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Creating the Strategic Corporal – How to Improve the Preparation and Selection of the  
Marine Corps' First Line of Leadership

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## Executive Summary

**Title:** Creating the Strategic Corporal – How to Improve the Preparation and Selection of the Marine Corps’ First Line of Leadership

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**Thesis:** This study evaluates all aspects of how the Marine Corps creates its Strategic Corporals. It has found that the majority of Corporals within the Marine Corps may not be fully professionally competent for two main reasons. First, new Corporals do not have a clear understanding of their professional responsibilities. Second, all improvements to the process by which the Marine Corps creates its Corporals have so far focused solely on education, and have failed to identify and correct shortcomings in the evaluation and selection process used.

**Discussion:** General Kulak’s 1998 article that coined the term “Strategic Corporal” and General Amos’ Reawakening campaign served to orient the Marine Corps toward ensuring it understands the importance of, and creates strong and competent Corporals. One challenge to creating strong Corporals is how to ensure a clear understanding of professional responsibilities. This study explains professional responsibilities and makes them easily identifiable by distinguishing them from technical responsibilities. It also evaluates how the Marine Corps prepares its Lance Corporals for the responsibilities of a Noncommissioned Officer through required professional military education (PME). It further takes a detailed look at how Lance Corporals are selected for regular promotion by evaluating how Composite and Cutting Scores are calculated, and considers the role of the Proficiency and Conduct Marking Process, as well as the Non Recommendation/Will Not Promote Process. Finally, it identifies shortcomings in these processes and offers corrections and/or enhancements that will improve the quality of Marines becoming Corporals, thus resulting in a higher quality of leadership.

**Conclusion:** The Marine Corps to date has spent much time and effort on acknowledging the importance of, and creating professional military education for its Corporals. It is time now to look at the rest of the process beyond just professional military education, and make the changes needed, no matter how difficult, to ensure the Corps has professional and prepared Strategic Corporals in its first line of leadership.

## *Preface*

As a Sergeant Major of Marines with the responsibility to be the duty expert in all things common to every Battalion or higher level Marine Corps unit, I have the opportunity to focus on the professional aspects of the force rather than specific Military Occupational Specialty concerns. An understanding of and appreciation for the professional aspects of being a Marine are not more critical than at the rank of Corporal due to the proximity they have to the Non NCO ranks, the newness of the Noncommissioned Officer responsibilities, and the level of authority and responsibility the Corps gives them.

I tried to remember the challenges I faced as a new Corporal, and the challenges of all of the young Corporals I have served with across the MAGTF as I evaluated how we as a Corps prepare them. I have felt for many years that the institution fails to prepare them adequately, promotes Marines that should not be promoted, fails to promote some that should, and this study has confirmed that for me. I have also felt for many years that as an institution, Marines are quick to assign blame for institutional problems on our Noncommissioned Officer Corps, and then use additional professional military education only as the answer. I believe it is time to look to other places and start making the hard manpower decisions that will ensure we have professionally competent Corporals.

I would like to thank first and foremost my wife Heidi and son 2nd Lieutenant Michael Harting for the support and inspiration to stay educated. Secondly, to all of the Strategic Corporals serving that are doing the best they can to understand and fulfill their professional responsibilities - - this is for you. Next, I would like to thank those that made my attendance at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College possible. Finally, I want to thank my faculty advisors Dr. Richard DiNardo and LtCol Haakon Waroe, my Master of Military Studies mentor Dr. William Gordon, students of Conference Group 16, and Gunnery Sergeant Alejandro Gonzalez of the Manpower Information Systems Technology Manpower and Reserve Affairs section at HQMC.

## **Introduction**

*In many cases, the individual Marine will be the most conspicuous symbol of American foreign policy and will potentially influence not only the immediate tactical situation, but the operational and strategic levels as well. His actions, therefore, will directly impact the outcome of the larger operation; and he will become...-the Strategic Corporal.<sup>1</sup>*

-General Charles C. Krulak  
31<sup>st</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps

*Strong leadership is the key to our success, and thus our Non-Commissioned Officers are the main effort. Of the 174,415 enlisted Marines on active duty today, 145,114 are Sergeants and below. Fully 83.2% of our enlisted force is led by NCOs. Our Sergeants and Corporals proved over the past decade of war that they are the backbone of our Corps. As such, we will publically increase the stature of our NCOs commensurate with our high regard for them. Commanding Officers and Sergeants Major need improve the quality of our promotion ceremonies for Corporals and Sergeants. Establish more stringent criteria for promotion to the NCO ranks. Cutting scores will become initial qualifiers for promotion, not determinants of promotion.<sup>2</sup>*

-General James F. Amos  
35<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps

*Marines in the grades of Corporal and Sergeant are required to exercise an ever-increasing degree of maturity, leadership, and professionalism. To a large extent, accomplishment of the ultimate mission -- success in battle -- depends on the manner in which Marines are developed into small unit leaders and their professional abilities. Consequently, no Marine will be promoted to Corporal or Sergeant who has not positively demonstrated the potential, motivation, and maturity to satisfactorily discharge the duties of a small unit leader.<sup>3</sup>*

-MCO P1400.32d Marine Corps Promotion  
Manual, Vol 2, Enlisted Promotions

Noncommissioned Officers are the backbone of the military. This is a common phrase and belief within the U.S. military. In some services the term Noncommissioned Officer can refer to all enlisted leaders, such as Sergeant through Command Sergeant Major in the Army. In the Marine Corps, the term Noncommissioned Officer refers

specifically to its Corporals and Sergeants; however, the belief that these two ranks are in fact the backbone of the service is still valid. In 1998, then Commandant of the Marine Corps General Krulak coined the term “Strategic Corporal” in an article outlining the extreme importance of our lowest level of leadership to the operational and strategic levels of war.<sup>4</sup> In 2013, then Commandant General Amos called for a “Reawakening” of professional conduct and made the Noncommissioned Officer the main effort.<sup>5</sup> Following both of these efforts at emphasizing and energizing the Noncommissioned Officer Corps, many articles were written about how to create the best Noncommissioned Officer, and some institutional changes were made toward that effort; however, changes have so far mainly focused on education, rather than the entire process by which the Marine Corps creates Noncommissioned Officers. Within the Noncommissioned Officer ranks, and indeed within the entire leadership rank structure of the Marine Corps, the challenge of creating a competent Corporal of Marines is the most difficult.

This study evaluates all aspects of how the Marine Corps creates its Strategic Corporals. It has found that the majority of Corporals within the Marine Corps may fall short of being professionally competent for two main reasons. First, new Corporals do not have a clear understanding of their professional responsibilities.<sup>6</sup> Second, all improvements to the process by which the Marine Corps creates its Corporals have so far focused solely on education, and have failed to identify and correct shortcomings in the evaluation and selection process used. This study will therefore offer a clear distinction between professional and technical responsibilities and competence, as well as improvements to the overall process by which the Marine Corps creates its Strategic Corporals.

A clear understanding of the Marine Corps rank structure is required in order to understand its successes and failures as they relate to Corporals. The rank structure in the Marine Corps is a highly effective hierarchy that allows efficient command and control. It is generally broken up into enlisted Marines, also known as NON NCOs – Private through Lance Corporal, Noncommissioned Officers – Corporal through Sergeant, and Staff Noncommissioned Officers – Staff Sergeant through Sergeant Major. Officer ranks include Warrant Officers – Warrant Officer 1 through Chief Warrant Officer 5, Company Grade Officers – 2nd Lieutenant through Captain, Field Grade Officers – Major through Colonel, and Flag Officers – Brigadier General through General.<sup>7</sup> Inherent in military rank are different things, the most important of which for this paper are ever increasing amounts of responsibility and authority, both professional and technical.

Following this general understanding of the rank structure, an appreciation for where the Corporal falls within it is needed. The Corporal is unique in that it is the Corps' first leadership rank. Like a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant within the Commissioned Officer Corps, the Corporal is new to leadership responsibilities; however, unlike the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant who is fresh from six months of education and training at The Basic School, the new Corporal has no resident leadership education behind him. The Corporal, instead, is expected to have learned through distance Professional Military Education (PME) courses and on the job training. At the base level, the Corporal is expected to be able to lead a fireteam maneuver element of three junior Marines, although, in many Military Occupational Specialties (MOS), the certainty of assignment to this type of leadership billet is difficult if not impossible.

In the contemporary Marine Corps, the growing importance of the Corporal as a leader is continuously emphasized, both doctrinally as the Marine Corps emphasizes more distributed operations, and culturally/socially with current perceived ethical problems in areas such as sexual assault, hazing, and suicides. However, the emphasis on the importance of Noncommissioned Officers in general and Corporals in particular is nothing new. The 31<sup>st</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps General Charles C. Krulak recognized both the tactical importance of what he called the “Strategic Corporal” as well as the professional importance of Corporals as small unit leaders in his 1999 forward to Marine Corps Reference Publication (MCRP) 6-11D Sustaining The Transformation.<sup>8</sup> General Krulak further validated his belief that the Marine Corps’ most junior leaders, which are its Corporals, hold the key to success in both combat and garrison.<sup>9</sup> The 36<sup>th</sup> and current Marine Corps Commandant General Joseph F. Dunford Jr. reemphasized the importance of leadership at the junior level by focusing on decentralization, the use of mission tactics, which is a process that inherently pushes responsibility and authority down to the lowest level, and empowering subordinates in his 2015 Planning Guidance.<sup>10</sup>

### **Responsibility and Authority – Technical and Professional**

As previously mentioned, responsibility and authority are inherent in rank, with a level of authority that is usually commensurate to the level of responsibilities assigned. However, rank is not the only way to receive responsibility and authority in the Marine Corps. Billet assignment is the other way to hold responsibility and authority. Sometimes the billet responsibility and authority will augment the responsibility and authority

already held by the rank, such as in the case of a Sergeant billeted as a Squad Leader or a Lieutenant Colonel billeted as a Battalion Commander. Both have responsibilities inherent in their rank, but also have added responsibilities due to their assigned billets, billets that are generally assigned because the Marine Corps has determined that they hold the appropriate rank. Sometimes, however, due to manpower shortfalls or other factors, the billet assignment held is designed for a Marine with higher levels of professional abilities such as in the case of the NON NCO filling the Noncommissioned Officer billet, or the Staff Noncommissioned Officer filling the Commissioned Officer billet. In both of these cases a junior Marine will hold higher level authority and responsibility that is completely divorced from his rank and solely due to his billet.

