Do your best to prepare for challenges you never thought of!

#### **18.1. HOW DO I BECOME A SQUADRON COMMANDER?**

**Col Mike Foutch, Commander, 88<sup>th</sup> Medical Group, Wright Patterson AFB, OH**

When asked the question, “How do I become a Commander”, the first thing that comes to mind is an old stand-up joke that originated somewhere in the 1950’s. A patron goes to New York to attend a concert, but gets lost. They spot a musician on the street carrying a violin case. “Sir, can you tell me how to get to Carnegie Hall?” The musician smiles and says, “Practice, practice, practice.” (If you don’t know what Carnegie Hall is please google it.)

I think of that story all the time when I’m asked how to get to a certain position. In this sense, practice doesn’t necessarily mean practicing Command, it means all the jobs leading up to it and all the work you put in to get ready to Command. There are no shortcuts, and there is no guaranteed path.

Given that statement, I do believe MSCs and BSCs are given an advantage of being able to start ‘practicing’ their leadership skills almost from day 1 in the AFMS. Many MSCs and BSCs are given Flight Command positions early on and have the opportunity to grow and learn through several years. Take advantage of it! The more opportunity you have to practice, study, learn, grow, and lead ... the better you will be when given the opportunity for Command.

Perhaps the next question might be: “Okay, then what should I practice ... what should I focus on?” In my opinion, practice building a team. Bringing those around you together for a common goal. Getting each team member to give just a little more than usual because they believe in the mission, your leadership, or that everyone is pulling in the same direction. To do that, the first step is: you have to care about your team and your team members. Caring for someone on your team doesn’t mean you’re soft. It sometimes means discipline, extra work, or delivering difficult feedback. You have to do it, and you have to learn how to be effective at it without completely losing the member. (Two books that might help improve your feedback skills are: “Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most” and “Getting to Yes.”) It also means positive feedback for a job well done, praise up the chain for your team, and compromise with other teams to accomplish the ultimate goal.

I could go on and on regarding this topic, (and if you want to talk more – shoot me an e-mail), but I'll wrap this up with one more thought. Your record gets you on the Command Candidate list; performance is important, but your reputation gets you hired. The AF holds an official board to review records and selects officers as Command Candidates, then Senior Commanders hire from the list. Do you know how they pick? ... every one of them picks based on differing criteria. But almost all use some form of “phone a friend” to find out the ground truth on the person they’re about to hire. Are they a good person? Can they work with others? Do they get the job done while also taking care of their team? Are they toxic? These are often some of the final questions right before they submit their pick.

Record gets you on the list – reputation gets you hired. When you practice building a team to accomplish the mission, you learn how to get the job done and also bring the team along with you. Your team performance will improve and when the hiring authority calls to ask about the ground truth, your reputation will land you the job. It starts with the job you have right now ... good luck and take care!

## **18.2. A DAY IN THE LIFE...**

### **Lt Col Josh Curtis, Commander, 355<sup>th</sup> Medical Support Squadron, Davis-Monthan AFB**

A Squadron Commander's time is rarely their own. Every day begins with a plan to accomplish a few goals. The goals may include strategic-level requirements – those being levied across the MHS and/or AFMS necessitating planning and/or action at the MTF level. They may include planning for or executing wing-level taskers – efforts that require the MTF's involvement to support Line of the Air Force missions. Or, they may be comprised of unit-level requirements such as EPRs, OPRs, feedbacks, officer professional development, inspection preparations, tasker tracking and response reviews, disciplinary actions, award submission reviews/selections, meeting attendance, staffing reviews/approvals, personnel requisition actions, personnel stratification evaluations/determinations, personnel mentorship and guidance, and simply walking around the unit to continue to grow relationships with the personnel. Inevitably, there will be countless additional requirements that will pop up during the day that will either become a higher priority in the daily task list than what was originally planned, or that will require so much time that there won't be enough day left to get back to the daily task list.

Each day can include some incredible highs, like surprising a SrA with the news that they were selected for SSgt unexpectedly as part of a supplemental release or receiving extremely positive feedback about an Airman who was on the verge of an Administrative Separation that you took a chance on. They can also include lows, like learning that a member of the squadron failed a urinalysis and is under investigation for illegal narcotics distribution or that a young Airman in the squadron was hospitalized for suicidal ideations or an attempted suicide. The most exciting and challenging aspects of being a Squadron Commander are that these highs and lows regularly occur either simultaneously or right after one another. You may get great news about the promotion and minutes later get terrible news about the failed urinalysis. The challenge is being able to genuinely emote excitement for the newly selected SSgt-select without letting the disappointment of the

possible drug use and its implications get in the way. Managing situations such as these while effectively guiding the daily operations of the unit and supporting its personnel provides a brief glimpse into a day in the life of a Squadron Commander.

### **Lt Col Theodosia Hill, Commander, 72d Medical Support Squadron, Tinker AFB**

As a Squadron Commander, expect that each day will provide unique challenges and rewards.

#### **BATTLE RHYTHYM**

- ✓ HUDDLE WITH YOUR SECRETARY AND SQUARON SUPERINTENDENT AT 0715
- ✓ Obtain a pulse on the big rocks for the day schedule changes and etc.
- ✓ Leadership safety huddle every day at 0745.
- ✓  
Think on your feet and contribute to the huddle by adding facts related to the environment of care or life safety code standards at least once a week.
- ✓ Flight huddles at 0800.
- ✓ Visit at least one flight huddle every day it helps you to understand the dynamics in your unit.
- ✓ MDG Senior Staff meeting every other Monday at 0830.
- ✓ Bring relevant information/reminders to your colleagues' fellow Squadron commanders and 3-letters.
- ✓ MDSS leadership meeting every Monday at 1000.
- ✓ Your flight leaders brief you on operations. Your goal is to motivate and inspire your flight leaders.
- ✓ ABW staff meeting every Tuesday at 1000.
- ✓ You'll brief updates on updates related to TRICARE changes, clinic operational changes, immunization supply, and etc.
- ✓ MDG Stand up meeting every Friday at 0715.
- ✓ COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT
- ✓ You'll attend the MDG executive council meeting.



- ✓ You'll chair the MDG environment of care quarterly meetings.
- ✓ You'll attend the monthly ECOMS meeting.
- ✓ You are the chair for the MISTR.
- ✓ You attend the Medical Readiness Committee (MRC) meeting and the Readiness classified briefings monthly.
- ✓ Every other month you'll attend the TRICARE Access to Care meeting.
- ✓ You are the chair for the SUF and the ERAA.
- ✓ In between meetings and unscheduled meetings you will need to access vPC to review performance reports and decorations.
- ✓ You'll also need to review profiles on any member who is not fully mission ready in ASIMS.
- ✓ You will spend time looking at your gain/loss rosters monthly so you know how to balance the mission requirements.
- ✓ You'll always be in inspection ready mode. You will spend time every week in MICT reviewing your flights' progress with any open observations.
- ✓ You will sign off deployers in MRDSS.
- ✓ You will mentor your officers deliberately by giving candid feedback.

### **18.3. TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS**

**Lt Col Theodosia Hill, Commander, 72d Medical Support Squadron, Tinker AFB**

#### **MISSION AND PEOPLE ALWAYS: MORALE**

Your attitude and demeanor are contagious; be aware of your disposition. Strive to always be professional calm, humble, and confident.

Your squadron will be made up diverse people with unique talents, challenges and skills. Empower your team. Make time to talk with them daily even if it's just to say good morning.

#### **FLIGHT COMMANDERS**

Encourage and motivate your flight commanders; let them guide, lead, and mentor their Airmen.

## **SCHEDULE**

- ✓ Make time to do your PT before work if you can. Even so, you will often be the first one in the office.
- ✓ Be flexible and utilize a time management system.
- ✓ You'll attend at least 1-2 wing meetings per week.
- ✓ Additionally, you will need to plan to attend Airmen Leadership graduations. Save time by packing your mess dress in your car so you don't have to drive home after work.
- ✓ Huddle every morning with your secretary and squadron superintendent for 10 minutes to gain a grasp on the status of EPRs/OPRs/decorations/meetings/projects.
- ✓ Grow the bench, take at least one duty day off per quarter to allow your deputy the opportunity to grow and shine.
- ✓ Minimize the number of drive-by conversations so you can increase your productivity by not being afraid to say "can we put a semicolon here and schedule a meeting to discuss this issue in greater detail within the next 8 hours?"
- ✓ Establish healthy boundaries at work and at home. As a squadron commander you will need to learn how to master the art of diplomacy; everybody wants you time/attention.

## **RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**

- How to stop procrastinating: a simple guide to mastering difficult tasks and breaking the procrastination habit by S.J. Scott
- Organize Tomorrow Today: 8 Ways to Retrain Your Mind to Optimize Performance at Work and in Life by Dr. Jason Selk and Tom Bartow

## Chapter 19

### MSC Pinnacle Positions

Key Contributors: Col Greg Cullison, Col Fred Grantham, and Col Antonio Love

BLUF: Opportunity abounds in our Medical Service Corps. As a Colonel, you will have the chance to lead at the clinic, hospital, MAJCOM, and HAF level in myriad ways.

#### **19.1. DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE MSC CORPS DIRECTOR**

Let me first start off by saying I am honored and humbled to be in this position. A day in my life can include many things. That is because, being the MSC Corps Director is actually my second job. My work is primarily as the Chief of Medical Manpower and Personnel Division (SG1A), working in SG1 at Defense Health Headquarters. But that is another article. As your Corps Director, I am responsible to the SG and Corps Chief for the utilization, sizing, education, training, and force development of our MSCs. Practically, this means working in conjunction with our SG staff and AFPC to ensure we take care of the Corps. From selecting our future MSCs via the accession board to working with AILO at the Pentagon on our colonel's assignments, I work to take care of our MSCs from start to finish and everything in between. But I don't do this alone. Our Corps Office consists of myself, an Associate Corps Director, Col(s) Stephanie Ku, who is also dual-hatted in our division, and our Corps Office Fellow, Maj Sean Rotbart. Together, we work year-round at the tactical, operational, and strategic level. For the sake of brevity, here is a list of our responsibilities:

- ✓ Supporting twice yearly Development Teams which select candidates for Sq/CC, SGA/DO, IDE/SDE/IAI/Capstone/MSLP, HPERB and specialty matching
- ✓ Executing our Colonel's game plan, working to place our O-6s in the right jobs at the right time
- ✓ Hosting the Senior Council (Board of Directors) meetings, usually in conjunction with the DT
- ✓ Facilitating annual AFMS awards (YHCA, Commitment to Service, Commitment to Excellence)
- ✓ Supporting HSA with senior leader panels and guest speakers
- ✓ Hosting annual briefings and receptions at ACHE
- ✓ Maintaining pertinent information for MSCs on the Knowledge Exchange
- ✓ Publishing our monthly BLUF,
- ✓ Develop Career Field Progression Timeline (new Career Field Pyramid)

There really is much more, but that list gives you a good baseline of what we handle in the Corps Office. And before I end, let me give you one last bit of information. The Corps Office is not an actual office. We sit in the cubicle city of DHHQ in Falls Church with our

fellow SG1 teammates. If you're ever here, come by and say "hi".

## **19.2. DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MAJCOM/SGS**

### **Col Fred Grantham, AFSPC/SGA, Peterson AFB, CO**

To look at the "day" of a MAJCOM Administrator is a little short sighted. I prefer to take a larger bite of the apple and discuss the Month in the Life of a MAJCOM SGS/Administrator. I've been the AFSPC/SGS from 2015 to 2019. Over that time, my requirements have ebbed and flowed covering many topics and issues. In basic terms: meetings, meetings, communicating up, down and sideways, and then more meetings!!

The best way to describe a MAJCOM SGS/Administrator is we are the jack of all trades (master of some functions but not all). Every month kind of has a theme that drives your activities. Some months are focused around Developmental Team (DT)/Senior MSC meetings, others are driven by fiscal issues, while others are readiness/disaster preparation activities. Overall, I believe we keep the ship sailing in the right direction and handle the details others my overlook. We cover for the SG/SG2, respond directly to the MAJCOM/CC, AF/SG and DHA. Below are some of the topics we are expected to address:

- Readiness Requirements/Taskings
- Logistics Management
- Manpower for MDGs and HQ Staff
- Fiscal Status for the MDG and HQ Staff
- Communications
- Mentoring
- DT/Sr MSC council activities
- Military Construction projects

To provide a good flavor of a typical month, here are some of the issues we face through a series of questions:

- 1) What is the current Cat I/II status for our MDGs??
- 2) Have we completed the justifications for the Joint Validation Board for the new COCOM being established??
- 3) A MDG shows a projected inbound for PT, can you confirm the inbound and projected RNLTD??
- 4) How is our CBRNE spend rate, and are the MDGs being fully supported??
- 5) How are the tasked members' preparations progressing??
- 6) How is the manning assistance for Primary Care for Base X coming along??
- 7) We need to backfill the MAJCOM/SG's IMA, is the position advertised??
- 8) Prepare the slide deck for the SVTC with the other AF/SG and MAJCOMs.
- 9) What's the latest on the Reform CONOPS and the Medical Redux??
- 10) We have a MDG concerned about their generator being removed, how do we support

keeping it up and running??

