

INFLATION OF RATINGS IN THE NCOERS

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An ethical dilemma that has the Army at a crossroads with its Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Reporting System (NCOERS) is leaders inflating their ratings in the evaluation of noncommissioned officers (NCOs). The purpose of the NCOERS is to strengthen the ability of the NCO Corps to meet the professional challenges of the future through the indoctrination of Army values and basic NCO responsibilities. It also ensures the selection of the best qualified NCOs to serve in positions of increasing responsibility by providing rating chain view of performance and potential for use in centralized selection, assignment, and other Enlisted Personnel Management System (EPMS) decisions. Without modifying the current NCOERS, or the implementation of a new NCOERS, the Army will continue to fail to not promote the most qualified and deserving Soldiers.

Leaders at all levels are charged with the responsibility to accomplish the mission and taking care of their Soldiers. Inherent in that is the responsibility to mentor - coach, teach and counsel - their subordinates. When this is done properly, Soldiers grow by seeing the knowledge, skills, attributes, and values that they wish to possess in action. When this is not done, Soldiers are forced to learn on their own, often being influenced in a manner that results in substandard behavior. Those leaders that mentor properly use the key ingredient of communication to be effective. However, in a society that communicates only through sound bites, news clippings and short emails, most leaders are not spending an adequate amount of time and effort to ensure that effective communication is taking place.

Raters in the NCOERS are to prepare a fair and correct report evaluating the NCO's duty performance, values, and responsibilities. Many raters take this responsibility very seriously and follow the Army's regulation and the guidance provided by the unit's senior NCOs. These leaders prepare reports that accurately depict the Soldier and their performance. They counsel

the Soldier as required by regulation and communicate their expectations, with established standards, for the Soldier to achieve. Other raters have the intention to prepare a thorough NCOER, but because they have not counseled the Soldier throughout the rating period their evaluation falls short. This is unfortunate as it is extremely difficult to document a Soldier's marginal performance without knowing what the prescribed standards were. Without the necessary documentation their ratings are higher than the performance would indicate.

Still others however, feel that the best method for them to take care of the Soldier is by submitting a report that presents the NCO in the best light. They do not want to damage a Soldier's career by submitting a rating that is not either an excellence, or at least a strong success. Even worse, some raters allow the NCO to prepare their own evaluation. These evaluation reports are incredibly biased and do not represent the "rating chains view" as the rating chain did not prepare the report. Leaders seem to be unaware of the damage that they are doing to the Army by their action. Without an accurate representation of the NCO's performance during the rating period, the Army cannot promote, train or assign them properly.

The senior rater is responsible in the NCOERS to observe the NCO from an organizational perspective, over-watch the performance evaluation and evaluate their potential. They compare the NCO's performance and potential with that of NCOs of the same grade. In most instances, the rater prepares the senior rater's portion of the evaluation. Though they have the critical role of being the link between the day-to-day observation of the rated NCO's performance by the rater and the longer-term evaluation of the rated NCO's potential by Department of Army (DA) selection boards, senior raters shirk this responsibility. Additionally, many have the opinion that in order for the NCO to be considered successful they must have top blocks. Though guidance from Enlisted Records and Evaluation Center, after action reviews from promotion boards and

the Sergeant Major of the Army has continued to state otherwise. Senior raters have no accountability because there is no data available which would provide a comparison of how they have evaluated other Soldiers. The EPMS is then left to interpret what the senior rater meant in their evaluation.

The inflation of the Enlisted Evaluation Report (EER) led to the Army's development and institution of the NCOERS in 1988. The inflation of the NCOER by raters and senior raters is having a negative affect on the selection and assignment of the best qualified Soldier. Though many leaders are well meaning and are not intentionally submitting reports that do not sufficiently reflect the performance and potential of their NCOs, they are still damaging the NCOERS. Soldiers with evaluations submitted that are accurate are being penalized because their rating is lower, though their performance and potential is in fact higher. The Army expects its leaders to uphold the Army's values in preparing evaluation reports. If they don't, how can they expect their subordinates to uphold the values in their performance?