Along with the understanding that responsibility and authority are inherent in both rank and billet, and that rank and billet responsibility and authority may not be commensurate, an appreciation for the differences between technical and professional responsibilities is required, as in many cases this marks the difference between rank and billet responsibility and authority. Technical responsibilities are fairly easy to understand, as they relate directly to the military occupational specialty (MOS) assigned. The Marine Corps has various publications that outline standards that make MOS responsibilities and proficiency relatively black and white. MOS Roadmaps are guides to required and suggested education, training, and billet, which cover the entire rank structure of specific MOS's. Their purpose is to help Marines and their leaders "intelligently manage their respective careers."<sup>11</sup> Training and Readiness (T&R) Manuals outline required Individual Training Standards (ITS) and Mission Essential Tasks (MET) by rank and MOS in order

to establish training standards, regulations, and policies regarding training Marines for each MOS.

As a relatively simple example of how these references interact with rank and billet, the MOS Roadmap for an 0311 Infantryman has a recommended billet assignment for a Corporal of fireteam leader/grenadier or scout team leader.<sup>12</sup> The Infantry T&R Manual then outlines the technical responsibilities of a Fire Team Leader as carrying out the orders of the Squad Leader, training his team in all T&R tasks, effective control of his team in patrolling, the defense and offense, and for the condition, care and use of its weapons and equipment.<sup>13</sup> However, for the more complicated to manage Combat Service Support MOS of 3531 Motor Vehicle Operator, the MOS Roadmap has a recommended billet for a Corporal as a Motor Vehicle Operator in a tactical or commercial motor pool. Of note, the MOS Roadmap shows the billet of Motor Vehicle Operator as a generic Private through Sergeant billet, with variations only in collateral type duties such as Dispatcher and MIMMS Clerk.<sup>14</sup> The T&R Manual also shows this lack of variation in technical responsibilities by rank as most requirements such as the inspection, loading, and operating of motor transport equipment is standard for Private through Sergeant, with only a few technical responsibilities such as the use of automated maintenance systems, and publication and hazardous material management reserved for Noncommissioned Officers, with no specific technical responsibilities exclusive to Corporals.<sup>15</sup> The two examples listed above show that through the MOS Roadmaps and T&R Standards, all MOS's and ranks have technical responsibilities, but that not all MOSs have technical leadership billets that are commensurate to what the Marine Corps

considers as professional leadership ranks. This will hold more significance to the issues of professionally incompetent Corporals as this paper develops.

In contrast to clearly defined technical responsibilities, professional responsibilities are much more subjective, much less tangible, and deserve a detailed definition.

A profession is made up of practitioners performing a kind of knowledge-based work in which the workers enjoy a high degree of independence in application of particular skills. A profession generally has four basic elements: a specialized practical expertise, an acknowledged responsibility to society, a sense of corporateness, and a professional ethos.”<sup>16</sup>

U.S. military wide professional standards that apply to Noncommissioned Officers should be considered standards of the profession of arms and are dictated in various sources to include Title 10 U.S. Code, the Uniform Code for Military Justice (UCMJ), and the new National Defense University publication *The Noncommissioned Officer and Petty Officer, Backbone of the Armed Forces 2014*, hereafter referred to as *Backbone*. Although not specifically mentioning Noncommissioned Officers, the exemplary conduct section of Title 10 U.S. Code is the highest authority outlining Noncommissioned Officer professional responsibilities to the nation. It states that those in authority in the naval service must set the example in virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination. It also requires leaders to be conscious of and correct deficiencies in the conduct of subordinates, all things that the Marine Corps expects of its Corporals today.<sup>17</sup>

The UCMJ is another national level reference that recognizes the authority and responsibility of Noncommissioned Officer by giving them apprehension and seizure powers. It further makes it a specific violation of the UCMJ to be insubordinate to Noncommissioned Officers while acknowledging the previously mentioned evolving

nature of their responsibilities, acknowledging in the discussion of Article 91 that “...increasing responsibility for training, complex and expensive equipment, and leadership in combat is placed on noncommissioned and petty officers in today’s armed forces. The law should reinforce the respect and obedience which is due them with meaningful sanctions.”<sup>18</sup> *Backbone* is the most comprehensive publication yet to discuss the complete set of professional responsibilities specific to the Noncommissioned Officer in the U.S. military and begins by acknowledging that they “...are now empowered to assume added roles and responsibilities—with commensurate accountability—once reserved for the commissioned officer corps in each Service.”<sup>19</sup>

In addition to the general Noncommissioned Officer professional responsibilities to the overall profession of arms as outlined above, each military service has its own unique professional responsibilities, specifically in its practical expertise and professional ethics and standards. *Backbone* discusses the difference in Marine Corps professional standards by stating

It is the culture of the Marine Corps that makes it different not only from society as a whole, but also from the other Services. The Marine Corps is determined to be different—in military appearance, obedience to orders, disciplined behavior, adherence to traditions, and most important, the unyielding conviction that the Corps exists to fight.<sup>20</sup>

The Marine Corps has many sources that discuss the professional requirements and standards expected of Marine leaders. Chief among them are the Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment, and the Leadership Traits and Principles. Specific to Noncommissioned Officers in general and Corporals specifically, the Noncommissioned Officer Promotion Warrant tells Corporals that their “conduct and professionalism both on and off duty shall be above ~~responsible and that they are~~ responsible and that they are

accomplishment of their assigned mission and for the safety, professional development and well-being of the Marines in their charge. The currently accepted Noncommissioned Officer Creed emphasizes continuous self-improvement, a pursuit of excellence, integrity, and upholding the heritage of the professionals that have come before<sup>21</sup>.

As outlined above there are many sources that discuss professionalism and professional topics for Marines; however, truly understanding what these subjective attributes are can still be difficult. Also, some efforts at enhancing professionalism can hinder rather than help the process. For example, the Noncommissioned Officer's Creed just mentioned, while certainly beneficial, replaced a previous creed that outlined in clear terms a Noncommissioned Officer's professional responsibilities, and was arguably more appropriate for a new Corporal to understand.<sup>22</sup>

One approach to understanding professional responsibilities and authority is to separate the professional responsibilities and authorities from the technical MOS responsibilities and authorities. A very easy way to do this is a comparative exercise with MOS's that are not unique to the Marine Corps, of which there are many. Utilizing a Marine Corps 0311 as an example, a Corporal 0311 is an E-4 Infantryman who utilizes the same weapons systems, gear, and general doctrine of maneuver warfare as an E4 Corporal (or in most cases Specialist 4) in the Army. So the question is, what makes that Marine Corporal different? If there is no difference other than organizational name, then Army and Marine Infantry Corporals would seem to be interchangeable. This applies to other elements of the Marine Air Ground Task Force as well. Utilizing a Corporal 6256 C-130 Airframes Mechanic, the same question applies. The Air Force has E4's who are C-130 Airframes Mechanics and who repair the same type of aircraft with the same

procedures. Not much is different within the technical (MOS) realm. So, what makes the Marine Corporal different? The answer is not the technical responsibilities, it is the professional responsibilities. The difference is Marine Corps professional standards above and beyond MOS technical standards, professional standards that every Marine and every Marine leader hold and are responsible for, regardless of MOS. These professional standards are common to and expected of all Marines and include standards of performance, proficiency, discipline, conduct, personal appearance, physical fitness, customs and courtesies, etc. More significant in terms of this paper, is that the Marine Corporal, unlike the Army Specialist 4 and the Airforce Senior Airman, and similar to the Navy Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class, is a Noncommissioned Officer and has professional leadership responsibilities.

The only resource that clearly distinguishes this difference between technical and professional standards within the Marine Corps is *MCO P1400.32d Marine Corps Promotion Manual, Vol 2, Enlisted Promotions 2012*, which ironically makes this distinction in the Non Punitive Reduction Chapter that discusses reductions for incompetence. In outlining “Technical Incompetence” the manual states

A Marine is technically incompetent if he/she is not proficient or capable of performing the duties and tasks prescribed for his or her assigned MOS, in the grade currently held, as specified in the current edition of MCO P1200.16 (Marine Corps Military Occupational Specialties Manual (MOS Manual)).<sup>23</sup>

This definition reinforces the idea that technical competence of technical responsibilities is easily measurable and identifiable as it is outlined in black and white by grade (rank) and MOS. With regard to professional competence, the manual states

A Marine who fails to exhibit military attributes to the degree appropriate for the current grade is professionally incompetent. These attributes include, but are not limited to: leadership, force, judgment, integrity, military presence and bearing, reliability, obedience, moral fitness, physical fitness, endurance, and self-discipline.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, identifying whether a Marine lacks the appropriate degree of force, for example, is a subjective endeavor. Of note with both descriptions above, MOS responsibilities are identified in terms of MOS and grade and are clearly separated from professional responsibilities, which are indicated in terms only of grade. This indicates that professional responsibilities are common among all Marines, with the degree dependent upon grade, without respect to MOS. This does not mean that professionalism does not influence or apply to a Marine's MOS; rather, it means that it is very possible to have offsets in competence by grade. One can be technically competent within his MOS for his grade but not professionally competent for his grade. For Corporals, this generally appears when a Corporal is filling a billet that requires high levels of technical experience but is not also a leadership billet. The reverse also applies of course, wherein a Marine has the appropriate level of professional competence for his grade but lacks the expected technical competence. However, since a lack of technical competence is easily identifiable for reasons explained above, this is generally only tolerated if a Marine has completed a lateral move to a new MOS.

Now that there is clarity with regard to professional and technical standards expected of Corporals of Marines, next to analyze are the unique challenges that new Corporals face that can lead to professional incompetence. The very first challenge of course, is that the new Corporal is the very same person the day after he is promoted to Corporal as he was as a Lance Corporal the day prior. And although he has not changed,

the authority he holds, the responsibilities he has, and the expectations on him have changed, quite a bit. Strictly speaking of the professional, all of the subjective professional standards of being a Marine that he was solely responsible for as a Lance Corporal, i.e., his own conduct, performance, discipline, physical fitness, he is now responsible for enforcing and developing in his peers and subordinates. Complicating this, those same subordinates that he is responsible for the day after promotion, were his peer group the day before. Further complicating this issue, many of those Marines that are his subordinates now, potentially held a higher place in the peer group due to seniority in grade, or even just a stronger personality. With regard to the technical, his technical responsibilities may or may not have changed depending on MOS. The big difference, however, is that if they have changed, they are very easily measurable by looking at the clear cut MOS Manual and MOS Roadmap.