11) A hurricane has damaged one of our facilities, what's the status/what are we doing??

12) The 4-Star is prepping for CORONA, we need a BBP and/or White paper for him and his spouse.

13) With MAJCOM staff moving from DHP to LAF funding, have you coordinated the transition of Civ Pay and other budget requirements??

The above is really the tip of the iceberg to give you context of a typical month.

MAJCOM/SGAs work the issues expected of us but we always keep an eye on what's coming down the road. I would say communication is the most important asset any SGA can possess. In my opinion, no one can master every aspect of every task that is sent to them but we know WHERE to get the answer(s)!!

### **19.3. DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MSC GROUP COMMANDER**

#### **Col Antonio Love, 1st Special Operations MDG Commander, Hurlburt Field**

A Day in the Life...What follows is not a rundown of a typical day as a MSC Group Commander, because I don't know if such a thing exists. When I'm asked the question "what do you do", my response is "I take care of people who take care of people." With that said, what follows is my typical approach to every day as a MDG Commander.

- Pre-Duty Hours. This is probably the most important part of my day, because it sets the tone for everything that follows. I've found that when I'm off, I can usually trace it back to how the day began.
  - Quiet time
  - Work-out
  - Coffee time with my wife
  - Connect with family/drive kids to school
- Standard Duty Hours
  - First of all, have and model them. Sometimes the mission will dictate otherwise, but it should be the exception, not the norm. What you model, becomes what is expected, so be mindful of what you're modeling
  - Connection before content. Your calendar is full, taskers are due, OPRs, PRFs, etc. are looming. Those things are ever present, but a smile and sincere, "Good Morning" goes a long way. Bottom line, build time in your schedule to connect with people in ways that are important to them.
  - Sq/CCs command Airmen, Gp/CCs command Commanders
    - Honor their command authority, help them to solve the problems of their Airmen, but don't be "the Knight in Shining Armor"
    - Hold them accountable to their inherent command authority
  - Spend your time doing only what you can/should do for the unit
    - Cast Vision, Define Mission
    - Be principled, transparent and consistent...over time your values become the organization's values and subsequent culture
    - Connect and build relationships external to the Medical Group
      - Wing Commander

- Vice
  - Other Group Commanders
  - MAJCOM staff, etc.
- Advocacy for your mission, resources and your people. Advocacy requires time and preparation...don't sell your mission or people short
- Guard your calendar
  - Do routine things routinely...recurring events should be anchored on your schedule
  - Standardize how staff work is done...I don't like working through email
  - Determine who has access/permissions to add/delete from your calendar and communicate your expectations for calendar management. I personally block dedicated admin and lunch time every day
  - Be mindful of Sq/CCs time, remember, they are Commanding Airmen
- Prepare for the next day
  - Wrap up today's tasks...some may spill into tomorrow...determine a good stopping point
  - Preview tomorrow's schedule; determine if any additional prep is required
  - De-conflict any conflicts (remember to spend your time doing only what you can/should do)
  - Thank your support staff, say good night, pack up and leave
- Post Standard Duty Hours
  - Re-visiting the BLUF, when in command, command...until you relinquish the guide on, you're still in command whether "on-duty" or not. However, establishing some boundaries helps me maintain/sustain balance.
    - Dinner time is family time and it begins at 1830
    - Homework review follows dinner
    - Any work-related activities occurs after the above
    - Sleep is important...bedtime for me is between 2000-2030
- Specific to MSC Group Commanders
  - Remember that while your primary AFSC is still 41A, while in command, your duty AFSC is 40C...allow your Administrator to be the Administrator and MDSS/CC to be the MDSS/CC.
  - While I personally believe that MSCs are well-prepared to assume the mantle of MDG Command, because of our non-clinical background, some may view you with skepticism or apprehension. Don't be offended or surprised by this.
  - There are some responsibilities that may be a little foreign (credentialing and privileging authority for example). Lean on your SMEs.
  - While in command, you will have the opportunity to build/select portions of your team. Take time to think about what you're looking for, find good candidates and interview them.

## Chapter 20

### Medals

Key Contributor: Lt Col Stephenie Williams

BLUF: Medals are designed to recognize individual accomplishments. Receipt of medals is an indicator of sustained, superior performance and is vitally important to your career. Medals are taken into consideration when meeting promotion boards and professional development milestones. It is important to note that the inability to meet standards, e.g. failed fitness assessment, may impact one's ability to receive a medal.

#### **20.1. PCS Medals include the following: Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, and Commendation Medal.**

Legion of Merit

Grade: O-6 minimum

Eligibility Criteria: Awarded to any member who "distinguished him/herself by exceptionally meritorious conduct in performing outstanding services."

Awarding Authority: MAJCOM/CC

Meritorious Service Medal (MSM)

Grade: Typically minimum of O-4

Eligibility Criteria: Awarded to "any member who has distinguished him/herself by outstanding meritorious achievement or service."

Awarding Authority: Gp/CC

Air Force Commendation Medal (AFCM)

Grade: Typically minimum of O-1/awarded to O-6 and below

Eligibility Criteria: Awarded to "any member who has distinguished himself/herself by meritorious achievement or service, valor or heroism."

Awarding Authority: Sq/CC

#### **20.2. When Should I Expect to Receive a Medal?**

One may expect to receive a medal for sustained, superior performance at the time of PCS, deployment, etc. For more detailed guidance refer to AFMAN 36-2806, Awards and Memorialization Program, 10 Jun 19.

#### **20.2. Who Can Approve the Various Types of Medals?**

In addition to the awarding authorities listed in section 20, see the following:

Air Force Achievement Medal (AFAM)

Grade: Typically minimum of O-1

Eligibility Criteria: Awarded to any member "who has distinguished him/herself by outstanding achievement or service."

Awarding Authority: Sq/CC

Detailed guidance for all awards are located in AFMAN 36-2806, Awards and Memorialization Program. Note that updated guidance in SECAF memorandum, Awards Eligibility and Approval Authority Changes dated 1 Oct 19, authorized changes that are not yet included in AFMAN 36-2806.

**POLICY REFERENCES:**

- AFMAN 36-2806, Awards and Memorialization Program, 10 Jun 19
- SECAF MEMO, Awards Eligibility and Approval Authority Changes, 1 Oct 19

**APPLICABLE WEBSITES:**

- [www.e-publishing.af.mil](http://www.e-publishing.af.mil)



## Chapter 21

### **Mentorship and Resilient MSCs**

**Key Contributors:** Lt Col Josh Curtis, Lt Col Thomas Naughton, Maj Misti Neill

**BLUF:** Have you ever thought about becoming a mentor? Do you have unique experiences from your personal or professional life that could really help someone else navigate a stressful situation? Do you want to help good MSC's become great? Anyone can be a mentor. Anyone can be a mentee. Mentor up. Mentor down. All ranks and walks of life make great mentors. We all crave mentorship...and you never know how stepping up to help someone navigate a tough situation could change and potentially even save their life.

“I had the opportunity to interact with quite a few Airmen who had thought about taking their own lives and they didn’t. Every single one of them said...it was because of this person...this supervisor, this Commander, this teammate, this person that I connected with and showed some interest in me and my well-being and that is why I made the decision to not commit suicide.”-CMSgt of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright.

#### **21.1. VIRTUAL MENTORSHIP (I.E., VIDEO MESSAGING)**

**Maj Misti Neill, AFMS GPM Consultant, AFMRA**

Virtual mentorship is growing in popularity all over the world! Many of our junior MSCs find apps like FaceTime and Marco Polo and other apps conducive to busy work schedules. Virtual mentorship eliminates the challenges of busy work schedules, time zones, and geographical locations so that anyone can give and receive mentorship anytime anywhere! No more excuses!

#### **MARCO POLO**

I use this free asynchronous (non real-time) video messaging app all the time to connect with peers, mentors, and mentees! I love it because I can record and listen to messages when it is convenient for my busy schedule (and for theirs) and it feels like I am talking to the person face-to-face...without all the challenges of connecting in person face-to-face (i.e., coordinating schedules, different time zones, etc.). I typically listen to messages on blue tooth in my car as I’m driving to and from work (this is also when I record messages back). I also like to “catch up” on my messages while running on the treadmill...kill two birds with one stone!

What do we talk about you ask? EVERYTHING! Having someone to talk to about everyday adversities as well as bigger life challenges has an enormous impact on my mental health and well-being. Most people just need someone to talk to and apps like

Marco Polo make it more convenient than ever.

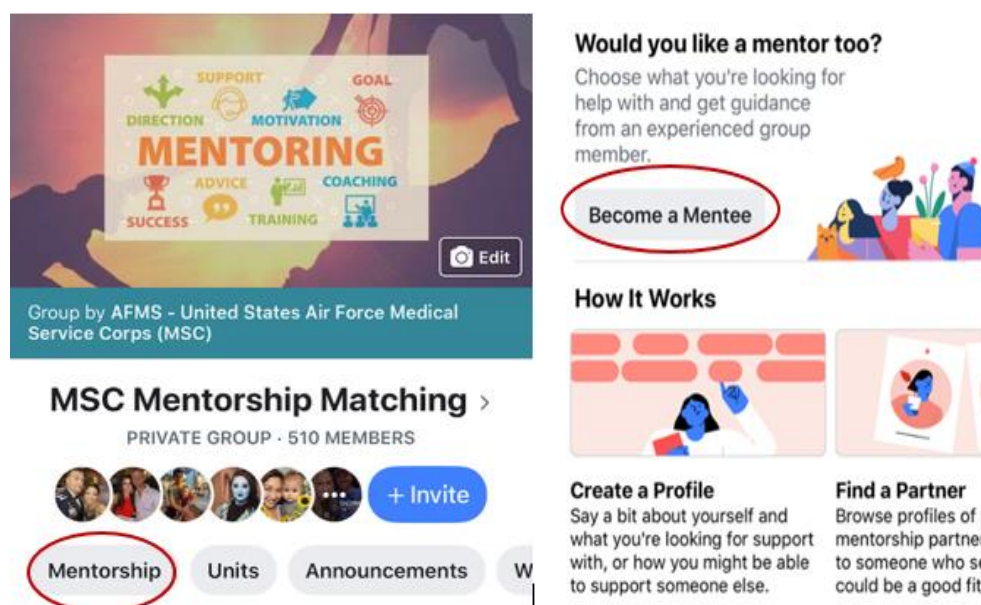
Another reason I love using this app is because it forces me to really listen and be heard. Too often when we communicate in person, we find ourselves interrupting each other. When we're forced to listen to the video message before responding, we truly hear the other person out and everything they have to say before responding back...and then they do the same.

Can you imagine having a Face-to-Face back-and-forth mentorship conversation with your Associate Corps Chief, MAJCOM SGA, or other Senior MSC leader...on your phone and at your convenience?! I truly feel that the more we start thinking "outside of the box" with WHERE we mentor, the less excuses we will hear about why it's not happening on a consistent basis around the Corps.

## 21.2. CONNECTING MENTORS TO MENTEES

### GROWING OUR "MENTOR VILLAGE" WITH FACEBOOK

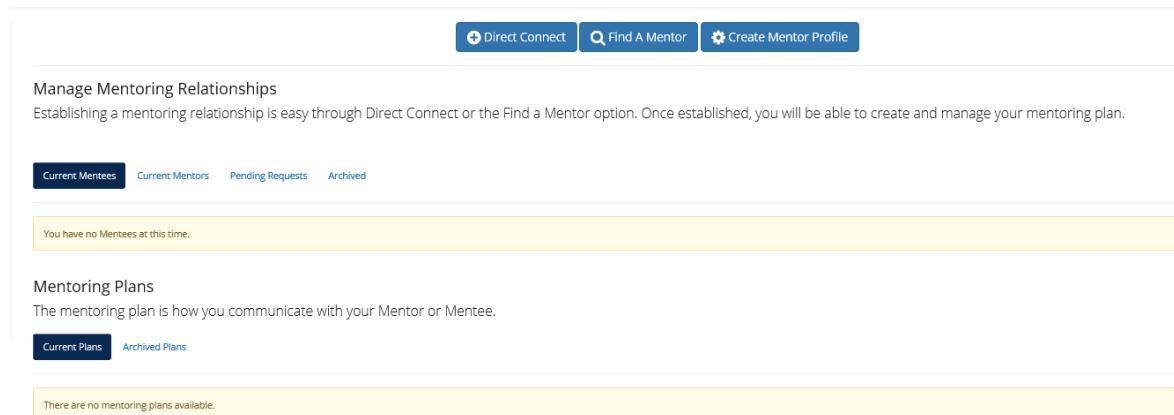
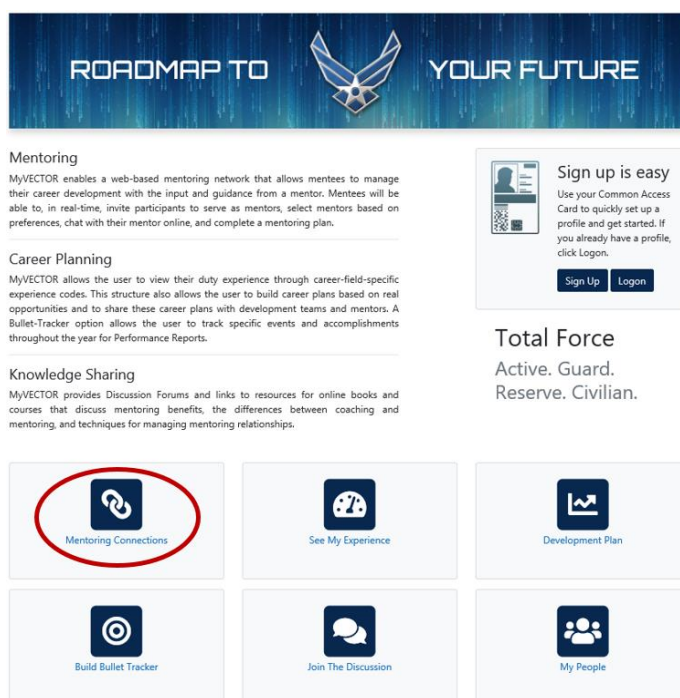
The Facebook "Mentorship" feature has now made connecting MSCs more convenient and easier than ever.



