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THESIS

**ENHANCING OFFICER DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION
IN THE NAVY SURFACE WARFARE COMMUNITY**

by

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December 2023

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**ENHANCING OFFICER DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION
IN THE NAVY SURFACE WARFARE COMMUNITY**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the challenges faced by the Navy Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) community in developing officers with solid judgment and character while addressing the pressing issue of officer retention. By evaluating the existing *Surface Warfare Officer Career Manual* and the *Surface Warfare Officer Requirements Document (SWORD)*, this research aims to enhance the framework for SWO career trajectories, emphasizing leadership, mentorship, and personal growth. The guiding instructions must emphasize a more comprehensive and dynamic career path for SWOs. The current system has identified shortcomings in providing reliable and continuous mentoring tools to monitor officer progression and offer comprehensive leadership feedback, which is essential for their professional growth. Existing measures in the SWO community have proven insufficient, resulting in lower retention rates than their counterparts in other officer communities. By addressing not only the technical aspects of the profession, but also the personal and leadership dimensions, the SWO community can better retain talented officers, foster a culture of mutual support, and ensure the long-term success of its members. This study proposes a comprehensive framework for Commander, Naval Surface Forces and associated SWO echelons to address technical, personal, and leadership dimensions to improve officer retention rates and overall community capability.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADOC	Advanced Division Officer Course
BDOC	Basic Division Officer Course
BST	billet specialty training
CA	Command Assessment
CDR	Commander, O-5
CMD	command
CNP	Chief of Naval Personnel
CNSF	Commander, Naval Surface Forces
CO	Commanding Officer
DH	department head
DIVO	Division Officer
EC	Early Command
EVAL	Evaluation
FITREP	Fitness Report
GAO	Government Accountability Office
LCDR	Lieutenant Commander, O-4
LT	Lieutenant, O-3
MC	Major Command
NPC	Navy Personnel Command
NTO	Nuclear Trained Officer
NTTP	Navy Tactical Techniques and Procedures
OD	Organizational development
OOD	Officer of the Deck
PCO	Prospective Commanding Officer
PQS	Personnel Qualification Standards
PXO	Prospective Executive Officer
SWO	Surface Warfare Officer

SWORD	Surface Warfare Officer Requirements Document
SWSC	Surface Warfare Schools Command (previously named Surface Warfare Officer School)
TYCOM	Type Commander
XO	Executive Officer

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

This thesis addresses organizational development, focusing on leadership and professional development within the Surface Warfare community. By identifying best practices, the research provides impactful recommendations that may have a positive and lasting effect on the professional growth of officers in the Fleet. This research involves conducting a comprehensive evaluation of guiding documents to assess their effectiveness in shaping the career trajectories and leadership development of SWOs. The assessment focuses on evaluating leadership effectiveness and professional development within the SWO community, primarily by assessing the application of the *SWO Career Manual* and *SWORD*. Given the dynamic nature of the naval profession, this evaluation will center on several critical criteria and goals.

Firstly, the assessment will focus on leadership competency. It aims to determine whether the *SWO Career Manual* and *SWORD* contribute to developing leadership competencies among officers. This involves evaluating their ability to lead teams effectively, make critical decisions, and adapt to changing circumstances in the naval environment. Another critical aspect of the evaluation is career progression. The goal here is to ascertain if these resources support the career advancement of SWOs. This will involve examining whether the tools facilitate officers in moving up the ranks, taking on more significant responsibilities, and ultimately achieving their career goals within the SWO community. Performance improvement is another vital criterion. The assessment seeks to determine whether the *SWO Career Manual* and *SWORD* lead to measurable enhancements in the performance of SWOs within their assigned roles. This includes exploring how these resources improve officers' skills and capabilities in effectively fulfilling their duties.

Furthermore, the evaluation will consider the existence of a feedback mechanism and an evaluation process. This component is essential for gauging the impact and effectiveness of these resources. It involves researching methods in place that involve

feedback, including midterm debriefs and 360-degree evaluations. Additionally, aligning the *SWO Career Manual* and *SWORD* with current needs within the naval profession will be a focal point. The evaluation will investigate whether these resources' content and guidance align with the challenges and requirements faced by SWOs in the continually evolving naval environment.