### **How the Marine Corps prepares Lance Corporals for promotion – PME**

Understanding now the difference in technical and professional responsibilities that are inherent in rank and billet, it is appropriate to examine how the Marine Corps prepares its Lance Corporals to fill those responsibilities. Just as the measurement of technical competence is relatively black and white, the training process is the same. MOS Roadmaps and T&R Manuals outline the schools, courses, and training standards that Marines need to meet. Although changes are made yearly to training standards, rarely are they significantly large or high profile because the Marine Corps has not had a perceived

deficiency in its ability to meet its combat mission, or perform all of the technical responsibilities inherent in that combat mission.

Unlike technical responsibilities, there has been recent and high profile concern regarding the Corps' ability to meet its professional responsibilities. These concerns have generally focused in the areas of discipline and ethical conduct and have brought to light perceived institution wide issues with sexual assault, hazing, and suicide. The main population targeted for corrective action has been the junior enlisted Marines, and the Noncommissioned Officers have been singled out as the key to correcting the problem.<sup>25</sup> Following this line of effort the Marine Corps has put much emphasis on updating and improving the required Professional Military Education (PME) requirements for Marines competing for promotion to Corporal. The currently required PME for promotion to Corporal is the Leading Marines Distance Education Program (DEP).<sup>26</sup> This is a four block course that covers "Developing Leaders; Leadership Tools; Counseling, Coaching and Mentoring; and Command and Military Organizations." The program's purpose is to "prepare the student for the responsibilities of being a non-commissioned officer" and to "support and enhance the students' development of requisite leadership skills and the ability to think critically and make sound, ethical decisions."<sup>27</sup> Although the Leading Marines DEP is exceptionally relevant for providing the professional education required to succeed as a Corporal, the Marine Corps has recently found the need to add an additional PME requirement prior to promotion. Beginning in October of 2015 all Lance Corporals will be required to attend a one week command sponsored Leadership and Ethics Seminar. This seminar is intended to "enhance small unit leadership and ensure a

better understanding of Marine Corps Ethos, leadership fundamentals, and the total Marine concept.”<sup>28</sup>

There is much strength in the current PME that is required before a Marine can be promoted to Corporal, specifically in the curriculum and topics covered and how small unit leaders are designated to deliver the Ethics Seminar curriculum. There is one significant flaw, however, and that is in the timing of the education. The Ethics Seminar is required within 12 months of being promoted to Lance Corporal, and the Leading Marines DEP must be completed before the Ethics Seminar.<sup>29</sup> All Lance Corporals must have at least eight months time in grade (TIG) before they can be promoted; however, in general the average TIG for Lance Corporals being promoted is one year and five months.<sup>30</sup> Assuming that the Ethics Seminars is completed very soon after promotion to Lance Corporal, which could be likely based on operations tempo, the perceived ethical concerns previously mentioned, and the proclivities of the Senior Enlisted Advisor that runs the course, Lance Corporals could likely go over one year or more with no formal PME prior to promotion. Add additional time after promotion before a unit level Corporals Leadership Course can be conducted and the time between formal PME for Marines gaining the critical responsibilities of a Noncommissioned Officer grows even more. Commanders are responsible to provide continuous unit level PME and continue the professional development of their Marines; however, if this was considered sufficient for promotion purposes, there would be no current need for Marine Corps mandated Leading Marines DEP and Ethics Seminar. Therefore, the current timing requirements of the PME coupled with promotion rates raise concerns about a Marine’s ability to retain

and or put into practice what was learned many months, even in the best case scenario, before promotion.

### **How the Marine Corps selects Marines for promotion to Corporal - Evaluations**

Next to evaluate is the process by which Lance Corporals are selected for and promoted to Corporal. The first relevant piece to the overall process is the performance evaluation process used. Performance evaluations in the Marine Corps are broken up into two different processes. The Performance Evaluation System (PES) is used to evaluate Sergeants through Major Generals and the Enlisted Evaluation System, otherwise known as the Proficiency and Conduct System (Pro/Con), is used to evaluate Marines that are Privates through Corporals. The similarities in the two systems are few and revolve mainly around both systems being used for more than just promotions, and having periodic reporting requirements that must be met in order to ensure continuous evaluation reporting. Conversely, the differences in the two systems are stark, beginning with the level of detail of the evaluations and amount of guidance provided.

The PES is governed by a *Marine Corps Order P1610.7F Ch2 Performance Evaluation System (Short Title: PES) 2010*, which consists of 184 pages of instruction on all aspects of the fitness report and evaluation criteria. The fitness report is what is completed by evaluating officers and "...provides the primary means for evaluating a Marine's performance to support the Commandant's efforts to select the best qualified personnel for promotion, augmentation, retention, resident schooling, command, and duty assignments."<sup>31</sup> Fitness reports are completed by the first commissioned officer in the

Marine's reporting chain, also known within the PES as the Reporting Senior (RS). All fitness reports are then reviewed by the first commissioned officer in the RS's reporting chain, also known within the PES as the Reviewing Officer (RO). If the fitness report is considered adverse in nature, it goes through a third review by a Third Officer Sighter that is usually the RS of the RO. The fitness report itself consists of eleven sections that include general administrative information, a billet description, billet accomplishments, four evaluation sections that cover mission accomplishment, individual character, leadership, intellect and wisdom, and fulfillment of evaluation responsibilities, a comment section where the RS places a word picture of the Marine's performance, and a comparative assessments section for the RO. Within the four evaluation sections are thirteen attributes that the Marine is actually evaluated on which include performance, proficiency, courage, effectiveness under stress, initiative, leading subordinates, developing subordinates, setting the example, ensuring well-being of subordinates, communication skills, professional military education, decision making ability, and judgment.<sup>32</sup> Each attribute comes with a written description and is broken into a Performance Anchored Rating Scale (PARS) of three sections, also with written descriptions that give the RS a graduated scale from A through H to choose from. The final element of the PES of note is that the final evaluations are not objective, but rather they are relative in nature. Meaning, that each Marine is evaluated only against other Marines of the same grade written on by the same RS and comparatively assessed by the same RO. This relative assessment ensures that differences in understanding of the guidance and/or attributes between RSs and ROs does not adversely affect the Marine Reported On (MRO).

The Pro/Con System which evaluations Privates through Corporals consists of periodic numerical proficiency and conduct markings that “record the Marine’s performance which is used to determine eligibility for reenlistment, qualification for certain types of duty assignments, characterization of service upon discharge, and computation of composite scores for promotion.”<sup>33</sup> *Marine Corps Order P1070.12K Ch1 Individual Records Administration Manual 2000* governs the process utilizing two tables and with a total of only thirteen pages of instruction. Contrary to the very detailed PES the intent of the small amount of guidance provided for Pro/Cons is to balance the need of providing fair evaluations to Marines while not tying the hands of the Commanders that approve the marks; therefore, the instruction is intended to be very subjective.<sup>34</sup> The actual guidance provided is in the form of a general description of conduct and proficiency, and a table with suggested numerical markings from 0.0 to 5.0.<sup>35</sup> The guidance for the conduct evaluation listed in paragraph 4007.6a states

In addition to observance of the letter of law and regulations, conduct includes conformance to accepted usage and custom, and positive contributions to unit and Corps. General bearing, attitude, interest, reliability, courtesy, cooperation, obedience, adaptability, influence on others, moral fitness, physical fitness as effected by clean and temperate habits, and participation in unit activities not related directly to unit mission, are all factors of conduct and should be considered in evaluating the Marine.<sup>36</sup>

The Standards of Conduct Table then goes on to recommend a 0.0 to 1.9 rating for “Unacceptable” conduct, which is listed as a Marine that is a habitual offender, or in confinement, or who has multiple court martial convictions and reductions in grade. From 2.0 to 2.9 is listed as “Unsatisfactory” and describes a Marine that has no more than one summary court martial or two non judicial punishments (NJP) and/or a punitive reduction

in grade. From 3.0 to 3.9 is listed as “Below Average” and describes a Marine that has no more than one NJP, has no favorable impressions as to the qualities listed in paragraph 4007.6a, and whose conduct does not merit an honorable discharge. 4.0 to 4.4 is listed as “Average” and describes a Marine with no offenses and no unfavorable impression to the qualities listed in paragraph 4007.6a. 4.5 to 4.8 is listed as an “Excellent” Marine and describes a Marine with favorable impressions to the qualities listed in 4007.6a, as well as reliability, good influence, sobriety, obedience, and industry. Finally, 4.9 to 5.0 is listed as “Outstanding” and describes a Marine that exhibits to an outstanding degree the qualities listed in 4007.6a as well as observes the spirit as well as the letter of orders and regulations and has positive effects on others.

The guidance for proficiency marks focuses on how the Marine performed his primary duties during the period, includes technical skills and specialized knowledge, and places an emphasis on the whole Marine concept. Attributes to consider for this concept include mission accomplishment, leadership, intellect and wisdom, individual character, physical fitness, personal appearance and completion of PME. The Standards of Proficiency Table uses the same numerical and adjective rating recommendation system as in the conduct section. “Unacceptable” is described as doing unacceptable work in most duties, generally undependable, and needing close supervision in the simplest of assignments. “Unsatisfactory” is described as doing acceptable work in some duties but cannot be depended on, and needing assistance and close supervision in all but the simplest assignments. “Below Average” is described as handling routing matters acceptably but needing close supervision with duties not of a routine nature. “Average” is described as thorough and competent in normal duties needing assistance with problems

not of routine nature. “Excellent” is performing excellent work in normal duties but needing assistance in extremely difficult or unusual assignments. “Outstanding” is superior work in all duties including difficult or unusual assignments.

Relative to creating professionally competent Corporals, there are a number of problems with the current Pro/Con system as described above. First is the overall subjectivity of the guidance. Unlike the distinct description of technical competence, which equates to MOS performance, and professional competence, which equates to all other military standards, the Pro/Con system mixes the two between proficiency and conduct, making effective evaluation difficult. Additionally, conduct, as written in the table, focuses heavily on disciplinary conduct, implying that fully half of what junior Marines, and by inclusion Corporals, should be evaluated on is their disciplinary conduct. In today’s Corps, good conduct is expected, at all ranks, and is the minimum standard. With regard to the other Noncommissioned Officer rank of Sergeant, the fitness report used has no specific conduct rating, or focus on disciplinary action. Including Sergeants in the fitness report process and Corporals in the Pro/Con process ultimately leads to the impression that Sergeants are not expected to normally have discipline problems but that Corporals, like NON NCOs, are. Conduct to include disciplinary conduct, is and should be for evaluation purposes, a function of professionalism and should be graded as one small aspect of that. Doing so would take the focus off merely staying out of trouble and put it on overall professionalism.