To get started, click on the "mentorship" button, then create a mentor profile where you can tell other MSCs a little about yourself and what you have to offer as a mentor. Don't worry, your mentor profile is not linked to your personal account, and you don't have to be FB friends with someone in order to connect via the FB Mentorship feature. Mentees can then "shop around" for a mentor that resonates with them and then connect via the messenger feature. From there, it is up to the mentor and mentee to decide the best way to communicate.

## 21.3. MY VECTOR

My Vector <https://myvector.us.af.mil/myvector/Home> is an Air Force initiative to connect Mentors to Mentees through the Air Force Portal. This is a great option if you do not want to use social media to connect. You can build your own mentor profile and/or customize your “perfect mentor” by selecting specific ranks, career fields, gender, location, PME experience, education level, etc. The site then makes mentor recommendations based off the preferences you selected. The main downside to using My Vector is that it is not the most convenient way for today’s generation of MSCs to connect to mentors as the site requires a CAC, and is not available via a cell phone app.



## 21.4. PEER MENTORS: USING THE MSC DIRECTORY TO FIND PEERS

Have you ever needed to reach out to another MSC at a specific base and have no idea where to start? Or, do you remember meeting another MSC, but have no idea what base they're at now or how to contact them? Look no further than the MSC Directory on the Kx:

<https://kx.health.mil/kj/kx5/AFMedicalServiceCorps/Pages/home.aspx>



Using the directory is a great way to connect with peers who are in your same functional area at similar size MTF's. Reach out and learn from one another!

## 21.5. WHY LINE SIDE MENTORS ARE IMPORTANT

**Lt Col Josh Curtis, Commander, 355<sup>th</sup> Medical Support Squadron, Davis-Monthan AFB**

In its current hierarchical construct, the AFMS works for the Line of the Air Force (LAF). Therefore, it is vital that MSCs are able to understand and communicate in the language that the LAF speaks. This is the quintessential example of knowing your audience.

MSCs can learn how to communicate with the LAF and better understand the mindset of the LAF through direct mentorship. Having LAF mentors offers insight into different perspectives and priorities that would not otherwise be considered by medics. Bouncing ideas and concepts off of LAF mentors can help inform courses of action, tailor nomenclature, and tune messaging to align medical actions and requirements with LAF

efforts and thinking. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for medical requirements to be misperceived by the LAF as less important than operations or maintenance requirements. Requesting insight from LAF mentors to assist with messaging can put the requirement into terms the LAF better understands; thereby, raising the requirement's priority to the appropriate level for action.

Additionally, from a career perspective, your reputation among the LAF is just as important as it is throughout the MSC. Wing Commanders select Medical Group Commanders. They also select Medical Squadron Commanders with the recommendation of Medical Group Commanders. Having LAF mentors can, therefore, also impact the trajectory of your career.

## **21.6. RESILIENT MSCs**

**Maj Chris Harmer, AFMS Transition Cell Program Manager, Falls Church, VA**

### **BUILDING RESILIENT TEAMS**

The question is often asked: Can a leader save a life? Is it really our responsibility as leaders in the first place? The answer to these simple questions is a resounding YES! Leadership, emotionally Intelligent Leadership, can and does save lives. Let's take a look at a case study of one of our own:

A high-performing Jr. Officer grew up in an abusive home where drugs and poverty ruled the day. The Airman left home at 18 to enlist and be part of something bigger; he found his place in the United States Air Force Medical Community. Over the next decade the Airman flourished at home and work. Happily married, his family quickly grew with three children at home and one on the way. As a newly minted Lt, the Airman was content in life and stood on a solid foundation.

Then the nightmares started! The young Lt started to experience nightmares of childhood, in addition to a startled reaction to loud noises and ever-increasing general anxiety. As a busy father of 3 and a new Flight Commander, the Airman attempted to deal with the stressors presented by doing what had always worked – work harder! At about the same time, the Airman suffered a back injury preventing him from blowing off steam through running. Struggling with things he couldn't comprehend, the Airman began to withdraw from social situations and Church activities; both of which were critical to his and the families' source of strength.

The pillars fell one by one for the Airman and he began to cope with the increased stress in unhealthy ways, drinking excessively and further isolation. While the Airman continued to excel at work, the family was paying the price for his mental absence at home. The nightmares continued and with no way to release stress and the added dependency on alcohol, the Airman's guilt grew as he distanced himself from family and friends. The Airman found himself in a dangerous place with the desire to take his own life.

This process happened slowly over a period of 6 years and the Airman occasionally sought help, albeit halfheartedly, but it is easy to see from the outside that real help was needed, in addition to a change in behaviors. Our Air Force is full of Airmen from many different backgrounds. This diversity is part of what makes it the greatest Air Force in the world. We have to remember as leaders though, that behaviors are taught at a very young age and many coping skills simply are not. It is our job as leaders to help teach and build these skills in our teams.

So, what happened after 6 years of carrying the same burdens that pushed this Airman to seek help? Two things. The first was the Airman was ready for one, but the truth is the Airman found a leader that he could trust. When things finally came to a breaking point for the Airman, he felt comfortable reaching out because he had witnessed the way the leader handled prior situations and dealt with challenges. The bottom-line is the Airman witnessed a leader who exhibited emotional intelligence on a daily basis, which broke down natural barriers in seeking help, and in so doing built trust. The Airman attributes being alive today to trust in a leader...period.

How do we build upon our “soft” skills and develop resilient teams? We start by looking at the way we approach situations on a daily basis. Do we respond in anger or frustration when a problem is brought our way, or do we make our team feel comfortable coming to us? Do we engage on a deeper level, seeking to understand our team, or do we just drive forward regardless of what each member brings to the fight? As Officers in the United States Air Force, we are trusted to build teams that are resilient, not to just push them across the finish line. People really are our most trusted asset, and we have to remember it is a privilege and honor to lead them. Treat it as such!

**Lt Col Thomas Naughton, Base Support Branch Chief, AMC/SGX**

## **RESILIENCY**

Service member and veteran suicide is an epidemic in today’s Air Force. Strong leaders have an inherent ability to self-evaluate and understand the pulse of their team. An easy way to access resiliency is to apply the DLA Resiliency Model. The model has four pillars: mental, physical, social and spiritual. Evaluate each pillar of resiliency for yourself and your team. Use this information to identify which areas of your life and leadership are not in balance.

## **FITNESS**

Airman at all levels are expected to be Fit to Fight. Physical fitness is the foundation of resiliency. The technology age has created a culture that has reduced physical activity. As leaders, we can set the example by always being Fit to Fight. Additionally, we can set the tone by incorporating unit PT sessions into your team schedule. Consistent PT sessions will enhance team cohesion, productivity and resiliency while reducing stress and sick-days.

## **Maj Misti Neill, AFMS GPM Consultant, AFMRA**

“If the foundation of readiness is training, then the core of what makes an Airman more lethal is resilience.”- CMSgt of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright

Resiliency is not suicide prevention. Rather, suicide prevention is a 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> order effect of resilient Airmen. Resiliency is all about learning to “respond” vs. “react” to adversities. If you practice positive thinking when “responding” to everyday life stressors (i.e., someone spilled coffee on your laptop and now 10 keys on your keyboard don’t work...; you get a call from the CDC to pick up your kid on a day you had a big presentation, your DTS voucher keeps getting rejected!, etc.), then you are prepared to positively respond vs. react to the bigger life stressors (i.e., divorce, death, traumatic accidents, loss of relationships, etc.). POSITIVE EMOTIONS LIKE GRATITUDE FUEL RESILIENCY.

### **GRATITUDE**

Gratitude builds optimism and positive emotions, helps you cope with stress, and improves relationships. I would encourage you to find something to be grateful for every single day! This may seem difficult...especially on bad or mundane days, but challenge yourself to find even one thing to be grateful for and then reflect on the “why.” Why is it meaningful? Who contributed? Since most of us are more likely to remember negative things over positive things, looking for the good helps us to focus on what went right.

“I am grateful that my boss allowed me to leave work early; because I was able to leave work early, I was able to miss traffic and get home early.” When I think about who contributed...that was my boss. When I think about why that was meaningful to me, I connect it to a personal value...family. I was grateful to get home early because it allowed me to spend more time with my family vs. the car.

When we consciously look for things to be grateful for every day, we re-wire our brain (via neuroplasticity) to find things to be grateful for during times of high stress or tragedy. The result is we naturally become more resilient and become better at responding vs. reacting to life.

Try to start each day by quickly listing 5 things you are grateful for. Attempt to change these things to be more specific as time goes on. For example; as you start this daily exercise your list may include family, friends, home, car & job. As time goes on you want to try to focus more on the detail of things that day. Try turning negative things into positives. For example; if you have to provide a brief to a high ranking officer that day you might list “I’m grateful for a job that continues to challenge me.”

At some point you will start to naturally focus on gratitude and your list might look more like this: I’m grateful for my wife who also makes my coffee every the morning, a boss who pushes me to develop and grow, the opportunity to listen to books on tape during my drive to work, my sons eager hugs as I arrive home each day & crisp fall weather that makes my runs more enjoyable.



## VALUE BASED GOALS

Goals are a critical aspect of living a resilient life. As MSCs, we are naturally driven to perform well. Research shows that building optimism about the future helps increases your motivation. Developing goals that tie into our personal values is the best way to ensure you succeed! I would encourage you to critically assess what your top 5 values are. Here is a list of common personal core values:

**List of Personal Core Values**

Accomplishment	Determination	Honor	Perfection
Abundance	Discipline	Improvement	Perseverance
Accountability	Discovery	Independence	Persistence
Accuracy	Diversity	Individuality	Personal Growth
Achievement	Education	Initiative	Personal health
Adventure	Efficiency	Inner peace	Pleasure
Approval	Environment	Innovation	Power
Autonomy	Equality	Integrity	Practicality
Balance	Excellence	Intelligence	Preservation
Beauty	Exploration	Intensity	Privacy
Challenge	Fairness	Intimacy	Problem solving
Change	Faith	Intuition	Professionalism
Clarity	Faithfulness	Joy	Progress
Cleanliness/ orderliness	Family	Justice	Prosperity
Collaboration	Flair	Knowledge	Punctuality
Commitment	Flexibility	Leadership	Purpose
Communication	Forgiveness	Learning	Straightforwardness
Community	Freedom	Love	Strength
Compassion	Friendship	Loyalty	Success
Competence	Frugality	Meaning	Systemization
Competition	Fulfillment	Merit	Teamwork
Concern for others	Fun	Moderation	Timeliness
Confidence	Generosity	Modesty	Tolerance
Connection	Genuineness	Money	Tradition
Conservation	Good will	Nature	Tranquility
Content over form	Goodness	Nurturing	Trust
Cooperation	Gratitude	Obedience	Truth
Coordination	Hard work	Open-mindedness	Unity
Creativity	Harmony	Openness	Variety
Credibility	Healing	Optimism	Vitality
Decisiveness	Holistic Living	Patriotism	Wealth
Democracy	Honesty	Peace, Non-violence	Wisdom

Once you have identified your top 5 core values, try and imagine your best possible life 5, 10, 15 years from now. You could be thinking about your career, health, family, or even hobbies. Can you make the connection between your best possible life and your values? My guess is yes. So what will you do to make progress towards those values and your best possible life? What can you do in the next 24 hours, 2-3 weeks, 3-6 months? What kind of obstacles might stand in the way and how can you plan to overcome?

Goals change because life and priorities change. It's perfectly fine to change your goals, but have goals that are meaningful to you and work purposefully towards achieving your best possible self.



## **“VECTOR CHECK”**

Living your values takes consistent effort. Have you ever heard the term “vector check?” A pilot stays on course by consistently checking their vector to make sure they are still headed in the right direction and aligned with the flight plan. Things like storms can oftentimes throw a pilot off their vector for a short period, but by combining their training and instruments, they are able to quickly return to the planned vector. A pilot who is off vector even a couple of degrees whilst traveling from the East Coast to the West Coast can end up hundreds of miles off the intended location.