Lastly, the assessment will determine whether the *SWO Career Manual* and *SWORD* can adapt to changing circumstances, incorporate new technologies, and remain relevant in response to evolving leadership needs within the naval profession. By focusing on these goals and criteria, the evaluation will provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of leadership and professional development within the SWO community and offer valuable insights into the *SWO Career Manual* and *SWORD*'s impact on officers' career development and performance.

B. BACKGROUND

The SWO community emphasizes the development of officers with solid judgment and character, necessitating a reliable tool for tracking their professional progress and leadership capabilities. The current fitness reporting system (FITREP) falls short by serving only as periodic evaluation lacking continuous mentoring. Consequently, SWOs lack a guidance continuum that supports career growth. Officer retention poses a significant challenge, with the SWO community having the lowest retention rate among officer groups (GAO, 2021). Addressing this issue is vital to retaining talented officers, requiring strategies to enhance long-term commitment and satisfaction within the community.

Despite significant efforts in recent years to improve community health within the SWO community, recent surveys indicate that the desired impact has not been achieved (LaGrone, 2023). Surface Warfare leadership wants to enhance the experiences of SWOs by addressing their concerns and challenges, aiming to foster a more positive and connected community while improving recruitment and retention outcomes. There is an emphasis on uplifting the SWO culture and encouraging mutual support within the community. As expressed by previous Commander, Naval Surface Forces VADM Kitchener prior to the 2023 Surface Navy Association National Symposium, the

consideration of initiatives such as increased self-selectivity, comprehensive leadership development programs, and the establishment of a mentoring and coaching culture within the community holds excellent promise (Correll, 2023). Through a comprehensive analysis of the SWO community's current organizational development framework, we can gain valuable insights into their existing strengths and areas where enhancements can be strategically implemented to pave the way for their future success.

C. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This thesis explores the present and prospective significance of the *SWO Career Manual* and the *SWORD* in guiding the development and retention of SWOs from their initial qualification to future career milestones. The research aims to provide insights into the following questions:

- How can the *SWO Career Manual* be enhanced to create a talent management-oriented career continuum encompassing an individual's trajectory?
- How can implementing the *SWORD* and the *SWO Career Manual* enhance the personal development of officers in the Surface Warfare community and maximize its impact through effective strategies?

D. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Hanisko and Mulanax (2021) undertook an extensive literature review to explore the integration of the 360-degree feedback assessment within the Surface Warfare Schools Command (SWSC) framework. Their investigation primarily centered on SWO division officers within pay grades O-1 through O-3. However, while this aspect represents a vital component of the broader narrative, there could be value in exploring beyond the junior officer ranks and additional methodologies to ensure officers' alignment with the evolving needs and expectations of the U.S. Navy.

Within this context, the *SWO Career Manual* and the *SWORD* emerge as important documents governed by the SWO community. These documents not only apply to the JO ranks but empower SWO leadership to establish the desired standards and expectations for

their officers. By closely examining the content and principles outlined in the *SWO Career Manual* and *SWORD*, we can pinpoint areas that require change initiatives, enabling the community to align with the demands of contemporary culture (Kotter, 2012). By drawing from previous research and taking inspiration from successful models used by contemporary high-achieving corporations, this thesis seeks to identify areas in the current implementation that can benefit from improvement. The ultimate goal is to construct a comprehensive framework that aligns with the values and requirements of today's maritime landscape and seamlessly integrates with the *SWO Career Manual* and *SWORD*. This integrated approach aims to create an environment where SWOs can progress through their careers with clarity, strategic foresight, and a solid foundation of expertise.

E. THESIS ORGANIZATION

This research develops across five chapters. Chapter I focuses on the background and motivation behind this study. Chapter II discusses organizational development and best practices to improve an organization. Chapter III covers the background of the Surface Warfare community, providing historical context and a comprehensive portrayal of CNSF's current guidance. Chapter IV presents a gap analysis of the current instructions in place. Finally, Chapter V serves as the compass guiding the path, summarizing discoveries, drawing conclusions, and presenting actionable recommendations to refine the *SWORD* and *SWO Career Manual*.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines organizational development, exploring comprehensively through a literature review to unveil its practical applications within organizational contexts. The research will reveal proven strategies designed to improve overall effectiveness. Additionally, this chapter will present theoretical foundations, drawing parallels with programs used by the SWO Community.