The next shortfall is the negative focus of the suggested marking scale. In reality, positive ratings only exist from 4.0 to 5.0, with the majority of marking options 0.0 to 3.9 just different variants of negative. For example, the barrier between a Marine who rates a

characterization of Honorable Service at discharge, clearly a positive, is the difference between a below average Marine at 3.9 and an average Marine at 4.0. Additionally, all Marines that receive a mark below 4.0 for conduct and 3.0 for proficiency must receive a notification counseling, also known as a Page 11, that they can write a rebuttal on and that goes in their permanent file. The PES fitness report, in contrast, has one negative marking for each attribute, which is the adverse A mark. The remaining markings are different variations of positive. Within the actual positive Pro/Con marks of 4.0 to 5.0, the average marks of 4.0 to 4.4 describe a Marine that has no “unfavorable impressions” to the conduct description and can discharge regular duties competently but needs assistance with non routine problems. For a Lance Corporal, this description may be acceptable for a reenlistment evaluation and/or an honorable characterization of service, but certainly does not demonstrate promotion potential to the Noncommissioned Officer ranks, which ultimately leaves promotion potential marks in the 4.5 to 5.0 range as currently designed. This being the case, it would follow that if this system worked as expected for promotion purposes the average Pro/Con markings of Marines being promoted would fall in the 4.5 to 5.0 range.. However, average markings for Lance Corporals that were promoted to Corporal in 2014 were 4.4/4.4.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, either the Marine Corps is promoting merely average Marines to Corporal, or the evaluation system does not give enough variation of positive to make it useful.

Finally, with regard to evaluations, unlike the PES where the first commissioned officer in a Marine’s chain of authority completes a fitness report, only Commanders with Special Court Martial convening authority are authorized to approve Pro/Con Marks. In practice, this means that in most cases, Lieutenant Colonel Battalion and Squadron

Commanders are the approval authority. To put this in perspective, a Battalion of over 1,000 Marines, where the majority are always Corporals and NON NCOs, may have up to 50 RSs that write fitness reports, but only one Commander to approve Pro/Con marks. The general process for Pro/Con assignment begins with a recommendation from the first Noncommissioned Officer or Staff Noncommissioned Officer in a Marines chain of authority that moves up through his SNCOIC/Senior Enlisted Advisor (SEL) and Officer In Charge (OIC)/Company Commander, to the approving Commander's SEL, and then to the Commander for approval. Throughout this process, the recommended marks will likely be adjusted by some or all of the recommending chain based off of a need to establish a hierarchy with their Marines and their understanding and philosophy of the guidance within the IRAM. Ultimately, the Commander will approve based off his understanding and guidance of the IRAM, with most of the Marines falling into the average category, the rest being low outliers due to conduct/disciplinary issues, and a few being high outliers in the excellent and outstanding category. The IRAM places a premium on the Commanders authority and responsibility to assign marks, and states that he should consult with a Marines supervising officer or Staff Noncommissioned to inform the marks he gives. However, the reality that the Commander will make an informed decision on each Marine is unlikely, particularly in situations where a Battalion Commander has upwards of 300 Marines that need marks at the same time as in during a mandatory semi annual marking period. The totality of the issues with the Pro/Con system as outlined above ultimately result in constrained and subjective markings, that focus too much on disciplinary conduct, something that is a given for Marines, and is

approved by a Commander that most likely would not be able to pick the Marine out of a lineup.

### **How the Marine Corps selects Marines for promotion to Corporal - Selection**

Rank promotions in the Marine Corps are governed by four separate processes. Commissioned and Warrant Officer promotions must follow a specific process codified by law and the promotions are ultimately approved by the President of the United States. Enlisted Marines competing for promotion for the Staff Noncommissioned Officer ranks of Staff Sergeant through Sergeant Major follow a very similar process and the promotions are ultimately approved by the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Both processes involve a centralized annual board of senior and experienced Marine officers and Staff Noncommissioned Officers (in the case of enlisted boards), that review and brief the career records of Marines that have been identified for the promotion opportunity based off of their time in grade, time in service, other standards such as lineal standing (in the case of officers), and the needs of the Marines Corps, in order to identify and recommend the best qualified Marines for advancement to the next higher grade.

Promotions to the ranks of Private First Class and Lance Corporal (NON NCO) are generally a function of time in service, time in grade, and the discretion of the unit commander. *MCO P1400.32D Marine Corps Promotion Manual, Volume 2, Enlisted Promotions 2012*, the relevant order for all enlisted promotion matters, states that Marines that have served on active duty for at least six months and whose service has been satisfactory as determined by the commander must be promoted to Private First

Class.<sup>38</sup> For the next promotion to Lance Corporal it states that Privates First Class with at least nine months time in service and eight months time in grade as a Private First Class may be promoted to Lance Corporal, again based on the discretion of the commander.<sup>39</sup> In order to help the commander determine whether a Marine should be advanced, the manual emphasizes that Marines in these grades "...are required to exercise an ever-increasing degree of maturity, leadership and professionalism..." and that Marines that have not "...demonstrated these traits and the desire to assume positions of higher authority..." shall not be promoted.<sup>40</sup> Lastly it explains that in order to reduce the administrative burden on commanders and reduce the amount of late promotions, the Marine Corps Total Force System (MCTFS) which is the Marine Corps' overarching administrative program, will automatically identify and promote eligible Marines to the next higher grade unless stopped by the commander through an administrative process by which he not recommends the Marine for promotion. The not recommended for promotion (NON REC) process will be explained fully in the next section covering Noncommissioned Officer Promotions.

The Noncommissioned Officer promotion process by which Lance Corporals and Corporals are promoted shares a number of requirements with the other processes. Similar is the reliance on time in service and time in grade that the officer, Staff Noncommissioned Officer, and NON NCO processes use, as well as the supremacy of the commander's decision to promote, the automatic selection and promotion by MCTFS, and the NON REC process that the NON NCO process uses. Missing is the comprehensive board process used by the officer and Staff Noncommissioned Officer process, and added is an automated composite/cutting score process.

Central to the Noncommissioned Officer promotion process is the use of automated composite scores, which are designed to allow the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) to control the Corporal and Sergeant population on the basis of vacancies throughout the Marine Corps. Automated composite scores are numerical values assigned to each eligible Lance Corporal and Corporal and are the sum of numerical values representing an individual Marine's Rifle Score, Physical Fitness Test Score, Combat Fitness Test Score, Average Proficiency Marks, Average Conduct Marks, months of TIG and TIS, and bonus values for service in a Special Duty, Self Education, and Command Recruiting. Automated composite scores are calculated quarterly for all eligible Marines that have the required TIS and TIG and are not otherwise promotion restricted. CMC is able to control the Noncommissioned Officer population by using the composite score monthly to create a hierarchal list of eligible Marines, grouped by grade and MOS. This then allows the CMC to determine shortfalls by grade and MOS throughout the Corps and fill them by identifying the same number of Marines on each list, with the lowest one becoming the cutting score for that month and that grade/MOS grouping. Therefore, for each month, every combination of MOS and grade that have shortfalls should have a cutting score, and most if not all cutting scores should be different.

This process, as with the NON NCO process, is designed to be automatic. Meaning, MCTFS automatically generates which Marines are eligible for promotion, gives them a composite score, identifies shortages by MOS and grade, determines which Marines have a high enough composite score to fill the shortage, publishes a select grade roster to inform commands of who has met the cutting score, and then barring intervention from the commander, promotes the Marines in the system.

Of course, because the commander is the ultimate arbiter of whether a Marine gets promoted or not, there is a process by which he can overrule the automated system. This happens through a Recommended (REC) or Not Recommended (NON REC) for promotion process that each Marine must receive each month. During this process MCTFS automatically recommends each and every eligible Marine, not otherwise promotion restricted, for promotion. If the commander determines that a Marine is not recommended, he must provide a written counseling to the Marine informing him that he is not recommended for that period and why, which goes in the Marines permanent record. If for some reason a NON REC is not completed in time, which is usually no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month, and the Marine makes the cutting score, then the Commander must do a Will Not Promote process, which is essentially the same process with the counseling and how it is entered into the system. The Marine is no longer promotion eligible for that month but the big difference is that he has taken a promotion for that month away from another Marine, lower on the composite score list, that would have made the cutting score if he had been not recommended appropriately.

*Therefore, it is even more critical to ensure that a commander's recommendation concerning a Marine's promotion to Corporal or Sergeant is a thoughtful, deliberate decision. Each Marine recommended must be worthy of the title "Noncommissioned Officer." Marines should be recommended for promotion to Corporal or Sergeant only after demonstrating they are worthy of the next higher grade.<sup>41</sup>*

The Noncommissioned Officer promotion process itself presents some challenges to creating professionally competent Corporals, beginning with the automatic REC/NON REC process. Much like the negative approach discussed above in the Pro/Con evaluations, requiring commanders to look for reasons “not” to promote Marines rather

than for reasons “to” promote the Marines that are “worthy of the title Noncommissioned Officer” and that have “demonstrated” they are ready and able to assume the responsibilities of a Noncommissioned Officer, places a negative connotation on the process. Further, forcing commanders to place a written counseling in each not recommended Marines permanent record can appear to the Marine and the commander that it is in fact a punishment that stigmatizes the Marine. Many Marines may be led to believe that because they are already recommended (by the system), if they meet the cutting score then they deserve to be promoted as long as they haven’t done something bad resulting in the punishment of a commander’s NON REC. This could ultimately lead to the belief that as long as a Marine stays out of trouble, he or she will eventually have enough TIG and TIS and a high enough composite score to get promoted, and that promotion is then their right. This can give Marines the mindset that they need to focus on “not” doing something that will get them not recommended, rather than a mindset to focus on “doing” things that will get them recommended. So, if they are then not recommended for failing to demonstrate the sometimes subjective attributes expected of a Noncommissioned Officer and/or failing to give the commander confidence in their abilities to work at a higher level, they may feel cheated.<sup>42</sup> Considering that out of a pool of 200 Marines eligible for promotion, potentially 25% may be ready and have demonstrated that they are ready for promotion, this means that if the system is done correctly, there should be 150 Non Recs occurring. That is 150 Marines potentially feeling cheated and having morale issues because the commander is forced to justify reasons that they haven’t met their responsibility of demonstrating that they are ready for promotion. The administrative burden alone makes this model prohibitive, which is why

it is not likely followed in many commands and results in the promotion of Corporals that have not demonstrated that their promotion will “positively contribute to the high standards of leadership and proficiency required for continued combat readiness.”<sup>43</sup>

Contrasting this process with the promotion board process utilized by Staff Noncommissioned Officers and Commissioned Officers is instructive. Marines that are eligible and briefed by these boards that do not get selected for promotion are not told why. There is no counseling that goes in their record that tells them why their peers were selected and they were not. They are expected to understand that their record did not demonstrate that they were the best qualified for promotion. This should also be the case for the Noncommissioned Officer promotion process.