Think of how this applies to your life. Do you consistently do “vector checks” to make sure you are living your values and staying on track with your “plan?” Life can throw thunderstorms your way, but it is much easier to return to the vector if you address it the right way rather than months or even years later. This skill requires consistent self-assessment and an inventory of sorts. Set aside time each week to review how your actions are, or are not, tracking with the vector you have set for your life.

## **BRING YOUR STRENGTHS**

Try writing your name with your left (or non-dominant) hand. Now, write your name with your dominant hand. Which one was more difficult? Naturally, the most difficulty was in using your non-dominant hand. Now, I am willing to bet you could still write your name with your left (or non-dominant hand)...but was it harder? Did it take longer? Was it nearly as pretty? My guess is it was harder, did take longer, and did not look nearly as pretty.

The same analogy can be used when looking at our strengths. Do you know what you are naturally good at vs. the stuff that comes harder, takes longer, and doesn't turn out nearly as pretty as you had hoped? This is why it's important to really know your strengths and then bring those specific traits to the fight every day.

Research shows bringing our strengths to the table improves our performance. It helps us stay more engaged in what we do, and brings a sense of meaning and purpose. People using their strengths have a stronger sense of well-being and experience less stress. They are more energized in the task. Leaders who recognize strengths in others improve individual and team performance. You can click on the link below if you are interested in taking a quick quiz (<http://viame.org/>) to find out what your top strengths are.

Appreciation of beauty/excellence	Hope	Perseverance
Bravery	Humility	Perspective
Creativity	Humor	Prudence
Curiosity	Judgment	Self-regulation
Fairness	Kindness	Social intelligence
Forgiveness	Leadership	Spirituality
Gratitude	Love	Teamwork
Honesty	Love of Learning	Zest

Think about your top strengths and how you currently use those as a MSC. I challenge you to think of a new way to use one of your strengths on the job. How can you use what comes naturally to you to contribute to the mission? Can you think of new ways to bring your strengths to your personal life (i.e., relationships with parents, siblings, spouse, kids etc.)?

Don't shy away from those things that make you unique. The diversity of thought you bring to a team can help that team to grow. Learn to grow in new areas, but remember that the things you are naturally good at are a gift and are needed. Oftentimes we shy away from the things that we are good at because we don't see how they fit, but often times those natural skills can elevate a team to new heights.

## **REFRAME YOUR THOUGHTS**

Did you realize your thoughts drive your reaction? Events alone are not positive or negative. It is our thoughts and physical/emotional reactions to those thoughts that make the events in our lives positive or negative.

Have you ever been called to your Commander's office and instantly felt your stomach sink? You might be thinking "Am I in trouble? What did I do? What could he/she possibly want to see me about?" Your emotional response may be fear and uncertainty. Your physical response may include feeling your heart race, sweaty palms, or even facial reactions.

Have you ever been cut off while driving? Your thought may be "Are you kidding me?" Your emotional response may be annoyance or anger. Your physical response could be feeling your blood boil, shouting out profanity, or giving the individual who cut you off a glare as they drive by.

The point is...the event itself should never be the focus, but rather focusing on changing our thoughts to drive controlled physical/emotional reactions can completely change our experiences in life. Easier said than done right?

I would challenge you to slow down when events happen and think about whether your thoughts about the event are harmful or helpful. Do the thoughts interfere with your personal or professional goals? Did they hurt your relationship with anyone or undermine your values. If so, how could you look at the situation in a way that improves your performance, helps you reach your goals, reflects your values, or strengthens relationships? We can't always control events, but what we can control is the way we think about and react to those events. Obviously, this takes a lot of practice...so practicing reframe with everyday life struggles will help you naturally have a more controlled response to life's bigger challenges.

Maybe the next time you are called to your Commander's office you can re-frame your thoughts to be "Maybe I'm getting a new and exciting project! Or an award...or a kudos, or some constructive feedback that will help me become a better MSC!" The next time someone cuts you off, perhaps reframe to think "That person may have an emergency and needed to get home quick!"

Fear is a real thing for all of us, but learning to embrace that fear and overcome it can lead you to new heights. We all experience fear and uncomfortable emotions, but the difference between those that embrace the fear and challenge the thoughts and those that are overcome by it is the difference between meeting and exceeding your potential. Once you have practiced this skill for some time your mind will start to naturally acknowledge the fear and you can make the decision to push through it!

## **BALANCE YOUR THINKING**

Balancing your thinking is a skill that helps when you find it especially difficult to reframe a negative thought. Take a step back and look at things objectively. Have you fallen into a cognitive trap? The four cognitive traps are All-or-Nothing, Confirmation Bias, Blaming Others or Yourself, and Mind Reading:

All or Nothing: "My civilian is ALWAYS late to work". "I NEVER win CGO of the quarter."

Confirmation Bias: Looking for information/data that supports your beliefs and ignoring anything that proves against it (i.e., trying to hire a specific individual you know for a job in your section when there may be better qualified candidates).

Blaming Others: "We got 'written-up' in our inspection because my boss wouldn't listen to me."

Blaming Yourself: "I should have known everything about my job by now (even though I've only been on the job for 6 months), it's my fault our flight is broke."

Mind Reading (Assuming others know what you're thinking): "My TSgt should know this project is first priority. He shouldn't be taking this long to get it done."

Mind Reading (Assuming you know what others are thinking): "Capt Snuffy is my Commander's favorite MSC because he gets all the high visibility projects and awards."

As MSCs, and as humans we fall into cognitive traps all the time at work as well as home. When this happens, identify which trap you could be falling into and then think about how the trap affects your thought about the event. From there, try to look at the situation as an objective unbiased 3<sup>rd</sup> party. What specific evidence do you have that supports your thought? What specific evidence do you have that does not support your thought? After weighing the evidence, do you have enough new information to reframe your thought? No?

You may also check to see if there is a double standard. Would you judge someone else just as harshly? If there is no double standard, you can always reach out and phone a friend for their thoughts or better yet, talk to the person you may be having the issue with. You never know how significant your perspective may change once you have all the information.

One day I was giving a briefing and noticed that a SNCO appeared to be sleeping at the conference table. My initial thought was “Are you kidding me? Is he really sleeping?” At first I was confused, but then I quickly grew annoyed and infuriated once I realized he wasn’t going to wake up.” I could feel my blood boiling, but attempted to calmly finish my brief. When examining the evidence for and against my thoughts, the evidence was pretty clear for my thought...HE WAS SLEEPING IN FRONT OF ME DURING A BRIEF...Now, my thought against the situation was “Maybe, he had a rough night and didn’t get any sleep.” Needless to say, I phoned a friend (not literally). I actually went and vented to another SNCO and discovered he actually had Narcolepsy. This new information definitely helped me to balance my thinking.

## **CELEBRATE GOOD NEWS**

When people come to you with good news to share, don’t dismiss them. Celebrate with them! It’s not about the news itself (you could care less about that new puppy they just got). It’s about building relationships...and relationships are critical to resiliency. Celebrating good news provides a boost of positive emotion for both you and the person you are supporting—and those positive conversations lay important groundwork for times when someone needs your support. The best strategies to help celebrate good news are to ask questions, show enthusiastic support and interest, be authentic and be engaged. Stop what you’re doing, give that person your undivided attention for a few moments, and support them. If you don’t have time to help celebrate the good news, tell them you want to hear all about it, but also want to give them your undivided attention. Coordinate a time that will work for you to truly be present and in the moment with them.

Your relationship will build over time, and can withstand the occasional time if you negatively respond to good news by squashing, shutting down, or stealing it. Celebrating Good News is like putting money in a bank! You are also building currency for future conversations that may not be about good news. If you respond well to someone with good news, they will be more likely to trust you with bad news in the future. And, they know they can go to you for support. Remember that someone chose you to share their good news!

## **MINDFULNESS**

Have you ever drove to work and then wondered “How did I get here?” You don’t remember anything about the drive? Mindfulness can help us stay focused in the moment, be more open to experiences, and stay engaged.

Mindfulness is also helpful when you are facing stress and adversity. Sometimes, we experience negative events that we can't control. Rather than avoiding any negative thoughts, mindfulness can help you acknowledge the discomfort so you can focus on taking purposeful action.

Practicing mindfulness in the moment is a great way to observe what’s important in a situation (reflect on your values), reflect on what can be controlled (usually our thoughts and responses), and how we can take purposeful action (respond vs. react).

My son is 6. He always dresses himself backwards...and I mean BACKWARDS. Shirt is on backwards. Shorts are on backwards (when I actually told him to put on pants). Shoes are on the wrong feet and he is wearing 2 completely different socks. In these moments, mindfulness is what saves the both of us from my reaction. I have to take a moment and think about what in this situation is actually important (the relationship I have with him). When I stop and consider what’s important, it is easier for me to take a deep breath and calmly tell him to turn everything around and put his shoes on the correct feet.

Think of your brain like any other muscle in your body. It takes time and effort to train it. Some of the most successful people I have met make mindfulness a part of their day. Taking 10 minutes, a couple times a day to close your eyes and focus your mind will more than pay for itself in clearer and more responsive cognitive ability. It is just as important to step away when you feel like you can’t focus and practice mindfulness. You are taking the time to truly “refocus” your thoughts on the moment vs. the hundreds of things that may be running through your mind.

## **PHYSICAL RESILIENCE**

It’s one of the four pillars. You always hear about it, but as MSCs I see too many of us putting it on the back burner. How often have you opted to work through lunch or skip the gym to come in early or stay late? How often do these “one-off’s” start becoming the norm. Before you realize it, you’re never working out...you’re never eating healthy...and the only time you get a full night’s sleep is on the weekend? The real question is “why”? Are you afraid that others may judge you for taking PT time? Do you really not have 1 hour in your day to spare? What’s getting in the way of you making healthy nutrition choices? What can you do to ensure you start getting more quality sleep?

Physical resilience and mental resilience go hand-in-hand. Think about how you feel when you are exercising, eating healthy, and getting enough sleep every night. I’m willing to bet you are much more productive that when you neglect these areas. You probably feel more focused, energized, and are in a better mood (and moods are contagious).

For me personally, I like to go to the gym during lunch. This is what works best for me, my life, and the mission. It also creates minimal impact since most people are gone during lunch anyway and best of all, I have a 2<sup>nd</sup> wind to get through the rest of my day! I love to meal prep my breakfast/lunch and snacks on Sunday so I have healthy grab-n-go options to pack for throughout the week. I also go to bed really early (like abnormally early...8:30pm). My kids go to bed at 8pm and I don't feel like there is any real reason to stay up later. Needless to say, I get my 9 hrs of sleep each night.

We make time for our priorities and taking care of our bodies (to include our mind) has to be a priority. Schedule your own personal PT time 3-5 times per week. You know your schedule best, so find a time that works for you and make it happen. Make it a habit and then reap the physical and mental highs you get throughout the process.

### **Capt Ebony Shannon, IT Customer Support Center Chief, Ft Sam Houston**

~~“Hi. Sorry I haven't texted you back. I've been anxious and depressed. I haven't had time to catch my breath you know how life gets. I am so drained I can't even collect the energy for the most basic tasks, like, texting you back or doing the dishes. The weather has been beautiful, right?~~

~~Yesterday I fought off a panic attack while I was driving. I had to pull over because my vision was blurred. I just want to sleep all the time, but if I told you, you would want to uncover a reason behind all of this, and there is no tangible reason you would accept as valid.~~ How are you? I hope all is well. Let's get dinner soon!” (Alicia Cook)

The word resilience for most often correlates with getting over something like you are “supposed” to; however what is often missed in conversation is that we often cannot specifically identify the SOMETHING. As MSCs this is something that just doesn't happen, as we are typically the definition of Type A individuals. How can we not be able to identify the source of our pain/discomfort/stress/anger and even more so be able to map out a course of action for solving our issues? How can we not be the epitome of leaders that need to be the example for those who work with and for you? How can we show our peers and leaders that we are not everything we promised them we would be when we had the proud honor of being selected for the Corps?

The element that gets over-looked by not just our leaders but more commonly by each of us as individuals is that resilience is not in essence ONE word, it's not ONE action, it's not ONE individual plan. We hear about the four pillars on endless CBTs, PowerPoint slides and briefings. But for me the day that I sat in a staff meeting with our leadership and as our Squadron Commander finished briefing us on yet another Airman suicide and how we should take the time to know our people, to get involved, to be present...I will never forget how I felt that much like the CBTs and PowerPoint slides, we as culture were just checking a box. I spoke up to that affect about my sentiments and the response from around the table were weird looks, as negativity was completely contrary to my normal persona. No one asked why I was different, that I recall. No one pulled me aside to check in on the change. Instead, as I later learned, it just seemed I was having a bad day; they were giving me the benefit of the doubt. They knew me as a servant-leader and for my ever-present smile; which also happened to be rare around that time. After that day, I told myself that I slipped

and almost let them fully know that SOMETHING was not right. I just could not place it.

According to the Bounce Back Project, in addition to the four pillars that we have been taught as our primary resiliency foundations, there are 5 others that we should incorporate into our thought process. These five pillars are: self-awareness, mindfulness, self-care, positive relationships & purpose.