B. BACKGROUND

Organizational Development (OD) is a finely tuned and deliberate approach to enhancing the effectiveness and performance of organizations, operating as a dynamic system where planned and collaborative endeavors involve all strata within an organization. OD interventions span a broad spectrum, addressing multifaceted challenges that include improving communication and collaboration, reinforcing leadership and teamwork, heightening employee engagement and motivation, steering change and transitions, innovating products and services, elevating customer satisfaction, and fostering an inclusive, equitable, and diverse workplace.

At the heart of OD is the foundational belief that organizations are intricate and evolving systems, continually adapting to the ever-changing landscape of the business world. To succeed in this environment, organizations must cultivate the ability to adapt and learn, remaining agile and forward-thinking. OD, as a comprehensive discipline, equips organizations with the capacity to navigate change and attain their desired objectives. It is the compass that steers organizations toward lasting success.

The roots of OD can be traced back to the early 1950s, catalyzed by the pioneering work of Kurt Lewin (Burnes & Cooke, 2013), a distinguished German-American social psychologist. Lewin's profound curiosity revolved around the dynamics of change, and he postulated that change could be harnessed through systematic interventions.

As the 1960s and 1970s unfolded, OD was embraced more widely by organizations eager to amplify their performance and effectiveness. OD practitioners were instrumental in formulating diverse interventions, adopting team-building exercises, leadership development programs, and the advent of employee engagement surveys (Cummings & Worley, 2009). In the 1980s and 1990s, OD underwent a transformative phase, shifting its focus toward aiding organizations in the intricate change management process and transitions. Simultaneously, a more profound commitment to fostering culturally sensitive and inclusive approaches took center stage (Cummings & Worley, 2009).

C. KEY CONCEPTS

1. Leadership Development

Schein and Schein (2016) delve into the intricate relationship between leadership development and establishing a vibrant organizational culture. Schein underscores that leaders play a pivotal role as the architects of an organization's culture, responsible for cultivating an environment that fosters high performance. These assertions resonate in Schein's exploration of various dimensions of leadership development, a discourse that offers invaluable insights for leaders seeking to nurture a culture of excellence.

Schein elucidates that leaders, through their actions and decisions, wield immense influence over the organization's culture. They act as role models, setting the tone by exemplifying the values and behaviors they wish to see mirrored throughout the organization. Furthermore, through effective communication, leaders convey the organization's mission, vision, and values, reinforcing the desired cultural elements. Their decision-making, including resource allocation, employee recognition, and conflict resolution, significantly molds the cultural landscape. Additionally, Schein highlights the pivotal role of rituals and ceremonies that leaders can employ to create and fortify the organization's culture (Schein, 2019). These ceremonial moments, whether award ceremonies celebrating employee achievements or town hall meetings fostering transparent communication are instrumental in shaping the organization's cultural fabric.

It is essential to highlight the indispensable role of leadership development in nurturing a thriving organizational culture. Schein (2019) underscores the dual imperative

that leaders face. Firstly, leaders must invest in their continuous growth and development, a commitment that can be realized through reading, workshops, conferences, and mentorship. Secondly, leaders are responsible for fostering a culture conducive to leadership development. This can be accomplished by providing employees opportunities to learn, grow, and assume leadership roles. In essence, leaders are not only beneficiaries of leadership development but also their stewards, creating an environment where leadership can flourish.

Schein (2019) emphasizes the pivotal role of cultivating a learning culture in leadership development. This culture encourages employees to seek new knowledge and take on fresh challenges. Leaders facilitate this culture by offering training and development opportunities, promoting an environment where employees feel safe asking questions and making mistakes, encouraging knowledge sharing, and recognizing and rewarding employees for their dedication to learning and development.

Cameron and Quinn's Competing Values Framework is a well-established model in the field of organizational culture and leadership (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Developed by Robert E. Quinn and Kim S. Cameron in the 1980s, this framework provides a way to understand and assess organizational cultures by identifying four distinct cultural archetypes, each associated with different values and beliefs (Quinn & Cameron, 1983). The Competing Values Framework was further elaborated in their book titled *Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture: Based on the Competing Values Framework*, which was published in 1999 and updated a few years later (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). These archetypes are:

1. **Clan Culture:** Clan cultures are characterized by a focus on internal integration and collaboration. They are like a family where individuals have a strong sense of belonging. Leadership in clan cultures is often seen as mentorship and nurturing. The key values are teamwork, participation, and employee development (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).
2. **Adhocracy Culture:** Adhocracy cultures are known for their emphasis on creativity, innovation, and risk-taking. They are dynamic and

entrepreneurial, encouraging experimentation and adaptability. In these cultures, leadership is seen as visionary and innovative. The key values are creativity, risk-taking, and change (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

3. **Hierarchy Culture:** Hierarchy cultures are structured and rule-oriented. They prioritize efficiency, stability, and control. Leadership in these cultures is often based on hierarchy and authority. The key values are consistency, control, and efficiency (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).
4. **Market Culture:** Market cultures are competitive and results-driven. They value achievement, competitiveness, and meeting customer needs. Leadership in market cultures is seen as results-oriented. The key values are competitiveness, customer focus, and achievement (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

Organizations might exhibit aspects of one or more archetypes, and their culture might change over time. The framework is not prescriptive but serves as a diagnostic tool to help organizations comprehend their cultural inclinations, identify strengths, and recognize areas for development (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Using this ideology may assist leaders and consultants in making informed decisions about leadership styles, strategic planning, and organizational interventions, leading to a better understanding, and leveraging of the complexities within an organization's culture.

2. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement, often described as the essence of thriving organizations, is a multifaceted concept with profound implications for productivity, job satisfaction, and overall business performance (Harter et al., 2002). At its core, employee engagement reflects the emotional and intellectual connection between employees and their work, organization, and colleagues. Engaged employees invest their time, skills, enthusiasm, and passion into their roles, fueling the engine of progress and innovation (Robinson et al., 2004). This dynamic relationship between individuals and their workplace fosters an environment where employees go above and beyond, manifesting in higher levels of motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment.

Organizations worldwide recognize the intrinsic value of employee engagement and its potential to drive success. A fundamental element of engagement is emotional commitment—engaged employees are personally invested in the organization’s mission and success, resulting in a sense of pride and belonging (Bakker et al., 2008). The emotional link between employees and the organization acts as a motivating force, fostering enthusiasm. This results in a workforce that actively looks for opportunities to grow and develop. In essence, employee engagement serves as a powerful catalyst for innovation, transformation, and sustained excellence.

Effective employee engagement fuels individual and team success and cultivates a positive workplace culture of collaboration, trust, and resilience (Saks, 2006). Engaged employees tend to be more adaptable and demonstrate a greater willingness to confront challenges, embracing setbacks as opportunities for growth. Their emotional connection to colleagues promotes a spirit of teamwork and mutual support (Saks, 2006). Macey and Schneider (2008) discovered engaged employees often become vocal advocates for their organizations, bolstering employer branding and helping attract top talent. The benefits are multifold, contributing to a harmonious workplace, lower turnover rates, and superior customer satisfaction (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Employee engagement plays a crucial role in organizational development, influencing performance, culture, and competitiveness. Research consistently highlights that an engaged workforce correlates with a motivated, resilient, and collaborative team capable of adapting to change and working towards strategic objectives. Creating and sustaining employee engagement involves aligning personal and organizational goals, promoting transparent communication, and cultivating a supportive work environment—all key aspects of organizational development.

3. Performance Improvement

Performance improvement is a fundamental practice within organizations, driven by data-driven decision-making, training, clear goal-setting, feedback mechanisms, and process optimization. In today’s dynamic business landscape, organizations must continually assess and enhance their performance to remain competitive and meet their

objectives. Research has underscored the importance of performance improvement as a strategic organizational tool. Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2009) conducted an analysis that identified a correlation among employee satisfaction, engagement, and business results. This research demonstrated the profound impact of employee engagement on overall organizational performance. Engaging employees through well-designed performance improvement initiatives contributes to higher productivity, job satisfaction, and commitment, ultimately fostered a positive workplace culture.

Organizations need to establish clear goals and objectives to drive performance improvement. Setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) goals is a well-recognized best practice (Dale et al., 2016). These goals provide a roadmap for individual employees and teams, ensuring their efforts align with the broader organizational strategy. Furthermore, Dale et. al. (2016) argue that organizations must employ data-driven decision-making as a cornerstone of performance improvement. This entails collecting and analyzing data related to key performance metrics, enabling organizations to identify areas that require improvement.