The second problem with the Noncommissioned Officer promotion process itself deals with the Corps’ inability to give all Corporals the opportunity to lead. Promotion allocations are based on shortfalls of the entire Marine Corps and Marines are selected for promotion with no thought to shortfalls within individual units. Each unit in the Marine Corps rates only so many Corporals of whatever particular MOS at that unit. Some units have more opportunities for Marines to accomplish training that raise the individual scores that comprise their composite scores, and some commanders give higher or lower Pro/Con Marks on average that also affects composite scores. This results in relative differences in composite scores within the same MOS depending on unit location, type, operations tempo etc. Taking the relative differences in composite scores by MOS, coupled with promotions that do not take individual units shortfalls into account inevitably results in some units having an over abundance of Corporals and other commands not having enough Corporals to fill their requirements. The issue with an over

or under abundance of Corporals is also related to the assignments process and overall unit structure. In most cases in the contemporary Marine Corps, when a Marine is promoted to Corporal he does not change units or billets because there is no room due to an overabundance of Corporals or due to concerns about unit cohesion. Also, as previously demonstrated some billets by MOS can be for a Private through Sergeant, which means they are not leadership billets at all. All of these situations are concerning because Corporals are supposed to be leaders, and more importantly new leaders, the first line of leadership, and if they aren't in leadership billets, they are not leaders or learning to be leaders.

### **Recommended Corrections**

A number of initiatives can be taken to correct the issues previously discussed and improve the overall system, at least one that is quite simple, and all mutually supporting. Some of the following recommendations have been discussed in one form or another in opinion articles published since the coining of the term Strategic Corporal.<sup>44</sup> The first recommendation is for the Marine Corps to re adopt its old Noncommissioned Officer's Creed. The current creed previously mentioned, emphasizes continuous self-improvement, a pursuit of excellence, upholding the heritage of the professionals that came before and other subjective and lofty type goals. While these are worthy ideas, like many concepts of professionalism they are difficult to frame and unlikely a new leader will reference on a daily basis. The old Noncommissioned Officer's Creed is more

objective and gives new Corporals clear marching orders from day one with the following text:

*I am an NCO dedicated to training new Marines and influencing the old. I am forever conscious of each Marine under my charge, and by example will inspire him to the highest standards possible. I will strive to be patient, understanding, just, and firm. I will commend the deserving and encourage the wayward. I will never forget that I am responsible to my Commanding Officer for the morale, discipline, and efficiency of my Marines. Their performance will reflect an image of me.*

The next recommendation is that all Marine Corps Tables of Organization be reviewed to identify and eliminate any Corporal billets that are not leadership billets. This is admittedly a large and complicated task that requires figuring out a solution to inequalities in the amount of technical responsibilities versus leadership responsibilities for some billets. This will be especially difficult in units with high levels of technical MOSs. One potential solution to this situation is rather than promoting Marines to Corporal because of higher technical responsibility without the commensurate leadership billet as the Marine Corps does now, give monetary bonuses or allowances for higher technical skill and qualification. Depending on the amounts, this could be less expensive than promoting them, and would do a better job of ensuring the quality leadership skills of those that are promoted. Ultimately, due to the diversity in MOSs and unit structures, it would require the senior members of each MOS to figure out how to make this work.

With regard to PME, the timing concerns can be addressed in one of two ways. The timeline for completion of the currently required Ethics Seminar and Leading Marines DEP can be stretched out over a Marines TIG as a Lance Corporal, which would hopefully keep the information learned in the forefront of their minds at promotion. Or,

an additional PME requirement can be implemented at promotion. This process has been used by 3d Battalion, 11<sup>th</sup> Marines who implemented a two day Noncommissioned Officer's Indoctrination Course, and 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) who also implemented similar education with its Committed and Engaged Leadership Indoctrination Course.<sup>45</sup> Both courses aim to give new Corporals the practical professional tools that they need to be immediately effective, such as instruction on uniform inspections, hip pocket training, counseling, leadership theory, and disciplinary trends. These indoctrinations bridge the gap between the formal PME required of Lance Corporals and that which is given at the Corporal level well after being promoted. Among the many strengths of these courses is that they are designed and implemented at the local level, following the overall principle of ensuring new Corporals are instantly prepared to take on the additional professional responsibility commensurate with their new rank. Therefore, a Marine Corps mandated indoctrination course, specifying only that a course must be completed for new Corporals, developed and implemented at the local level, would be the ultimate service wide correction to the current PME gap for new Corporals.

Recommended corrections for the enlisted evaluations process begin with removing the overall negative focus by changing the Proficiency and Conduct evaluations to a Technical Competency and Professional Competency Evaluation. The current conduct assessment should be included in the Professional Competency Marking. This will allow leaders to evaluate Marines based on their MOS abilities on the one hand and everything else required of the profession on the other, removing the confusion and subjectivity with the current process.

The second part to removing the negative focus is changing the process to include more variations of positive markings than negative. Rather than the current scale, which places 0.0 to 3.9 as different variations of negative and 4.0 to 5.0 as average, excellent, and outstanding markings, the exact opposite should be utilized. 0.0 to 1.0 should be negative and 1.1 to 5.0 should be variations of positive. Along with changing the negative aspect of the markings, this will also allow for a greater variation of scores, and give more weight to these marks within the composite score.

The final recommendation for the correction of evaluations is to change the approving authority to the first Commander in a Marine's chain of command that has Non Judicial Punishment authority, rather than Special Court Martial convening authority. This would effectively put the approval authority in the hands of Company Commanders in the large Battalions, who are the officers in a much better position to know, observe, and effectively and fairly evaluate a junior Marine. Certain Marine Corps commands, such as most Squadrons, do not have Company Commanders and therefore the Squadron Commander would continue to be the approving authority. This should be of no concern however, as most Marine Corps squadrons have close to the same numbers of Marines as most Marine Corps companies.

Recommendations to correct the actual promotion process itself center mainly on the automated process by which Marines are recommended or not recommended for promotion. In order to remove the focus on the negative, remove the stigma of the NON REC, remove the need for Marines to focus on not doing things that result in a Non Rec, and remove the need for Commanders to focus on reasons not to promote Marines, the automated system should change from automatically recommending all eligible Marines

to automatically not recommending eligible Marines. This will allow Commanders to look throughout their eligible populations each month and determine which Marines have demonstrated that they have the ability and desire to meet the high standards of Noncommissioned Officers outlined in the promotion manual. The Marines that are then recommended should get a Page 11 notification for their permanent record that states that they were recommended for promotion, allowing future reviewers of their record to see that they were ready to be promoted whether they make the cutting score or not. For critics concerned that deserving Marines may be overlooked in this process, there is still the option of providing Page 11 notifications for Marines allowed to stay not recommended that they can then rebut and place in their permanent record, but that would be the Marine's choice and be no more damaging than the current system. The above change would result in a positive focus for the promotions as well as cut down on the administrative burden currently placed on Commanders.

The final recommendation to correct deficiencies in the promotion process also affects the REC and NON REC process, as well as the assignments process. Promotion allocations need to start taking deficiencies within individual units into consideration, in order to ensure there are not excessive deficiencies and/or overages at individual units. This is especially important for new Corporals, as they need billets to fill where they can learn to be leaders. Therefore, rather than recommending for promotion an unlimited number of Marines that the Commander feels is ready for promotion, he will determine how many Corporals he is deficient based on his on hand, inbound, and outbound personnel, and he can only recommend that many in order to fill those billets. Of course there will be challenges with this approach in deployed, stabilized, and very small units

that would need to be taken into consideration. However, once established this process should ensure the correct number of Corporals at each unit across the Marine Corps, and that each Corporal has a leadership billet to fill where he can learn to be a leader.

## **Conclusion**

Critics of the outlined recommendations may rightly point out the potential problematic outcomes of some these changes, as well as the complexities and difficulties in manpower management that would make implementation of them difficult, to include assignments, future force shaping, budget issues, and technical MOS recruiting and retention concerns. These are, of course, valid concerns. As previously mentioned, some of these changes will need thorough research and evaluation to determine feasibility, while others will need none. The hope is that the easy changes will be made quickly and the work will be put into the more difficult ones to check their validity. The Marine Corps to date has spent much time and effort on acknowledging the importance of, and creating PME for its new Corporals. It is time now to look at the rest of the process beyond PME, and make the changes needed, no matter how difficult, to ensure the Corps has professional and prepared Strategic Corporals in its first line of leadership.



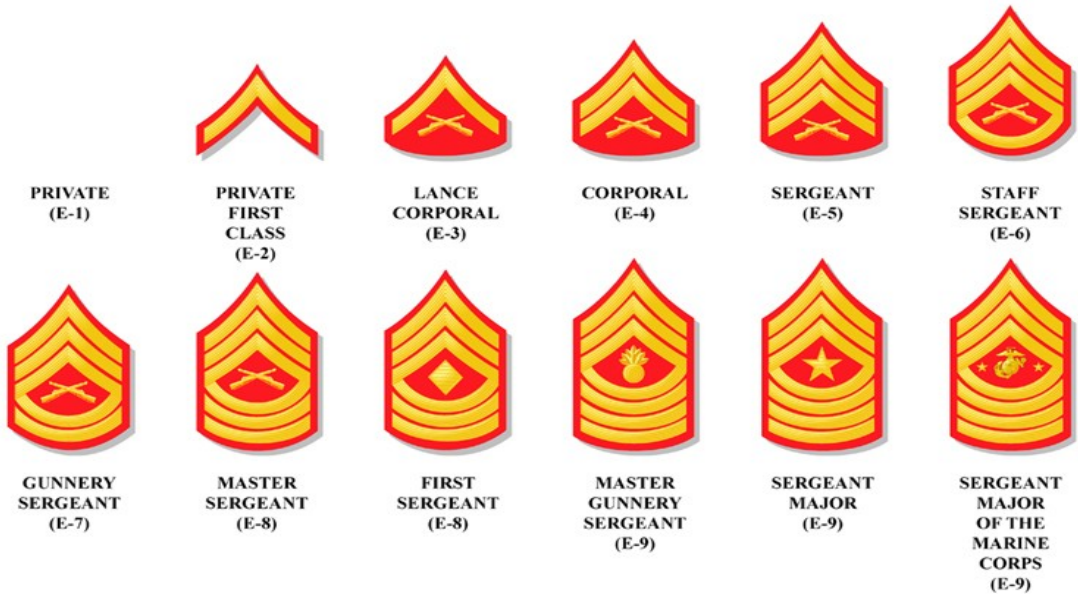
# USMC RANK STRUCTURE

## Officer



# USMC RANK STRUCTURE

## ENLISTED



**COMMANDANT'S GUIDANCE**

The completed fitness report is the most important information component in manpower management. It is the primary means of evaluating a Marine's performance and is the Commandant's primary tool for the selection of personnel for promotion, augmentation, resident schooling, command, and duty assignments. Therefore, the completion of this report is one of an officer's most critical responsibilities. Inherent in this duty is the commitment of each Reporting Senior and Reviewing Officer to ensure the integrity of the system by giving close attention to accurate marking and timely reporting. Every officer serves a role in the scrupulous maintenance of this evaluation system, ultimately important to both the individual and the Marine Corps. Inflationary markings only serve to dilute the actual value of each report. Reviewing Officers will not concur with inflated reports.

