

# Anchoring Effect: The Power of “Suggestion” on Military Evaluations

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# Military Evaluation System



Evaluations (EVALs) are provided to the service member on an annual basis

EVALs serve the following purposes:

- Official documentation of the member's job performance over the course of his/her career
- Primary factor in determining promotion in front of a Promotions Board

Two main parts of an EVAL:

Individual Trait Average

Promotion Recommendation block

Most important part of the EVAL

EVALUATION REPORT & COUNSELING REPORT (E1-E6) (cont'd)

RCS BUPERS 1610-1

1. Name (Last, First MI Suffix)  
SAMPLE, HARVEY J

2. Rate  
PN1

3. Desig  
SW/AW

4. SSN  
123-45-6789

| PERFORMANCE TRAITS   | 1.0<br>Below Standards   | 2.0<br>Meets Standards   | 3.0<br>Exceeds Standards            | 4.0<br>Outstanding       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 18. TEAMWORK:<br>- Cooperates with others in work with others, puts self above team.<br>- Contributes to team building and team morale.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. LEADERSHIP:<br>- Inspires growth/development or motivates subordinates.<br>- Plans to organize, create problems for subordinates.<br>- Directs and/or achieves goals relevant to command mission and vision.<br>- Exhibits ability to cope with or relieve stress.<br>- Adequate communicator.<br>- Takes hazards or unsafe practices. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

43. Individual Trait Average: 4.14

44. COMMENTS ON PERFORMANCE: All 1.0 marks, three 2.0 marks, and one 3.0 mark. Ranked #1 of 3 in Admin Department and #3 of 13 assigned. An absolute must select for Chief Petty Officer.

45. QUALIFICATIONS/ACHIEVEMENTS: Education, awards, community involvement, etc., during this period. Awarded Navy Achievement Medal (2nd award); awarded COMNAVJURFLANT Letter of Appreciation. SOQ for 2Q, CY 02.

46. SUMMARY: 0 0 5 5 3

47. Signature of Reporting Senior: R. Z. Sam

48. Signature of Individual Evaluated: Harvey J. Sample

49. Group Average: 4.00

50. Signature of Reporting Senior: R. Z. Sam

51. Signature of Individual Evaluated: Harvey J. Sample

52. Type name, grade/assignment, UIC, and signature of Regular Reporting Senior on Counseling Report





# Military Evaluation Rankings



Member's Promotion Recommendation is determined by being ranked against his/her peers.

Member is ranked based on recommendations by the following three **decision making bodies**:

Chiefs mess

Department Heads

Executive Officer

Chiefs mess ranks members 1st

Department Heads rank members 2nd

Executive Officer ranks members last

Final ranking determines the members'

Promotion Recommendation category

| <i>Chief Rankings</i> |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Name</b>           | <b>Rank</b> |
| Sally                 | 2           |
| Joe                   | 3           |
| Bob                   | 5           |
| Zeke                  | 4           |
| David                 | 6           |
| Rose                  | 1           |
| Howard                | 7           |





# Anchoring Effect



After the chiefs have completed their ranking of members, this list is turned over to the Department Heads who conduct their own internal ranking. Anchoring Effect has a powerful influence on the Department Head decision making process.

For example:

| <i>Chief Rankings</i> |      |
|-----------------------|------|
| Name                  | Rank |
| Sally                 | 2    |
| Joe                   | 3    |
| Bob                   | 5    |
| Zeke                  | 4    |
| David                 | 6    |
| Rose                  | 1    |
| Howard                | 7    |

| <i>Department Head Rankings</i> |      |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Name                            | Rank |
| Sally                           | 2    |
| Joe                             | 3    |
| Bob                             | 4    |
| Zeke                            | 5    |
| David                           | 6    |
| Rose                            | 1    |
| Howard                          | 7    |



...very minimal changes from one list to the other....



# Anchoring Effect Mitigation



Department Heads should start their ranking from scratch just like the chief's do.

Doing so will allow for a less-biased approach to deciding how to rank each individual member.

Executive Officer is in the position to adjudicate major discrepancies between chief and department head rankings.

Biggest effects will be seen in the mid-ranked personnel, given that the top-ranked and bottom-ranked positions are always a topic of vehement opinion.