Feedback mechanisms are pivotal in performance improvement as they enable organizations to monitor and adjust their strategies continuously. Saks (2006) emphasized the need for constructive feedback provided to employees, helping them understand their strengths and areas needing development. Effective feedback fosters a culture of continuous improvement, enabling employees to adapt and enhance their performance based on actionable insights (Saks, 2006).

In addition to feedback, organizations should invest in training and development programs to enhance employees' skills and competencies. Continuous learning is essential in today's rapidly evolving business environment (Dale et al., 2016). By investing in training and development, organizations improve their workforce's capabilities and demonstrate a commitment to their employees' growth and career advancement. This increases employee engagement and overall performance (Harter et al., 2002).

4. Cultural Transformation

Cultural transformation represents a multifaceted process involving deliberate reconfiguring of an organization's core values, beliefs, and behavioral paradigms. This intricate process, albeit demanding, is imperative for organizations that aspire to adapt to shifting landscapes and attain their strategic objectives within an ever-evolving milieu (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). The rationale for such an endeavor is rooted in several compelling motives, each underscored by distinct organizational imperatives (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996).

1. **Performance Enhancement:** One of the foremost catalysts for cultural transformation is the aspiration to elevate organizational performance. A culture imbued with values of excellence, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to continuous improvement is poised to outperform its counterpart entrenched in complacency and resistance to change (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).
2. **Adaptation to Dynamic Change:** The relentless pace of change characterizing the contemporary world necessitates that organizations acquire adaptability as a core competency. In this context, a malleable and change-embracing culture emerges as a potent asset for long-term viability and prosperity (Schein & Schein, 2016).
3. **Talent Attraction and Retention:** The contemporary workforce increasingly gravitates towards organizations characterized by a robust culture underpinned by values aligned with individual convictions. Organizations that embark on the journey of cultural transformation position themselves favorably in the competition to attract and retain top-tier talent (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

Undertaking cultural transformation requires a systematic and sustained commitment led by visionary leadership. Several fundamental steps guide the way:

1. **Articulate a Vision for the Future Culture:** The inception of cultural transformation demands a clear vision. Leaders must define the desired

future culture, specifying the values and behaviors they aspire to cultivate (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

2. **Disseminate the Vision:** Communication is paramount. The vision must be communicated meticulously to all organizational stakeholders, harnessing mediums such as town hall meetings, emails, and other forms of discourse (Schein & Schein, 2016).
3. **Model Desired Behaviors and Values:** As exemplars of the cultural shift, leadership must embody the desired behaviors and values. Leading by example is indispensable in galvanizing the transformation process (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996).
4. **Reward and Recognize Cultural Champions:** Acknowledging and rewarding employees who embody the desired culture is a potent motivator. It encourages emulation of such exemplary behavior throughout the organization (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).
5. **Facilitate Learning and Growth:** Cultural transformation is inseparable from individual development. Leaders must provide employees with avenues for learning and growth facilitated through training, development programs, and opportunities for job rotation (Schein & Schein, 2016).

Cultural transformation does not manifest overnight; it unfolds over time, necessitating sustained commitment and collective dedication. This journey is characterized by patience, persistence, and the unison of all organizational members. It is incumbent to acknowledge that cultural transformation is not an endpoint but an enduring process where deeply ingrained assumptions and beliefs undergo evolution (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996).

Crucially, cultural transformation is not an imposition from a hierarchical summit but a collective commitment encompassing every organization member. It is not about uniformity but rather the creation of an inclusive culture where each individual is esteemed, respected, and offered the opportunity to make meaningful contributions and foster personal growth (Schein & Schein, 2016).

5. Process Improvement

Process improvement is a pivotal component that holds the potential to revitalize an organization's operations, increase efficiency, and drive better results. Organizations often turn to methodologies such as Lean Six Sigma (LSS) for continuous enhancement. By implementing these principles, organizations can meticulously analyze workflows, identify bottlenecks, and eliminate redundant steps, ultimately fostering improved efficiency and resource utilization (Näslund, 2008).

The Total Quality Management (TQM) approach plays a significant role in achieving process improvement. TQM emphasizes a holistic perspective that integrates quality throughout an organization (Dale et al., 2015). It underscores the significance of employee involvement in continuous improvement, aligning well with the core tenets of organizational development. By engaging all organization members, TQM fosters a culture of quality, making it a driving force behind the pursuit of process excellence.