**A. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**

1. Marine Reported On:							
a. Last Name	b. First Name	c. MI	d.ID	e. Grade	f. DOR	g. PMOS	h. BILMOS
2. Organization:							
a. MCC	b. RUC	c. Unit Description					
3. Occasion and Period Covered:				4. Duty Assignment ( descriptive title ):			
a. OCC	b. From	To	c. Type				
5. Special Case:			6. Marine Subject Of:			7. Recommended For Promotion:	
a. Adverse	b. Not Observed	c. Extended	a. Commendatory Material	b. Derogatory Material	c. Disciplinary Action	a. Yes	b. No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Special Information:				9. Duty Preference:			
a. QUAL	d. HT(in.)	g. Reserve Component	a. Code b. Descriptive Title				
b. PFT	e. WT	h. Status	1st				
c. CFT	f. Body Fat	i. Future Use	2nd				
			3rd				
10. Reporting Senior:							
a. Last Name	b. Init	c. Service	d.ID	e. Grade	f. Duty Assignment		
11. Reviewing Officer:							
a. Last Name	b. Init	c. Service	d.ID	e. Grade	f. Duty Assignment		

**B. BILLET DESCRIPTION**

*(This section is currently blank in the provided image.)*

**C. BILLET ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

*(This section is currently blank in the provided image.)*

1. Marine Reported On:				2. Occasion and Period Covered:			
a. Last Name		b. First Name		c. MI		d. ID	
a. OCC		b. From		To			
<b>D. MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT</b>							
1. PERFORMANCE. Results achieved during the reporting period. How well those duties inherent to a Marine's billet, plus all additional duties, formally and informally assigned, were carried out. Reflects a Marine's aptitude, competence, and commitment to the unit's success above personal reward. Indicators are time and resource management, task prioritization, and tenacity to achieve positive ends consistently.							
ADV	Meets requirements of billet and additional duties. Aptitude, commitment, and competence meet expectations. Results maintain status quo.	Consistently produces quality results while measurably improving unit performance. Habitually makes effective use of time and resources; improves billet procedures and products. Positive impact extends beyond billet expectations.	Results far surpass expectations. Recognizes and exploits new resources; creates opportunities. Emulated; sought after as an expert with influence beyond unit. Impact significant; innovative approaches to problems produce significant gains in quality and efficiency.				N/O
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. PROFICIENCY. Demonstrates technical knowledge and practical skill in the execution of the Marine's overall duties. Combines training, education and experience. Translates skills into actions which contribute to accomplishing tasks and missions. Imparts knowledge to others. Grade dependent.							
ADV	Competent. Possesses the requisite range of skills and knowledge commensurate with grade and experience. Understands and articulates basic functions related to mission accomplishment.	Demonstrates mastery of all required skills. Expertise, education and experience consistently enhance mission accomplishment. Innovative troubleshooter and problem solver. Effectively imparts skills to subordinates.	True expert in field. Knowledge and skills impact far beyond those of peers. Translates broad-based education and experience into forward thinking, innovative actions. Makes immeasurable impact on mission accomplishment. Peerless teacher, selflessly imparts expertise to subordinates, peers, and seniors.				N/O
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
JUSTIFICATION:							
<b>E. INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER</b>							
1. COURAGE. Moral or physical strength to overcome danger, fear, difficulty or anxiety. Personal acceptance of responsibility and accountability, placing conscience over competing interests regardless of consequences. Conscious, overriding decision to risk bodily harm or death to accomplish the mission or save others. The will to persevere despite uncertainty.							
ADV	Demonstrates inner strength and acceptance of responsibility commensurate with scope of duties and experience. Willing to face moral or physical challenges in pursuit of mission accomplishment.	Guided by conscience in all actions. Proven ability to overcome danger, fear, difficulty or anxiety. Exhibits bravery in the face of morally difficult situations or hazardous responsibilities.	Uncommon bravery and capacity to overcome obstacles and inspire others in the face of moral dilemma or life-threatening danger. Demonstrated under the most adverse conditions. Selfless. Always places conscience over competing interests regardless of physical or personal consequences.				N/O
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. EFFECTIVENESS UNDER STRESS. Thinking, functioning and leading effectively under conditions of physical and/or mental pressure. Maintaining composure appropriate for the situation, while displaying steady purpose of action, enabling one to inspire others while continuing to lead under adverse conditions. Physical and emotional strength, resilience and endurance are elements.							
ADV	Exhibits discipline and stability under pressure. Judgment and effective problem-solving skills are evident.	Consistently demonstrates maturity, mental agility and willpower during periods of adversity. Provides order to chaos through the application of intuition, problem-solving skills, and leadership. Composure reassures others.	Demonstrates seldom-matched presence of mind under the most demanding circumstances. Stabilizes any situation through the resolute and timely application of direction, focus and personal presence.				N/O
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. INITIATIVE. Action in the absence of specific direction. Seeing what needs to be done and acting without prompting. The instinct to begin a task and follow through energetically on one's own accord. Being creative, proactive and decisive. Transforming opportunity into action.							
ADV	Demonstrates willingness to take action in the absence of specific direction. Acts commensurate with grade, training and experience.	Self-motivated and action-oriented. Foresight and energy consistently transforms opportunity into action. Develops and pursues creative, innovative solutions. Acts without prompting. Self-starter.	Highly motivated and proactive. Displays exceptional awareness of surroundings and environment. Uncanny ability to anticipate mission requirements and quickly formulate original, far-reaching solutions. Always takes decisive, effective action.				N/O
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
JUSTIFICATION:							
NAVMC 10835B (Rev. 4-03) (P)				PAGE 2 OF 5			

1. Marine Reported On:				2. Occasion and Period Covered:			
a. Last Name		b. First Name		c. MI	d. ID	a. OCC	b. From To
<b>F. LEADERSHIP</b>							
1. LEADING SUBORDINATES. The inseparable relationship between leader and led. The application of leadership principles to provide direction and motivate subordinates. Using authority, persuasion and personality to influence subordinates to accomplish assigned tasks. Sustaining motivation and morale while maximizing subordinates' performance.							
ADV	Engaged; provides instructions and directs execution. Seeks to accomplish mission in ways that sustain motivation and morale. Actions contribute to unit effectiveness.	Achieves a highly effective balance between direction and delegation. Effectively tasks subordinates and clearly delineates standards expected. Enhances performance through constructive supervision. Fosters motivation and enhances morale. Builds and sustains teams that successfully meet mission requirements. Encourages initiative and candor among subordinates.	Promotes creativity and energy among subordinates by striking the ideal balance of direction and delegation. Achieves highest levels of performance from subordinates by encouraging individual initiative. Engenders willing subordination, loyalty, and trust that allow subordinates to overcome their perceived limitations. Personal leadership fosters highest levels of motivation and morale, ensuring mission accomplishment even in the most difficult circumstances.			N/O	
A <input type="checkbox"/>		B <input type="checkbox"/>		C <input type="checkbox"/>		D <input type="checkbox"/>	
E <input type="checkbox"/>		F <input type="checkbox"/>		G <input type="checkbox"/>		H <input type="checkbox"/>	
2. DEVELOPING SUBORDINATES. Commitment to train, educate, and challenge all Marines regardless of race, religion, ethnic background, or gender. Mentorship. Cultivating professional and personal development of subordinates. Developing team players and esprit de corps. Ability to combine teaching and coaching. Creating an atmosphere tolerant of mistakes in the course of learning.							
ADV	Maintains an environment that allows personal and professional development. Ensures subordinates participate in all mandated development programs.	Develops and institutes innovative programs, to include PME, that emphasize personal and professional development of subordinates. Challenges subordinates to exceed their perceived potential thereby enhancing unit morale and effectiveness. Creates an environment where all Marines are confident to learn through trial and error. As a mentor, prepares subordinates for increased responsibilities and duties.	Widely recognized and emulated as a teacher, coach and leader. Any Marine would desire to serve with this Marine because they know they will grow personally and professionally. Subordinate and unit performance far surpassed expected results due to MRO's mentorship and team building talents. Attitude toward subordinate development is infectious, extending beyond the unit.			N/O	
A <input type="checkbox"/>		B <input type="checkbox"/>		C <input type="checkbox"/>		D <input type="checkbox"/>	
E <input type="checkbox"/>		F <input type="checkbox"/>		G <input type="checkbox"/>		H <input type="checkbox"/>	
3. SETTING THE EXAMPLE. The most visible facet of leadership: how well a Marine serves as a role model for all others. Personal action demonstrates the highest standards of conduct, ethical behavior, fitness, and appearance. Bearing, demeanor, and self-discipline are elements.							
ADV	Maintains Marine Corps standards for appearance, weight, and uniform wear. Sustains required level of physical fitness. Adheres to the tenets of the Marine Corps core values.	Personal conduct on and off duty reflects highest Marine Corps standards of integrity, bearing and appearance. Character is exceptional. Actively seeks self-improvement in wide-ranging areas. Dedication to duty and professional example encourage others' self-improvement efforts.	Model Marine, frequently emulated. Exemplary conduct, behavior, and actions are tone-setting. An inspiration to subordinates, peers, and seniors. Remarkable dedication to improving self and others.			N/O	
A <input type="checkbox"/>		B <input type="checkbox"/>		C <input type="checkbox"/>		D <input type="checkbox"/>	
E <input type="checkbox"/>		F <input type="checkbox"/>		G <input type="checkbox"/>		H <input type="checkbox"/>	
4. ENSURING WELL-BEING OF SUBORDINATES. Genuine interest in the well-being of Marines. Efforts enhance subordinates' ability to concentrate/focus on unit mission accomplishment. Concern for family readiness is inherent. The importance placed on welfare of subordinates is based on the belief that Marines take care of their own.							
ADV	Deals confidently with issues pertinent to subordinate welfare and recognizes suitable courses of action that support subordinates' well-being. Applies available resources, allowing subordinates to effectively concentrate on the mission.	Instills and/or reinforces a sense of responsibility among junior Marines for themselves and their subordinates. Actively fosters the development of and uses support systems for subordinates which improve their ability to contribute to unit mission accomplishment. Efforts to enhance subordinate welfare improve the unit's ability to accomplish its mission.	Noticeably enhances subordinates well-being, resulting in a measurable increase in unit effectiveness. Maximizes unit and base resources to provide subordinates with the best support available. Proactive approach serves to energize unit members to "take care of their own," thereby correcting potential problems before they can hinder subordinates' effectiveness. Widely recognized for techniques and policies that produce results and build morale. Builds strong family atmosphere. Puts motto <i>Mission first, Marines always</i> , into action.			N/O	
A <input type="checkbox"/>		B <input type="checkbox"/>		C <input type="checkbox"/>		D <input type="checkbox"/>	
E <input type="checkbox"/>		F <input type="checkbox"/>		G <input type="checkbox"/>		H <input type="checkbox"/>	
5. COMMUNICATION SKILLS. The efficient transmission and receipt of thoughts and ideas that enable and enhance leadership. Equal importance given to listening, speaking, writing, and critical reading skills. Interactive, allowing one to perceive problems and situations, provide concise guidance, and express complex ideas in a form easily understood by everyone. Allows subordinates to ask questions, raise issues and concerns and venture opinions. Contributes to a leader's ability to motivate as well as counsel.							
ADV	Skilled in receiving and conveying information. Communicates effectively in performance of duties.	Clearly articulates thoughts and ideas, verbally and in writing. Communication in all forms is accurate, intelligent, concise, and timely. Communicates with clarity and verve, ensuring understanding of intent or purpose. Encourages and considers the contributions of others.	Highly developed facility in verbal communication. Adept in composing written documents of the highest quality. Combines presence and verbal skills which engender confidence and achieve understanding irrespective of the setting, situation, or size of the group addressed. Displays an intuitive sense of when and how to listen.			N/O	
A <input type="checkbox"/>		B <input type="checkbox"/>		C <input type="checkbox"/>		D <input type="checkbox"/>	
E <input type="checkbox"/>		F <input type="checkbox"/>		G <input type="checkbox"/>		H <input type="checkbox"/>	
JUSTIFICATION:							
NAVMC 10835C (Rev.4-03) (P A-PES 5.4.1.1.1)				FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY - Privacy sensitive when filled in.		PAGE 3 OF 5	