## **SELF-AWARENESS**

“...is having a clear perception of your personality, including strengths, weaknesses, thoughts, beliefs, motivation, and emotions. Self-Awareness allows you to understand other people, how they perceive you, your attitude and your responses to them in the moment” (Bounce Back Project).

The day I sat at that table I had enough self-awareness to know something was wrong but not HOW to ask for help or WHO to ask for help. I didn't even have the ability to recognize my own emotions and inability to allow them to control my existence. I managed to make it to work every day and give all I had to the job, my Airmen, and the mission. I just returned home so exhausted from it all, and then I could not sleep. I would do everything to go to bed as early as possible only to lay in bed restless the entire night, awakening even more exhausted than when I returned home from work.

Much later after getting the help that I so desperately needed, did I recognize my extreme lack of self-awareness. I was so pre-occupied with how others saw me, that I didn't see I was living my life for others. I wanted to make my Commander proud and to ensure my enlisted trusted that I was not WEAK. My strength had become my weaknesses, my drive to do everything right the first time created undue pressure on my mental status. I was so hard on myself that when I did make mistakes, albeit mistakes that were to be expected by a junior officer, I would beat myself up relentlessly.

What I had to learn was that perfection is unattainable. I am human and my mistakes were my learning opportunities. I learned that I was exhibiting a great deal of negative self-talk. I learned that when I felt the urge to beat myself up that I should take a moment of mindfulness and gain perspective of the entire situation. I learned that as I sat at that table venting my feelings about the lack of trust for the system that I was manifesting all my negative thoughts, my pain, my frustrations; it created emotions that completely contradicted my beliefs.

I now make time for me. I make time, even if just on the drive into work to remind myself of the things in life that are “the good, bad and ugly.” However, now when I take the time to think on these things, I also remind myself on how they fit into the bigger picture of my life. These moments allow for me to put my mind at ease and to keep things in perspective. Now, by the time I lay my head down to rest, I sleep!

## **MINDFULNESS**

“...is a state of active, open attention on the present. When you’re mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them good or bad. Instead of letting your life pass you by, mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to experience” (Bounce Back Project).

The day I sat at the table was only the beginning of my downward spiral. I could not get out of my head at all. I worried about everything and anything. I was so pre-occupied with all I had going on in my life; divorce, health issues, loneliness, feeling abandoned and unlovable. I felt like my living was only to serve a purpose of doing my job. I felt that EVERYTIME I did anything, I was failing. I felt that EVERYONE was happy except me. I felt that ANYTHING and EVERYTHING was happening to me. I just felt that life was not fair. I wanted to die!!! However I did not have a plan and that is not a badge of honor. The ONLY reason I lacked a plan was because I could not figure out how not to have EVERYONE disappointed in me. See even when I wanted to die, I still wanted to please others.

We all hear about being mindful, and like many other pillars, its one that I think we easily overlook. I mean who does not use their mind? Especially as an MSC, we are in our positions because our minds are one of our greatest tools, RIGHT?!? What I overlooked was realizing that while I was in my mind, my mind simultaneously became my enemy. Instead of looking at life from a “right now” point of view, the world became all or nothing. My thoughts remained in absolutes. But I ask you, who or what in any world operates in the absolutes? The EVERYTHINGS, EVERYONE, ANYTHING mentality was not healthy.

So, how do you get out of that? As cliché as it sounds, you really do have to be in the present. When I would sit in a meeting, and it felt like I was the ONLY one ALWAYS getting tagged, I would have to take a step back in the moment and analyze the whole picture. Maybe I was getting tagged because it really was my role, and I was in that meeting because my role was actually required. I would realize how many meetings and taskings occurred that did not include me or create work for me because indeed it was not ONLY me. How crazy is that? Taking just a moment to reflect put things in perspective.

## **SELF-CARE**

“...is unique for each person and can be understood in many different ways. In its simplest form, the term refers to our ability as human beings to function effectively in the world while meeting the multiple challenges of daily life with a sense of energy, vitality, and confidence. Self-care is initiated and maintained by us as individuals — it requires our active engagement” (Bounce Back Project).

During the days when I was trying to exist in a world that no longer felt right for me was like being a zombie. I am talking “The Walking Dead” kind of zombie, I only had one mission and that was not to fail. So much like the zombies who would take any means necessary to attempt to eat, I did the same. In the end I found that I was not eating, was not



sleeping, and most sadly, I began to drink more. What started out as wine or cocktails during the weekends with friends turned into glasses of wine each night before bed, hoping it would help me to sleep. I am forever grateful that I never got to the total point of self-medicating and creating a drinking addiction, but I definitely was on the sure-fire path. No one would have ever noticed because I always showed up for work. Instead I began to forsake the other elements in my life that kept me whole; working out, friends, family and even “me time” to shop and take care of my personal needs. As a leader I worked so hard to hide my truths from everyone I could. I needed to be okay and fit to fight!

When in contrast, I was just the opposite. Self-care is something that can only be defined by you as an individual. I knew the importance of keeping up my personal “girly” hygiene such as nails, hair and even make-up when needed and would easily decide to forego them for the extra few minutes of attempting to get some rest that just would not come. Self-care is remembering that it is just as important to take care of the things that make you feel great on the inside as it is to feel great to beat a suspense to senior leadership. Finding the things in life that bring energy and happiness to you are vital for being able to embrace those moments of mindfulness as you continue to maximize your self-awareness. From getting in an amazing workout all the way to getting the most amazing massage, you have to take those moments to balance the negative self-talk and opposing outside negative elements. I take great pleasure in the multitude of applications online that allows me to find a way to workout no matter the circumstances, whether I have time for a full 60 minutes or only 15 minutes, I get to know that I put me first in that moment.

## **POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

“...are the people who support and care for us — and we care for them. One of the most profound experiences we can have in our lives is the connection we have with other human beings. By building positive relationships with others, we will be happier and more fulfilled and feel more supported, supportive, and connected. Positive and supportive relationships will help us to feel healthier, happier, and more satisfied with our lives” (Bounce Back Project).

This pillar is the most difficult for me to discuss because how do you tell yourself that the same people who have been in your life and care for you were not, at a time, the positive relationship you needed. In order to first accept this truth, I believe it’s vital for the individual to accept that one person at one time does not provide the same elements to your life at all times. It does not diminish their love, caring or importance in your life. What it does align is the ability for who can be there for you in different times of need.

I feel that in times of need, we neglect ourselves and inevitably begin to neglect the relationships we value. Given that relationships are based on give-take balance, in times of need you may need to take more than you have the ability to give. It is during these times to reflect and acknowledge those that have space to give as much as you need. Not to take advantage of them, but to care and nurture what they bring to the table. Build the relationships based on honesty, support and your ability to connect. Just like building bridge, you will find that one block at a time will build your road to a community and possibly being able to enable your previous community into your new reality will become a

true reality.

## **PURPOSE**

“...is a recognition that we belong to and serve something bigger than ourselves. Our purpose helps to shape the mindset and attitude we have toward others and the events we experience. We can find purpose in our faith, family, a political party, being green, or being a part of an organization like the Boy Scouts” (Bounce Back Project).

If nothing else, almost every Airman knows their purpose when it comes to the military and the Air Force. The true question is, have they lost sight of their individual purpose in life? It doesn't have to be life changing, but it does need to be something that hold true sentiment and value to the individual.

I lost that purpose when I lost my identity among all of the life circumstances from which I was recovering. My journey to my mental recovery helped me to identify the key moments I lost pieces and how to find them again. Cliché' as it sounds, that is why I chose to pen my story. Every Airman has a story, journey and purpose. Don't let moments in time take over your mind to diminish your true purpose. Do not lose sight of your purpose. You went through every step to join this amazing Corps, so if nothing else your purpose has already been in making you an example for hope and success.

In summation, I would like for you to think back to the first quote and ask yourself if you ever went through that process of thinking as you attempted to respond to a friend/loved one/co-worker. So often we as people, but especially as leaders, are battling internal issues that range from ant bite size to dramatically life changing decisions. The hardest part is figuring out how to identify what's wrong and that is often where we go wrong. In most occasions, the most accurate response will not be the most obvious. Instead, if we continue to embody these additional pillars into our everyday work and personal lives, we can begin to take human size bites on our realities of life. None of your issues began in just one day, give yourself a break and know that asking for help is one of the greatest signs of strength.

The day I called my first shirt and Commander to tell them I had a problem was the scariest day of my entire life. I was waiting on the judgement and the “I knew you were not good enough” speeches. Let me tell you, my leadership proved to me that the words they expressed at the table that day was not just words. They immediately expressed their support as I had to go to an inpatient setting and transition to an extensive outpatient program. They continued that support by allowing me the time to focus on my recovery, while also remaining close enough to let me know I was not alone. In addition, they protected my privacy at work. I learned with hindsight that it was my mind and the place I existed that didn't allow for the help I truly needed. I respect that all units and organizations are not the same; however, I implore you if you feel you need help to trust someone. I know that even in toxic environments that you can find someone who can help, in or out of the chain. I will forever be grateful for my leadership, the mental health team and the treatment facilities. They literally and figuratively saved my life. That day I did not have a plan, but they got me to a place where the person I was that day is a stranger to me today.

Speak up! Don't wait until your world becomes unbearable. Don't wait until you were like me and no longer had a desire to live. According to Forbes," It's important to note that a person with resilience still feels the intensity of a difficult situation---they've just found a better (quicker) way of dealing with it. Fortunately, resilience can be learned, and not surprisingly, it can make or break your career" (Forbes, 2019). Speak up and trust that we are Airmen and Wingmen, we are family...together we are stronger! Believe it or not, being honest will make you a greater leader.

#### RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Do What You Are. Tieger, P. D., Barron-Tieger, B., & Tieger, K. (2018).

#### APPLICABLE WEBSITES:

- <https://www.bouncebackproject.org/five-pillars/>.
- <https://www.afgsc.af.mil/News/Features/Display/Article/630008/pillars-of-resiliency-warren-educates-Airmen-on-mental-emotional-wellness/>
- <https://www.dla.mil/Info/Resiliency/Defined/>

## **Chapter 22**

### **Microsoft Office Basics**

Key Contributors: Lt Col Marlo Obcemea, Maj Adam Brown

BLUF: Understanding some basic ways to utilize Microsoft Office™ will make your life as an MSC easier and help you get home on time and the demands of administrative work decreased.

#### **22.1. OUTLOOK 101**

##### **22.1.1. INBOX MANAGEMENT**

**Maj Adam Brown, Systems Instructor, Health Services Administration School**

Reply all is not the normal go-to in email delivery.

As in life, rules matter! Use rules to manage important messages from a receiving standpoint.

Creating subfolders for organization is going to save you time and effort when looking for key messages. Find an organization technique that works for you to help simplify your inbox and reduce clutter.

##### **22.1.2. WHAT IS SCHEDULING ASSISTANT?**

Do not schedule a meeting without checking to see if the leadership involved already has something going on.

When creating a meeting request find the scheduling assistant button, and it will open the schedule of those being invited so you can coordinate a time all key players can attend without going back and forth with multiple parties.

##### **22.1.3. THE BENEFITS OF .PST FILES**

Overloading your inbox is unnecessary for emails you do not need to view often or want to keep for future reference. Create a .pst file and save space on the server for no messages to come into your inbox while retaining important messages on your computer's hard drive through a .pst file

Carrying your .pst file from base to base to base is not necessary or helpful. Purge email in your .pst from time to time when possible to keep the size of the file down. If you cannot fit your .pst onto one DVD when copying it for PCS purposes, then it's too large; purge unnecessary messages.

Keeping emails in a .pst will help in the future for important messages that should/could be referenced. If you think something might be important down the road, drop it in a .pst so you don't have to worry about that inbox limit.

#### **22.1.4. UTILIZING MAILBOX RULES**

Rules help to parse out important messages from those you think require it.

Rules matter! Make one for your supervisor or leadership directly in your chain-of-command so you can be sure to see their messages as soon as they hit the inbox.

Don't let an e-mail get "lost", build a rule that can move e-mails to subfolders, or your .pst, specific to a project or person, and always be in the know as soon as the messages arrive.

#### **22.2. EXCEL 101**

##### **Lt Col Marlo Obcemea, Medical Policy and Operations Division Chief, DHA/JX**

As MSCs you will deal with various reports that are often captured in a spreadsheet format e.g., Unit Manpower Document (UMD), MEPRS/DMHRSi (Medical Expense Performance Reporting System/Defense Medical Human Resource System internet) reports, budget execution data, etcetera. Further, you may receive tasks requiring you to provide adhoc report of your critical functional metrics, such as, current budget position, equipment replacement plan, provider availability, etcetera. Microsoft Excel is the most commonly used tool to address this requirement; therefore, learning how to use this program is an important MSC skillset. There are many websites and YouTube tutorials that can assist you with learning Excel and some links/URLs are provided at the end of this chapter—see appendix 1.

That being said, this chapter will focus on providing insight on some of the most useful feature in Excel that you will likely use as an MSC i.e., VLOOKUP function, Pivot Tables, and keyboard shortcuts. By no means an exhaustive list, there are other basic Excel functionality that you should learn; links/resources annotated in appendix 1 will definitely help you get you started on your journey on learning this program. Finally, this chapter will touch on other Excel features that are extremely valuable as you become an intermediate to advance level user.