1. Marine Reported On:				2. Occasion and Period Covered:			
a. Last Name		b. First Name		c. MI	d. ID	a. OCC	b. From To

**G. INTELLECT AND WISDOM**

1. PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION (PME). Commitment to intellectual growth in ways beneficial to the Marine Corps. Increases the breadth and depth of war-fighting and leadership aptitude. Resources include resident schools; professional qualifications and certification processes; nonresident and other extension courses; civilian educational institution coursework; a personal reading program that includes (but is not limited to) selections from the Commandant's Reading List, participation in discussion groups and military societies; and involvement in learning through new technologies.

<b>ADV</b>	Maintains currency in required military skills and related developments. Has completed or is enrolled in appropriate level of PME for grade and level of experience. Recognizes and understands new and creative approaches to service issues. Remains abreast of contemporary concepts and issues.	PME outlook extends beyond MOS and required education. Develops and follows a comprehensive personal program which includes broadened professional reading and/or academic course work; advances new concepts and ideas.	Dedicated to life-long learning. As a result of active and continuous efforts, widely recognized as an intellectual leader in professionally related topics. Makes time for study and takes advantage of all resources and programs. Introduces new and creative approaches to services issues. Engages in a broad spectrum of forums and dialogues.		N/O		
<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. DECISION MAKING ABILITY. Viable and timely problem solution. Contributing elements are judgment and decisiveness. Decisions reflect the balance between an optimal solution and a satisfactory, workable solution that generates tempo. Decisions are made within the context of the commander's established intent and the goal of mission accomplishment. Anticipation, mental agility, intuition, and success are inherent.

<b>ADV</b>	Makes sound decisions leading to mission accomplishment. Actively collects and evaluates information and weighs alternatives to achieve timely results. Confidently approaches problems; accepts responsibility for outcomes.	Demonstrates mental agility; effectively prioritizes and solves multiple complex problems. Analytical abilities enhanced by experience, education, and intuition. Anticipates problems and implements viable, long-term solutions. Steadfast, willing to make difficult decisions.	Widely recognized and sought after to resolve the most critical, complex problems. Seldom matched analytical and intuitive abilities; accurately foresees unexpected problems and arrives at well-timed decisions despite fog and friction. Completely confident approach to all problems. Masterfully strikes a balance between the desire for perfect knowledge and greater tempo.		N/O		
<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. JUDGMENT. The discretionary aspect of decision making. Draws on core values, knowledge, and personal experience to make wise choices. Comprehends the consequences of contemplated courses of action.

<b>ADV</b>	Majority of judgments are measured, circumspect, relevant and correct.	Decisions are consistent and uniformly correct, tempered by consideration of their consequences. Able to identify, isolate and assess relevant factors in the decision making process. Opinions sought by others. Subordinates personal interest in favor of impartiality.	Decisions reflect exceptional insight and wisdom beyond this Marine's experience. Counsel sought by all; often an arbiter. Consistent, superior judgment inspires the confidence of seniors.		N/O		
<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**JUSTIFICATION:**

**H. FULFILLMENT OF EVALUATION RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. EVALUATIONS. The extent to which this officer serving as a reporting official conducted, or required others to conduct, accurate, uninflated, and timely evaluations.

<b>ADV</b>	Occasionally submitted untimely or administratively incorrect evaluations. As RS, submitted one or more reports that contained inflated markings. As RO, concurred with one or more reports from subordinates that were returned by HQMC for inflated marking.	Prepared uninflated evaluations which were consistently submitted on time. Evaluations accurately described performance and character. Evaluations contained no inflated markings. No reports returned by RO or HQMC for inflated marking. No subordinates' reports returned by HQMC for inflated marking. Few, if any, reports were returned by RO or HQMC for administrative errors. Section Cs were void of superlatives. Justifications were specific, verifiable, substantive, and where possible, quantifiable and supported the markings given.	No reports submitted late. No reports returned by either RO or HQMC for administrative correction or inflated markings. No subordinates' reports returned by HQMC for administrative correction or inflated markings. Returned procedurally or administratively incorrect reports to subordinates for correction. As RO nonconcurred with all inflated reports.		N/O		
<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**JUSTIFICATION:**

1. Marine Reported On:				2. Occasion and Period Covered:		
a. Last Name	b. First Name	c. MI	d. ID	a. OCC	b. From	To

**I. DIRECTED AND ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

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**J. CERTIFICATION**

1. I CERTIFY that to the best of my knowledge and belief all entries made hereon are true and without prejudice or partiality and that I have provided a signed copy of this report to the Marine Reported on.

(Date in YYYYMMDD format)

2. I ACKNOWLEDGE the adverse nature of this report and

I have no statement to make  
 I have attached a statement

(Date in YYYYMMDD format)

**K. REVIEWING OFFICER COMMENTS**

1. OBSERVATION:     Sufficient     Insufficient      2. EVALUATION:     Concur     Do Not Concur

3. COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT: Provide a comparative assessment of potential by placing an "X" in the appropriate box. In marking the comparison, consider all Marines of this grade whose professional abilities are known to you personally.

DESCRIPTION		COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT
THE EMINENTLY QUALIFIED MARINE	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ONE OF THE FEW EXCEPTIONALLY QUALIFIED MARINES	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ONE OF THE MANY HIGHLY QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS WHO FORM THE MAJORITY OF THIS GRADE	<input type="checkbox"/>	
A QUALIFIED MARINE	<input type="checkbox"/>	
UNSATISFACTORY	<input type="checkbox"/>	

4. REVIEWING OFFICER COMMENTS: Amplify your comparative assessment mark; evaluate potential for continued professional development to include: promotion, command, assignment, resident PME, and retention; and put Reporting Senior marks and comments in perspective.

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5. I CERTIFY that to the best of my knowledge and belief all entries made hereon are true and without prejudice or partiality.

(Date in YYYYMMDD format)

6. I ACKNOWLEDGE the adverse nature of this report and

I have no statement to make  
 I have attached a statement

(Date in YYYYMMDD format)

**L. ADDENDUM PAGE**

ADDENDUM PAGE ATTACHED:     YES

Appendix B

MARK	CORRESPONDING ADJECTIVE RATING	STANDARDS OF CONDUCT
0.0 to 1.9	Unacceptable	Habitual offender. Conviction by general, special, or more than one summary court-martial. Give a mark of "0" upon declaration of desertion. Ordered to confinement pursuant to sentence of court-martial. Two or more punitive reductions in grade.
2.0 to 2.9	Unsatisfactory	No special court-martial. Not more than one summary court-martial. Not more than two nonjudicial punishments. Punitive reduction in grade.
3.0 to 3.9	Below Average	No court-martial. Not more than one nonjudicial punishment. No favorable impression of the qualities listed in paragraph 4007.6a. Failure to make satisfactory progress while assigned to the weight control or military appearance program. Conduct such as not to impair appreciably one's usefulness or the efficiency of the command, but conduct not sufficient to merit an honorable discharge.
4.0 to 4.4	Average	No offenses. No unfavorable impressions as to attitude, interests, cooperation, obedience, after-effects of intemperance, courtesy and consideration, and observance of regulations.
4.5 to 4.8	Excellent	No offense. Positive favorable impressions of the qualities listed in paragraph 4007.6a. Demonstrates reliability, good influence, sobriety, obedience, and industry.
4.9 to 5.0	Outstanding	No offenses. Exhibits to an outstanding degree the qualities listed in paragraph 4007.6a. Observes spirit as well as letter of orders and regulations. Demonstrates positive effect on others by example and persuasion.

4-41

MARK	CORRESPONDING ADJECTIVE RATING	STANDARDS OF PROFICIENCY
0.0 to 1.9	Unacceptable	Does unacceptable work in most duties, generally undependable; needs considerable assistance and close supervision on even the simplest assignment.
2.0 to 2.9	Unsatisfactory	Does acceptable work in some of the duties but cannot be depended upon. Needs assistance and close supervision on all but the simplest assignments.
3.0 to 3.9	Below Average	Handles routine matters acceptably but needs close supervision when performing duties not of a routine nature.
4.0 to 4.4	Average	Can be depended upon to discharge regular duties thoroughly and competently but usually needs assistance in dealing with problems not of a routine nature.
4.5 to 4.8	Excellent	Does excellent work in all regular duties, but needs assistance in dealing with extremely difficult or unusual assignments.
4.9 to 5.0	Outstanding	Does superior work in all duties. Even extremely difficult or unusual assignments can be given with full confidence that they will be handled in a thoroughly competent manner.

## **Core Values**

**HONOR:** The bedrock of our character. The quality that guides Marines to exemplify the ultimate in ethical and moral behavior; never to lie, cheat, or steal; to abide by an uncompromising concept of integrity; to respect human dignity; to have concern for each other. The quality of maturity, dedication, trust, and dependability that commits Marines to act responsibly, to be accountable for actions, to fulfill obligations, and to hold others accountable for their actions.

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**COURAGE:** The heart of our core values. Courage is the mental, moral, and physical strength the Corps ingrains in Marines to carry them through the challenges of combat and the mastery of fear, to do what is right in every situation, to adhere to a higher standard of personal conduct, to lead by example, and to make tough decisions under pressure. It is the inner strength that enables Marines to take that extra step.

**COMMITMENT:** The spirit of determination and dedication in Marines that leads to professionalism and mastery of the art of war. It leads to the highest order of discipline for unit and self; it is the ingredient that enables 24-hour-a-day dedication to Corps and Country, pride, concern for others, and an unrelenting determination to achieve a standard of excellence in every endeavor. Commitment is the value that establishes the Marine as the warrior and citizen others strive to emulate.

## **Marine Corps Leadership Traits**

Justice  
Judgment  
Dependability  
Initiative  
Decisiveness  
Tact  
Integrity  
Endurance  
Bearing  
Unselfishness  
Courage  
Knowledge  
Loyalty  
Enthusiasm

### **Marine Corps Leadership Principles**

Be technically and tactically proficient  
Know yourself and seek self-improvement  
Know your Marines and look out for their welfare  
Keep your Marines informed  
Set the example  
Ensure the task is understood, supervised, and accomplished  
Train your Marines as a team  
Make sound and timely decisions  
Develop a sense of responsibility among your subordinates  
Employ your unit in accordance with its capabilities  
Seek responsibility and take responsibility for your actions

### **NCO Creed**

I am the backbone of the United States Marine Corps, I am a Marine Noncommissioned Officer. I serve as part of the vital link between my commander (and all officers) and enlisted Marines. I will never forget who I am or what I represent. I will challenge myself to the limit and be ever attentive to duty. I am now, more than ever, committed to excellence in all that I do, so that I can set the proper example for other Marines. I will demand of myself all the energy, knowledge and skills I possess, so that I can instill confidence in those I teach. I will constantly strive to perfect my own skills and to become a good leader. Above all I will be truthful in all I say or do. My integrity shall be impeccable as my appearance. I will be honest with myself, with those under my charge and with my superiors. I pledge to do my best to incorporate all the leadership traits into my character. For such is the heritage I have received from that long, illustrious line of professionals who have worn the bloodstripe so proudly before me. I must give the very best I have for my Marines, my Corps and my Country for though today I instruct and supervise in peace, tomorrow, I may lead in war.

**NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICERS PROMOTION WARRANT**

To all who shall see these presents, greetings:  
special trust and confidence in the fidelity and abilities

*Know Ye, that repo*

of \_\_\_\_\_, I do appoint  
this Marine a \_\_\_\_\_  
in the

**United States Marine Corps**

to rank as such from the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, two thousand  
\_\_\_\_\_. “Effective with this appointment, you are charged to carefully and  
diligently execute

the duties and responsibilities of a \_\_\_\_\_ of Marines, and I  
do strictly \_\_\_\_\_  
obedience to appropriate \_\_\_\_\_

*direct and require all  
orders. As a \_\_\_\_\_*

must set the example for others to emulate. Your conduct and  
professionalism both on and off duty shall be above \_\_\_\_\_  
responsible for the accomplishment of your assigned mission and for the  
safety, professional development and well-being of the Marines in your  
charge. You \_\_\_\_\_

*reproach. You are*

will be the embodiment of our institutional core values of honor, courage  
and commitment. You will lead your Marines with firmness, fairness and  
dignity while observing and following the orders and directions of your  
senior leaders and enforcing all regulations and articles governing the  
discipline of the **Armed Forces of the United States**

**of America.”**

Given under my hand at

\_\_\_\_\_ this  
\_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, in the year of our  
Lord two thousand \_\_\_\_\_.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal Leadership in the Three-Block War," *Leatherneck* 96, no. 4 (Apr 2013): 18-23.  
<http://search.proquest.com.lomc.idm.oclc.org/docview/1326321295?accountid=14746>.
- <sup>2</sup> Gen James F. Amos, *Commandant Letter to General Officers* 2013.
- <sup>3</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *MCO P1400.32d Ch 2 Marine Corps Promotion Manual, Volume 2, Enlisted Promotions*, Vol. 2. WASHINGTON D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2012, 2-11.
- <sup>4</sup> Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal Leadership in the Three-Block War," *Leatherneck* 96, no. 4 (Apr 2013): 18-23.
- <sup>5</sup> James F. Amos and Michael P. Barrett, *The Reawakening*, 2013.
- <sup>6</sup> This assertion is based on the author's extensive experience discussing the concept of professional responsibilities with hundreds of Corporals while serving as a Company First Sergeant and Battalion Sergeant Major.
- <sup>7</sup> See Appendix A for a pictorial representation of the USMC Rank Structure,
- <sup>8</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *MCRP 6-11D Sustaining the Transformation*, Washington D.C.: Headquarters Marine Corps, 1999, FWD.
- <sup>9</sup> Rebecca Johnson, "Moral Formation of the Strategic Corporal," In *New Wars and New Soldiers: Military Ethics in the Contemporary World*, edited by Tripodi, Paolo and Jessica Wolfendale, 239. Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011, 242.
- <sup>10</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *36th Commandants Planning Guidance*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2015, 2.
- <sup>11</sup> Training and Education Command, "MOS Roadmap 0311-0369," 7.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* The current MOS Roadmap does not have the newly designated Infantry Corporal billet of Operations NCO that is included in the recently updated Infantry T&R Manual. The billet of Operations NCO is another example of a technical billet for a NCO that is not a leadership billet.
- <sup>13</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *NAVMC 3500.44B Infantry Training and Readiness Manual*, Washington, D.C, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2013, 11-4.
- <sup>14</sup> Training and Education Command, "MOS Roadmap 3531-3537," 8.
- <sup>15</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *NAVMC 3500.39B Motor Transport (Motor T) Training and Readiness Manual*, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2012, Ch. 9.
- <sup>16</sup> National Defense University, *The Noncommissioned Officer and Petty Officer BACKBONE of the Armed Forces*, Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2014, 21.
- <sup>17</sup> *Title 10, United States Code, Armed Forces Volume III*, (2007), 1888
- <sup>18</sup> United States Department of Defense. *Manual for Courts-Martial United States, 2012 Edition*. Washington, D.C., 2012, A23-6.
- <sup>19</sup> National Defense University, *The Noncommissioned Officer and Petty Officer BACKBONE of the Armed Forces*, Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2014, 3.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.
- <sup>21</sup> See Appendix C for examples of Marine Corps Professional Source Material such as the Corps Values, Leadership Traits and Principles, NCO Creed and NCO Promotion Warrant as taken from MCWP 6-11 Leading Marines.
- <sup>22</sup> See page 29 for the previously used NCO Creed.
- <sup>23</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *MCO P1400.32d Marine Corps Promotion Manual, Vol 2, Enlisted Promotions*, Vol. 2. WASHINGTON D.C.: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2012, 6-3.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup> James F. Amos and Michael P. Barrett, *The Reawakening*, 2013.

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- <sup>26</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps. *MARADMIN 521/14 Updated Enl Pme Prom Reqr's by Gde and Announcement of Cmd-Sponsored Lcpl Ldrship-Ethics and Career Crs Seminar*, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2014.
- <sup>27</sup> Marine Corps Education Command, "EPME3000AA, Leading Marines Distance Education Program Curriculum Details."
- <sup>28</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps. *MARADMIN 521/14 Updated Enl Pme Prom Reqr's by Gde and Announcement of Cmd-Sponsored Lcpl Ldrship-Ethics and Career Crs Seminar*, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2014.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Manpower Informations Systems Technology, "Evaluation Statistics "Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Quantico, VA.
- <sup>31</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *MCO P1610.7F Ch 2 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION SYSTEM (SHORT TITLE: PES)*, WASHINGTON D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2010, 2.
- <sup>32</sup> See Appendix B for a Fitness Report example.
- <sup>33</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *ALMAR 360/97 Proficiency, Conduct Marks and Composite Score Computation*, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 1997.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> See Appendix B for the Proficiency and Conduct Marking Tables.
- <sup>36</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *MCO P1070.12K Marine Corps Individual Records Administration Manual*, Washington D.C.: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2000, 4-39.
- <sup>37</sup> Manpower Informations Systems Technology, "Promotion Statistics, "Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Quantico, VA.
- <sup>38</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *MCO P1400.32d Marine Corps Promotion Manual, Vol 2, Enlisted Promotions*, Vol. 2. WASHINGTON D.C.: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2012, 2-3.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid., 2-4.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., 2-3.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., 2-11.
- <sup>42</sup> Based on the author's extensive experience with enlisted promotions, it is clear that for many if not most junior Marines, the key to earning a promotion is to stay out of trouble and stay in service long enough. Many will feel cheated if they are not promoted when they make the cutting score.
- <sup>43</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *MCO P1400.32d Marine Corps Promotion Manual, Vol 2, Enlisted Promotions*, Vol. 2. WASHINGTON D.C.: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2012, 1-8.
- <sup>44</sup> See for example:  
<http://search.proquest.com.lomc.idm.oclc.org/docview/1534475609?accountid=14746>; Hodge Seck, Hope. "Grooming NCOs." *Marine Corps Times*, December 1st, 2014, 2014.; Kinney, Calleen. "The Strategic Corporal: A Building Block Approach." *Marine Corps Gazette* 96, no. 7 (Jul 2012, 2012): 54-56.  
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- <sup>45</sup> 3/11 NCO Indoc information based on author's personal experience. 3d MAW CEL reported in *Marine Corps Times* 1 Dec 2014.

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