#### **BEFORE WE START, WHAT IS EXCEL?**

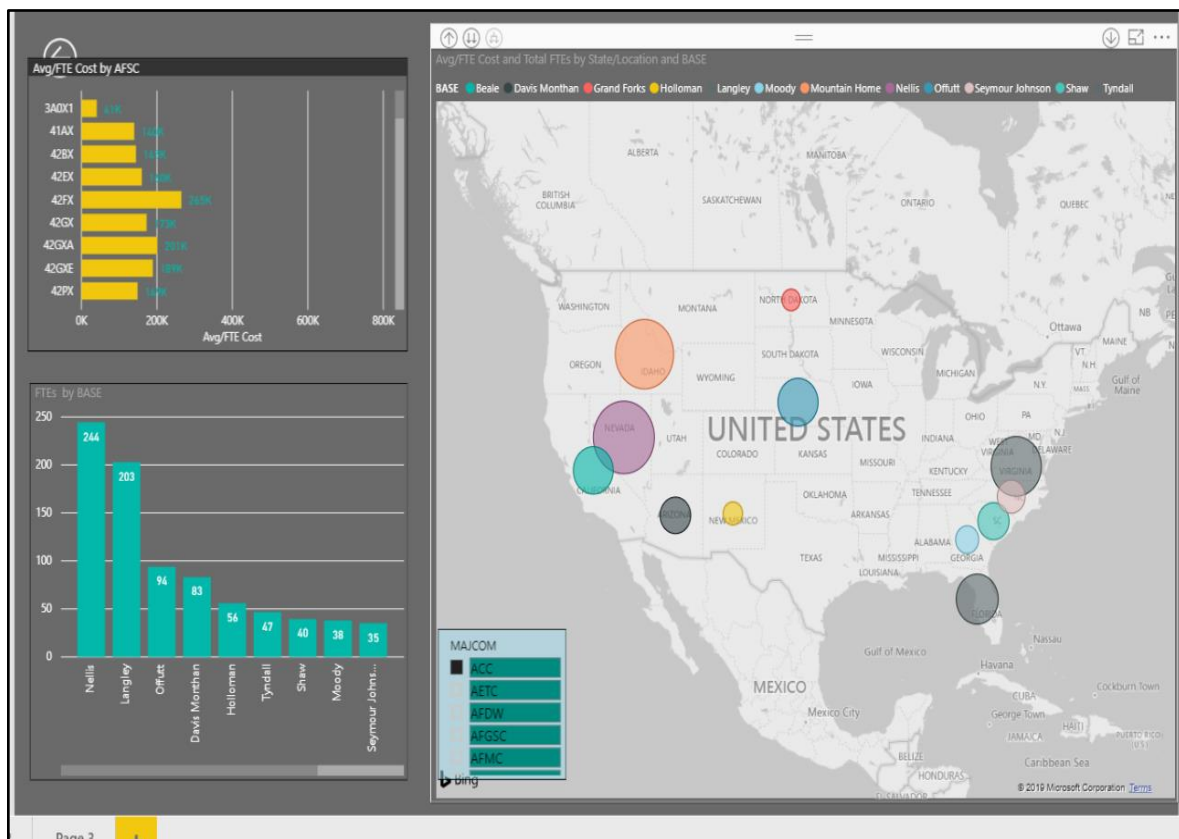
"Microsoft Excel is a software program produced by Microsoft that allows users to organize, format and calculate data with formulas using a spreadsheet system. This software is part of the Microsoft Office suite and is compatible with other applications in the Office suite". Source: <https://www.techopedia.com/definition/5430/microsoft-excel>

Given the versatility of Excel and ubiquity of Microsoft software products, Excel to some extent is the industry standard when it comes to spreadsheet program. Understanding the

basic usage and functionality of this software is vital such as the VLOOKUP feature.

Excel is a robust program and it continues to improve and features are added on a regular basis. You should continue to explore and leverage its capabilities to become more efficient and gain knowledge on how to tackle other tasks that require beyond basic Excel know how. For example, learning Excel's Power Pivot and Power Query will allow you to normalize, transform, model, and visualize various data for meaningful analysis. Understanding these features/add-ons also give you the knowledge and framework to use other analytical/business intelligence tools such as the Microsoft Power BI (Business Intelligence), which is similar to Tableau and Qlik. Below figure is an example on what you may be able to do...transform your raw data to insightful visualization. To learn more about these features see appendix 1 for links/resources.

Figure F: Example of Power BI Output



## 22.2.1. BUILDING A PIVOT TABLE

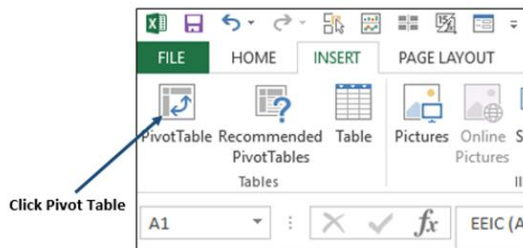
### WHAT IS A PIVOT TABLE?

“A PivotTable is a powerful tool [in Excel] to calculate, summarize, and analyze data that lets you see comparisons, patterns, and trends in your data”. Source:

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/create-a-pivottable-to-analyze-worksheet-data-a9a84538-bfe9-40a9-a8e9-f99134456576>.

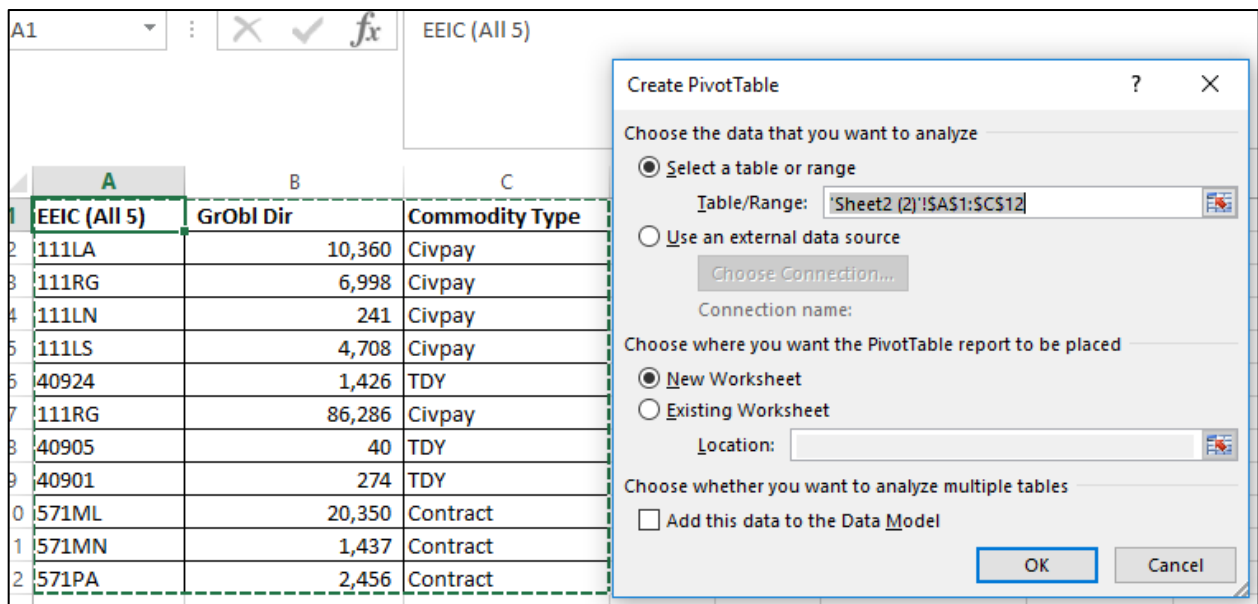
To illustrate, using the same data in figure B, click “Insert” located in the primary ribbon display then select Pivot Table (see figure c below)

Figure C



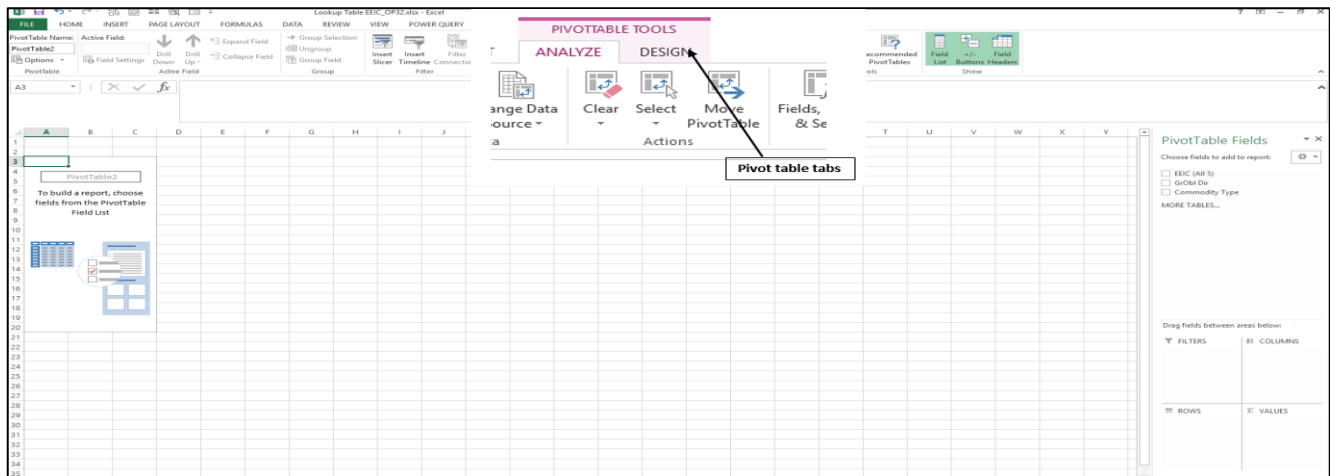
A new screen will then pop-up showing the data that will be included in the pivot table (range of included data can be adjusted as needed) and it also shows a screen that provides an option on where to create the Pivot table, the “New Worksheet” is the default (see figure D).

Figure D



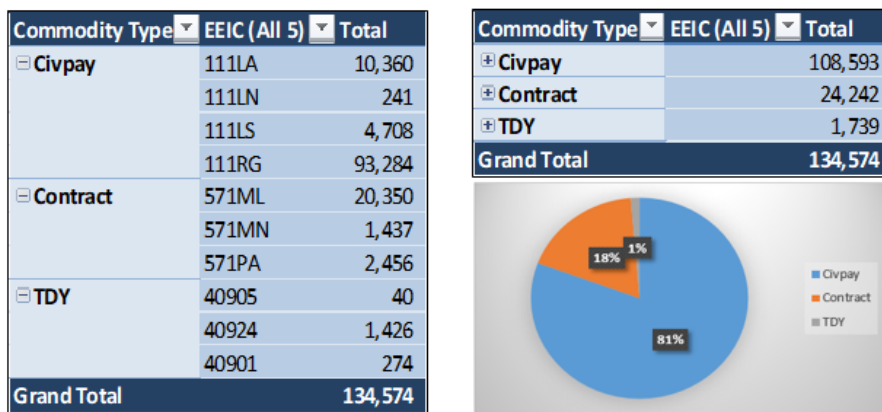
Once “OK” is clicked in figure D a new screen will appear (see figure E below)

Figure E



This screen provides a new format tabs specific for pivot table in the primary ribbon display. As mentioned before, pivot table is a robust Excel feature and it will not be feasible to cover most of its capability in this guide--appendix 1 has some links for more in-depth tutorial and guides.

Having said this, below are examples of pivot table format that can be done using the same data in figure B. As you can see the data provides much clearer insights with regards to breakdown and overall obligation of budget, more importantly, data can be easily adjusted/summarized to meet your audience's desire e.g., graphical view.



## 22.2.2. VLOOKUP

### WHAT IS VLOOKUP & WHEN DO I USE IT?

The technical description of VLOOKUP is that it is a function in Excel used to find things in a table or a range by row. The syntax for this function is, VLOOKUP(lookup\_value,table\_array,col\_index\_num,range\_lookup). This function tells Excel to lookup a value in the leftmost column of a table, and then returns a value in the same row from a column you specify. By default, the table must be sorted in an ascending order.

Okay, so what is the practical application of this function? Let say you were asked to brief



your executive staff and provide an adhoc report of your MTF's end-of-month budget expenditure. Given that this a brief to your executive leadership you were asked to use common/easy to understand nomenclature as opposed to technical jargon e.g., instead of using EEIC 40905 or object sub class 2101101, use "TDY". However, budget execution report may not have a common-name/layman's term nomenclature, and while this can be manually translated, it can become cumbersome particularly if you have to provide the same report every month and/or if you are dealing with larger data set. In this case, using VLOOKUP function is one way to facilitate/automate this requirement. To illustrate:

Looking at figure A below, columns A and B are the budget execution data set that show EEIC (Element of Expense/Investment Code) and gross obligation amounts pulled from a financial system. Column C will be used to annotate the common-name description. Columns F and G is a mapping or a lookup table of every EEIC with corresponding layman's term description. As mentioned before, this can be done manually but it is impractical for large data and/or recurring requirement--VLOOKUP function will simplify this process. As illustrated below in figure A, in cell C2 the VLOOKUP syntax is inserted, =VLOOKUP(A2,\$F\$1:\$G\$11,2,FALSE).

Let's breakdown the syntax:

The A2 portion of the syntax, "=VLOOKUP(A2,\$F\$1:\$G\$11,2,FALSE)", tells Excel to lookup the value in A2 (EEIC 111LA) in a table array and in this scenario Excel will use data in columns F and G as captured in the syntax  
 "=VLOOKUP(A2,\$F\$1:\$G\$11,2,FALSE)" (NOTE: \$ signs are included to tell Excel that these are absolute values or a static table), without the "\$" sign, the table array will change as the VLOOKUP formula is auto-filled/copied on the rest of the cells, which will result in an error. The next portion of the syntax is 2, "=VLOOKUP(A2,\$F\$1:\$G\$11,2,FALSE)" this tells Excel to use the values in column #2 of the table array (i.e., column G) if a match is found between column A and column F (NOTE: column F is considered column #1). The last portion of the of the syntax is FALSE, "=VLOOKUP(A2,\$F\$1:\$G\$11,2,FALSE)", which tells the program to capture an exact match as opposed to approximate.

Once the syntax in column C2 is complete the next step is to copy the formula on the rest of the column; figure B shows the end-result.

Figure A

	A	B	C
1	EEIC (All 5)	GrObl Dir	Commodity Type
2	111LA	10,360	=VLOOKUP(A2,\$F\$1:\$G\$11,2,FALSE)
3	111RG	6,998	
4	111LN	241	
5	111LS	4,708	
6	40924	1,426	
7	111RG	86,286	
8	40905	40	
9	40901	274	
10	571ML	20,350	
11	571MN	1,437	
12	571PA	2,456	

	F	G
1	EEIC	Commodity Type
2	111LA	Civpay
3	111LN	Civpay
4	111LS	Civpay
5	111RG	Civpay
6	40901	TDY
7	40905	TDY
8	40924	TDY
9	571ML	Contract
10	571MN	Contract
11	571PA	Contract

=VLOOKUP(A2,\$F\$1:\$G\$11,2,FALSE)

Figure B

	A	B	C
1	<b>EEIC (All 5)</b>	<b>GrObl Dir</b>	<b>Commodity Type</b>
2	111LA	10,360	Civpay
3	111RG	6,998	Civpay
4	111LN	241	Civpay
5	111LS	4,708	Civpay
6	40924	1,426	TDY
7	111RG	86,286	Civpay
8	40905	40	TDY
9	40901	274	TDY
10	571ML	20,350	Contract
11	571MN	1,437	Contract
12	571PA	2,456	Contract

Once this is complete, you can now easily sort this report (i.e., figure B) with common nomenclature. While figure B table provides desired common nomenclature, gaining insights to the data set is still not easy at this point e.g., determining total obligation for civ pay or TDY requires further consolidation of data. Although this can be done manually, but it is inefficient particularly when dealing with several rows/items. This leads to another useful function in Excel that can better improve your presentation and data analysis--Pivot Table!

### 22.2.3. SHORTCUTS

There are times using keyboard to execute a command is much easier than going through a series of point/click using the mouse. Below are some common Excel shortcuts that may help you work efficiently. Some keyboard shortcuts are also applicable to other Microsoft programs i.e., Word, Power Point, Outlook.

Formatting Shortcuts	
CTRL + 1	Format Box
ALT + E + S + T	Copy Format
ALT + H + 0	Increase Decimal
ALT + H + 9	Decrease Decimal
CTRL + SHIFT + 7	Boxing
ALT + O + C + A	Fit Column Width
ALT + H + O + R	Change Tab Name
ALT + W + F	(Un)Split Panes
ALT + W + S	(Un)freeze windows
SHIFT + CTRL + #	Date Format
SHIFT + CTRL + \$	\$ Dollar Format
SHIFT + CTRL + %	% Percentage Format
ALT + "="	Sum Function

CTRL Shortcuts	
CTRL + A	Select All
CTRL + B	Bold
CTRL + C	Copy
CTRL + D	Fill Down
CTRL + F	Find
CTRL + I	Italic
CTRL + N	New Workbook
CTRL + O	Open
CTRL + P	Print
CTRL + R	Fill Right
CTRL + S	Save Workbook
CTRL + U	Underline
CTRL + V	Paste
CTRL + W	Close Window
CTRL + X	Cut
CTRL + Z	Undo

Function Key Shortcuts	
F2	Edit Cells
F4	Anchor Cells
F7	Spell Check
F12	Save As
SHIFT + F2	Insert a Comment
SHIFT + F8	Add to Selection
SHIFT + F10	Right Click
CTRL + F3	Name a Cell
Windows Flag + D	Minimize Programs

Navigation Shortcuts	
Arrows	Move
CTRL + Arrows	Go to End of Continuous Range
SHIFT + Arrows	Select A Cell Range
CTRL + SHIFT + Arrows	Highlight A Continuous Range
ALT + Tab	Switch Programs
CTRL + Pg Up/Down	Switch Worksheets
Enter	Move below
Shift + Enter	Move Up
Home	Move to Beginning of Line
CTRL + Home	Go to Cell A1
ESC	Cancel
Alt + Enter (when in a cell)	Add a Line

Columns & Rows Shortcuts	
CTRL + 9	Hide Row
SHIFT + CTRL + 9	Unhide Row
CTRL + 0	Hide Column
SHIFT + CTRL + 0	Unhide Column
SHIFT + Spacebar	Highlight Row
CTRL + Spacebar	Highlight Column
SHIFT + CTRL + Plus sign	Insert Blank Cells
CTRL + Minus Sign	Delete Selected Cells
SHIFT + ALT + Left Arrow	Group Rows/Columns
SHIFT + ALT + Right Arrow	Ungroup Rows/Columns

## 22.3. POWER POINT 101

**Maj Adam Brown, Systems Instructor, Health Services Administration School**

Every meeting you go into or brief at will have some level of PowerPoint in the meeting being presented. Don't let the phrase "death by PowerPoint" happen to your briefing!

### **BASIC SLIDE DECK**

Keep it simple. Just because you know how to do all sorts of tricks and things in PowerPoint does not mean you actually need to show an entire room in a professional briefing. Know your audience and know the topic you are discuss to determine if certain things in your slides are right.

Color is good, but too much, or contrasting colors, can be an eyesore. Liven up a good slide deck with some colors that can show emphasis when needed and reduce the mundane of black words on a white background for your entire slide deck.

Words matter! If you put the words on the slide, then speak to them. If you don't have something on a slide and are talking about it, then it probably should have gone on the slide. Use the words you need to use, and don't go overboard with a busy slide. If you find yourself reading your entire slide then you have too much information on the slide.

## **TRANSITIONS AND ANIMATION**

I know you love to see the slide get balled up into a ball and bounce off the screen and the next slide come in looking like a paper airplane; you're the only one. Not that there isn't a time and place for fun transitions, but maybe not when going into a major decision brief with your commander on a multi-million dollar project.

Know your audience as well. I worked for a commander that, unbeknownst to me, HATED transitions. Any, and ALL of them. I learned that day one on the job while I was his executive officer and after the brief it was VERY obvious to me not to do that again. Animation is necessary in briefings from time to time if hiding information in a certain slide to present at a specific point. Just like transitions however, there is a lot of "fun" ways to show animations in your presentation. Use discretion on the matter and keep the animations right to the level of briefing you are providing.

### **22.4. TABLEU 101**

This is a strong analytics platform that can show data and correlations. It helps in simplifying raw data into the very easily understandable format. This is a great tool when manipulation, and showing, large data sets from an analytic point of view.

#### **WHAT IS TABLEAU?**

With data becoming an ever growing drive in our decision making toolkit, we rely on data translation and correlations to drive decisions based on data sets without our organization. Tableau was created to do just that in a simple, easy to read format, for basic users. The program, while designed for small user bases, can be scaled for enterprise and can make data come to life on the screen.

With this software you can link it to normalized presentations like Excel that most users are familiar with. While Tableau is designed to inherently show the information, not all viewers might be able to "see" the data or be comfortable with the manipulation of the data. Exporting it into Excel could prove beneficial for your organization to simplify the data set.

This program is not for basic users and there is a learning curve to utilizing Tableau. Before you try to convince your MTF to invest in the software be aware you might be the only one using it and the only one that can manipulate the data sets within it with any level of proficiency.

#### **TYPICAL USERS**

Analytics departments are going to be your common user group for this software. Normally, if used, this will be hosted or utilized at the MAJCOM or Headquarters level and not at an MTF level due to the complexity and intent of the program.

## **22.5. ONE NOTE 101**

Microsoft OneNote is a digital notebook that automatically saves and syncs your notes as you work. Keep notes on one machine in your account and seamlessly retrieve them on another device without having to save them to a shared drive or SharePoint page.

### **WHAT IS ONENOTE?**

Microsoft OneNote is a note taking and keeping documentation system that links to the cloud and stores your notes and information with seamless integration for retrieval and use on various platforms. Outside of the military network you can log into OneNote with your Microsoft account and download the free application as well on your tablet or smartphone device to view, edit, and create notes at any time. The application allows 7 GB of cloud storage for free but you can purchase the ability to store up to 200 GB of data on the cloud through Microsoft. Trust me, 7 GB is plenty of space when saving text files.

One problem is administrative rights on a government network. Not all locations allow you to sign into your Microsoft account so you cannot leverage this functionality inside the government network. However, you always have a phone on you so why not keep that with you and always have the notes you need to get the job done?!

### **BASIC USE**

OneNote can take multiple inputs for documentation. Primary use is through typed text but you can also use handwritten notes as needed or desired as long as the device being used supports that capability. You can also take snips from your screen and import that into OneNote along with websites and snips from website's for fast retrieval as needed in the future. Really the basic ways to use OneNote are almost endless and the platform is designed to work for any level of user.

Creating notes in the platform is easy as clicking a tab to create new and then you are off to the races! Be as creative as you want and can be within the platform to meet your note taking needs.

Another exciting thing you can do in OneNote is record. If you were going into a meeting and wanted to take notes for later, but didn't want to write everything down because it was going to be too much... let OneNote do it for you! Hit the record button in the note you created for the meeting and it will start recording the audio file and store it right in the note for you. Now you can come back to it later and listen as much as needed to really get all the pertinent information.

This is also a collaboration tool. You can share a note and allow others to collaborate on it in real-time. How many times have you wanted to have some additional inputs on a document and needed to save it, send it to the individual, wait for them to do something with it, and then send it back to you? With OneNote you can simply create the note, share it with a colleague, and then see the changes and results in real-time view right on your screen as they are happening

POLICY REFERENCES: Look for local policy if any exists. Some units will have their own master slide deck you need to work from

#### RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Learning Tableau, Joshua N. Milligan / 2015
- Tableau for Healthcare, Third Edition / 2017
- OneNote Secrets: 100 Tips & Tricks for OneNote 2013 & 2016, Marjolein Hoekstra and Stefan Wischner / 2016
- OneNote: OneNote User Guide - the Definitive Guide to Learn the Essentials of OneNote in No Time, Hillary Benson / 2016

#### APPLICABLE WEBSITES:

##### Tableau

- <https://www.tableau.com/>
- <https://www.analyticsvidhya.com/learning-paths-data-science-business-analytics-business-intelligence-big-data/tableau-learning-path/>

##### One Note

- <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-365/blog/2013/11/12/top-10-things-you-didnt-know-about-onenote/>

##### Excel

- <https://www.howtogeek.com/361582/all-the-best-microsoft-excel-keyboard-shortcuts/>
- <https://www.howtogeek.com/361582/all-the-best-microsoft-excel-keyboard-shortcuts/>

##### VLOOKUP Tutorials:

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwL6KKJP-\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hwL6KKJP-_I)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsTXTufM\\_Lc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsTXTufM_Lc)
- <https://www.excel-easy.com/examples/vlookup.html>

##### Pivot Table:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4K3xjM76kI&spfreload=10>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rii5PQfmxgs&spfreload=10>
- <https://www.excel-easy.com/data-analysis/pivot-tables.html>

##### Power Pivot:

- <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/power-pivot-powerful-data-analysis-and-data-modeling-in-excel-a9c2c6e2-cc49-4976-a7d7-40896795d045>

##### Power Query:

- <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/introduction-to-microsoft-power-query-for-excel-6e92e2f4-2079-4e1f-bad5-89f6269cd605>

##### Power BI:

- <https://powerbi.microsoft.com/en-us/>

## **Chapter 23**

### **Finding Policy**

**Key Contributor: Col Sally Kelly-Rank**

**BLUF:** Policies and procedures are an essential part of the Air Force. Successful missions, combat or otherwise, cannot succeed without strict compliance to applicable rules and regulations.

#### **23.1. IS THERE AN AIR FORCE INSTRUCTION (AFI) FOR THAT?**

**Col Sally Kelly-Rank, Director Air Force Medical Support Ops, AFMRA**

Unless otherwise stated, or a waiver has been granted by an approved waiver authority, all Airmen must follow AFIs.

As a new Medical Service Corps Officer, you should be familiar with the Air Force e-Publishing website. Here you will find the most recent editions of publications and forms, to include Air Force, Major Command (MAJCOM), Field Operating Agency (FOA), and base or unit-level documents.

The Air Force e-Publishing website should be your starting point for policy guidance and/or direction. It is easily accessed through the AF Portal via the “Library & Resources” tab. Select the “AF ePublications” options from the drop down menu, then select the “Publications + Forms” tab.

Additional websites can be accessed from the AF Portal “Library & Resources” tab by selecting the “Publication” option in the drop down menu.

Publications change frequently therefore, always verify you are using the most current version of a publication. This is especially important when writing or reviewing Medical Group Operating Instructions. Likewise, your MAJCOM functional (i.e., SGA, SGX, etc.) can also validate the most current publication and can also help provide interpretation of existing publications and/or guidance, if needed.

#### **23.2. IS THERE A DEFENSE HEALTH AGENCY (DHA) POLICY FOR THAT?**

DHA publications can be located on the DHA Public System Office website.

This site is accessible to anyone with a Common Access Card (CAC) and includes all signed DHA-Procedural Instructions (PIs), DHA-Interim Procedures Memorandums (IPMs), DHA-Administrative Instructions (AIs) and policy memorandums. It does not include any draft documents.

DHA publications follow the Department of Defense (DoD) structure for numbering (i.e., DODI 5025.01 is in the subject group 5000-Acquisition, Administrative Management Organizational Charters, Security, Public Affairs, and Legislative Affairs. The number "25" represents the subgroup 5000-5099 - Acquisition and Administrative Management).

Beginning 1 October 2018, Military Treatment Facility (MTF) commanders must follow DHA publications. Where no DHA guidance exists, Military Department (MILDEP) policy will remain in effect until superseded by a DHA-PI or DHA-IPM.

### **23.3. OTHER SOURCES (DODI, NDAA, USCODE, FAR, JTR, TPM, ETC)**

#### **DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (DOD) PUBLICATIONS**

The DoD publishes five types of publications to establish or implement DoD policy, designate authority, assign responsibilities, or provide procedures. Issuances apply to more than one DoD Component and include DoD Directives (DoDDs), Instructions (DoDIs), Manuals (DoDMs), Directive-type Memorandums (DTMs), and AIs.

Understand that guidance in Higher Headquarters (HHQ) publications takes precedence over guidance in lower level publications, unless the directing HHQ office agrees to the exception/deviation identified in the lower level publication. For example, a DODI would take precedence over an AFI; however, both documents would need to be followed.

#### **NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT (NDAA)**

The NDAA is the name for a series of federal laws which specify the annual budget and expenditures of the DoD.

Under the Rules of the House and Senate, it is the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) and the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) which provide jurisdiction over bills, resolutions, and other matters related to the common defense. The HASC and SASC, through subcommittees, hold a series of hearings to review budget requests and related matters, prior to approving the annual NDAA.

It is important to understand the NDAA process and language since these laws directly impact the MILDEPs. Current legislation can be found at the Library of Congress ([congress.gov](http://congress.gov)) website.

#### **UNITED STATES CODE (USC)**

The United States Code is a consolidation of general and permanent laws of the United States. The Code exists to enable easy access to Federal statutory law. USC Title 10 – Armed Forces (Subtitle A-E), specifically outlines the role, missions and organizations of the Armed Forces, as well as, the DoD.

#### **FEDERAL ACQUISITION REGULATION (FAR)**

The Federal Acquisition Regulations system establishes uniform policies and procedures for all acquisition activities. The FAR is a set of rules under the Federal Acquisition Regulations System which regulates government procurement to ensure sound business



judgement is used to provide the best value product or service.

The FAR can be located at the Acquisition.gov website. Additional regulations can be accessed from the Acquisition.gov website by selecting the “Regulations” tab.

### **JOINT TRAVEL REGULATIONS (JTR)**

The JTR is applicable to all members of the uniformed services and DoD civilian employees using DoD funding for travel. It provides guidance related to per diem, travel and transportation allowances, as well as relocation allowances. It applies to travelers in any travel category.

## **23.4. WHAT IF GUIDANCE CONFLICTS?**

While guidance publications are reviewed and coordinated through a formal process, there is always the possibility guidance will conflict.

When publications conflict, an AF Form 847, Recommendation for Change of Publication, can be submitted to the MAJCOM functional Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) for the publication (see information in 23.5).

Be sure to do your research (i.e., review all related policy) before submitting a change request. If you cannot find additional guidance through official websites, or the links below, remember, you can always conduct a Google search. And remember, you can always contact your MAJCOM functional for assistance.

## **23.5. HOW TO GO ABOUT CHANGING POLICY OR REQUEST A WAIVER**

Air Force publications include waiver approval authorities which are identified within each document with a Tier number (i.e., T-0, T-1, T-2, T-3). Table 1.1 in AFI 33-360, details the Tier waiver authorities.

If a commander makes the decision to assume risk and not comply with a regulatory guidance requirement, a waiver must be submitted in accordance with AFI 33-360. NOTE: Since waivers are submitted for a specific commander accepting risk, Tier 1, 2, and 3 waivers automatically expire 90 days after a change of leadership, unless the new commander renews the waiver.

Requests for waivers are submitted with an AF Form 679, Air Force Publication Compliance Item Waiver Request/Approval. AF Form 679s are routed through the chain of command to the appropriate Tier waiver authority.

To ensure success, route your waiver to the applicable wing-level program manager (i.e., Safety) or subject matter expert for informal review before submitting it to the Group.

The Wing Inspector General (IG) office will submit approved waivers to the OPR of the Higher Headquarter publication being waived; waivers are tracked at the Wing Commanders Inspection Management Board (CIMB).

## **POLICY REFERENCES:**

- AFI 1-1, Air Force Standards, 12 November 2014
- AFI 33-360\_AFGM2019-02, Publications and Forms Management, 28 June 2019
- AFI 90-201, The Air Force Inspection System, 20 November 2018
- National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA) for Fiscal Years 2017 (Section 30702) -2019
- Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, Implementation of the Transfer of Responsibility for Managing the Military Medical Treatment Facilities, 6 June 2019
- Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Memorandum, Authorities and Responsibilities of the Military treatment Facility Leaders, Service Leaders and the Military Medical Departments, 21 February 2018
- DHA Memorandum, Policy Guidance in Support of Defense Health Agency Military Medical Treatment Facility Responsibilities, 29 June 2018
- Congressional Research Service, Defense Primer: The NDAA Process, 9 November 2018

## **APPLICABLE WEBSITES:**

- Library of Congress - <https://www.congress.gov/>
- Office of the Law Revisions Counsel, United States Code - <https://uscode.house.gov/>
- Department of Defense (DoD) Publications - <https://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/DoD-Issuances/>
- DoD Forms Management Program - <https://www.esd.whs.mil/directives/forms/>
- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs (CJCS) Directives Library - <https://www.jcs.mil/Library/>
- CJCS/Joint Staff (JS) Directives Library - <https://jsportal.sp.pentagon.mil/sites/Matrix/DEL/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- Federal Acquisition Regulations System - <https://www.acquisition.gov/browse/index/far>
- Defense Travel Management Office - <https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/travelreg.cfm>
- The Joint Travel Regulations (JTR) - <https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/perdiem/JTR.pdf>
- DHA Publication System Office - <https://info.health.mil/cos/admin/pubs/SitePages/Home.aspx>
- Air Force E-Publishing - <https://www.e-publishing.af.mil/>
- Army Publishing Directorate - <https://armypubs.army.mil/>
- Navy Publications and Instructions - <https://www.public.navy.mil/BUPERS-NPC/REFERENCE/Pages/default.aspx>
- US Marine Corps Publication - <https://www.marines.mil/news/publications>
- US Coast Guard Publications - <https://www.uscg.mil/Resources/Library/>

## **Chapter 24**

### **Writing Policy**

**Key Contributor:** Col Kathleen Mackey

**BLUF:** Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson in 2017 “said the 1,300 official instructions are often outdated and inconsistent, breeding cynicism when Airmen feel they cannot possibly follow every written rule.”

#### **24.1. HOW DO I WRITE A MDGI?**

**Col Kathleen Mackey, 48th Medical Group Commander, RAF Lakenheath**

Know the Objective... What does this instruction need to cover and why?

Sometime in your career you will be in charge of reviewing and rewriting a Medical Group Instruction (MDGI).

First look at the current MDGI, what is the purpose? Research the AFI or publications it is trying to comply with” Determine do you really need this? If the MDGI is just regurgitating the current regulations... you probably do not need an MDGI.”

If you determine there is a reason for explaining a difference or more concise procedures than the Air Force guidance states, MDGI is a great way to do that.

If you are updating a current MDGI, then look at the references in the MDGI, do they still exist and are they still accurate? Are the forms still accurate? There is nothing more frustrating to a person starting their new job and the MDGI does not have current procedures or references.

Look at the outline, does it make sense and if you were new and were trying to find what you needed in the AFI, is it a quick content page to tell you where to go?

Do not be afraid to reach out to other bases, MAJCOM and HQ to search for a current product from your peers that might have a good start.

Do not think you can do this all alone! You must research who else has a piece of this responsibility in this process. Gather these members and work together to put a solid product together.

Have someone look at the final product, ensure it goes through proper routing and has a number of eyes to ensure it make sense and anyone can follow it.

Remember you are writing this for all the new people that come after you and guiding them

on how to do their jobs, this is the first place people will start their Self inspection in a new job, help them out by giving them a good solid product...do not pencil whip it, take time to do justice to the process.

## **24.2. HOW DO I WRITE AN OI?**

### **Col Kathleen Mackey, 48th Medical Group Commander, RAF Lakenheath**

First understand the purpose... an Operation Instruction assigns responsibilities, directs actions and prescribes procedures at the lowest level with a single subordinate function.

Be clear in identifying “who” this applies to in your Instruction. Who is responsible for what? Tables are always good and clear reference.

Details, Who, What, How and When? Do not assume these details are implied.

Who is the approval authority?

What is driving the need for this publication? Law, safety, or security? “Keep these items as your focus while writing the document.”

Write it to the newest and least ranking Airman/Civilian in mind, easy to understand and read without all the acronyms.

Walk through the process, workflow, and pictures... whatever it takes to help people understand the importance of following the instruction.

As stated before, always check your references and supporting information for accuracy.

### **POLICY REFERENCES:**

- Air Force Instruction 33-360, Publications and Forms Management
- Air Force Guidance Memorandum to Air Force Instruction AFI 33-360, Publications and Forms Management

## **Chapter 25**

### **Public Speaking**

Key Contributor: Lt Col Christine Sanders

BLUF: Public speaking is simply a performance. If you know your topic, understand the audience you are briefing and provide easy to follow charts, you've set the stage for a successful engagement.

#### **25.1. TIPS AND TRICKS FOR BRIEFING**

Know your topic. If you don't know what you are talking about, it will show.

Honesty is the best policy. When asked a question that you can't answer, say it. But always find the answer and deliver it.

Know your audience. Understand the personality of the audience. This can be rank based or topic based. Are you briefing a room of senior leaders? Are you briefing academics? The style is different.

Be confident and learn how to use your voice to engage your audience. Also use your face to express the emotion of a certain topic. If you want your audience to be excited over a new proposal, then be excited.

Engage the audience. Make eye contact and speak to the members of your audience. Now, don't be creepy and stare down one person. I try to move around the room with my eyes. If you become flustered when making direct eye contact, cheat. Look at hairlines.

Nervous? Breathe. Take your time. Use this to avoid verbal pauses, pregnant pauses or repetitive words. Ya know, right?

Are you an "ummer"? This is a difficult habit to overcome, but it can be overcome. You will have to be very deliberate when briefing. This reaches back to knowing your topic. If you have clear command of the subject matter the frequency of "ums" should be reduced.

It's called a brief, but it is not a race. Slow down and enunciate your words. There is nothing worse than walking away from a briefing with no idea what was presented because the briefer was too fast and didn't enunciate.

DO NOT READ THE SLIDE. Can't count the number of times I've heard leaders come out of a briefing saying "I can read a slide."

## **25.2. HOW TO PREPARE SLIDES BASED ON AUDIENCE**

First and foremost, PowerPoint slides should be used as a map for your briefing not a script. Determine what you want to tell your audience and pick out the main points.

When you have creative authority don't go too flashy. This is event dependent and there may be times when a flashy, over-the-top template actually meets your purpose. Use it sparingly.

Don't use "eye charts". Whenever possible. There are times it is part of the required format. If you are the architect do not do it.

Who are you briefing? Senior leaders have very little time for you to present weeds. They need a quick bottom line, problem/solution.

If you don't feel comfortable using PowerPoint, there are a lot of courses out there to help you improve your skills. Education and Training should be able to help you find one that will meet your needs.

Do not use animation or sounds for official briefings. They are distracting. They can be used sparingly for informal briefings but the usage has really become passé.

Finally, most often these days we are forced into templates that we strictly adhere to. Most Wings have a standard format. Reach out to the Unit Program Coordinator to obtain the desired format. Don't reinvent the wheel if you don't have to.