A powerful illustration of process improvement's potential benefits can be found in business process reengineering (BPR). BPR takes a bold and comprehensive approach, reimagining and redesigning processes from the ground up, often resulting in substantial, transformative improvements (Davenport, 1993). This radical methodology aligns with the essence of OD, as it involves a profound examination of current practices and a vision for a radically improved future state.

However, the pursuit of process improvement is not without its challenges. Resistance to change remains a persistent hurdle, as employees might be averse to alterations in their established routines (Kotter, 2012). Effective change management, a fundamental component of OD, becomes imperative in mitigating resistance and ensuring a smooth transition to improved processes.

D. BEST PRACTICES

1. Assessment and Feedback

The evolution of 360-degree feedback in Industrial-Organizational (I-O) psychology has involved refining its concepts and operational definitions (Bracken et al.,

2016). In its early stages during the 1980s-1990s, numerous names and approaches were associated with 360-degree feedback, reflecting a broad spectrum of applications. Over time, various forms of feedback, such as 360-degree interviews and personality measures, emerged from its origins.

Bracken et al. (2016) proposed a new definition to establish a more transparent and formal understanding of 360-degree feedback. According to this definition, 360-degree feedback is a process that involves collecting and quantifying observations from coworkers about an individual (ratee). This process serves three specific data-driven purposes: (a) gathering perceptions of specific behaviors, (b) analyzing meaningful comparisons of perceptions across multiple ratee and rater groups, and (c) facilitating sustainable changes in valued behaviors within the organization.

Bracken et. al. (2016) further elaborate upon with specific considerations:

1. The 360-degree feedback process encompasses all steps from design to use, emphasizing aligning with organizational requirements. Feedback methods lacking these features are termed “alternate forms of feedback” (AFF).
2. Observations come exclusively from coworkers, excluding those not directly involved in work-related interactions.
3. The term “quantifying” is used instead of “measurement” to emphasize the numerical assessment of the ratee by the rater. Interviews, while valuable for coaching, should not be considered 360-degree feedback.
4. Although not always required, anonymity is often associated with 360-degree feedback, promoting honesty in responses.
5. 360-degree feedback focuses on observing behaviors rather than traits, attitudes, or internal states. Competencies, skills, and knowledge are rated indirectly by demonstrating related behaviors.
6. The ability to make meaningful comparisons between different rater groups and within groups is central to 360-degree feedback.

7. The process should aim to create sustainable changes, starting at the individual level and potentially extending to groups and organizations.

Battley (2011) identifies two key strategies, namely 360-degree feedback and executive coaching, stand out in the realm of leadership development. The 360-degree feedback process is known for its comprehensive evaluation, brings numerous benefits to both organizations and individuals. For organizations, it aligns performance standards, nurtures a culture embodying core value, and nurtures vital talent. On an individual level, it fosters self-awareness and behavior change through a more holistic evaluation process. In the context of different roles, 360-degree feedback offers tailored advantages. Senior executives benefit from receiving insights that might not otherwise be communicated, early-stage managers use the feedback to benchmark their progress, while high-potential professionals refine their career paths through the comprehensive evaluation.

a. Culture Change

The efficacy of 360-degree feedback in promoting behavior change is contingent upon careful design and implementation. Bracken and Rose (2011) delineate four pivotal factors influencing its effectiveness. Firstly, the feedback must be pertinent to the individual's job and career aspirations, ensuring that it resonates with their professional development goals. Secondly, the feedback should emanate from sources deemed credible by the recipient, instilling trust and reliability in the feedback process. Thirdly, individuals must be held accountable for enacting changes, often achieved through setting specific goals and monitoring progress over time. Lastly, the involvement of a substantial portion of individuals working with the subject is essential to ensure the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the feedback.

To gauge the effectiveness of 360-degree feedback in driving behavior change, Bracken and Rose (2011) recommend various assessment methods. These encompass self-reporting, where individuals articulate whether they have made behavioral improvements based on the feedback received. Additionally, manager ratings can be solicited to evaluate performance in the specific areas targeted by the feedback, while peer ratings offer an external perspective. In some instances, objective measures, such as tracking customer

satisfaction scores, can be employed to ascertain changes in behavior, primarily when feedback is related to specific skills or competencies.

There is a pivotal role of 360-degree feedback in shaping organizational culture. By aligning performance standards and nurturing a culture ingrained with core values, the 360-degree feedback method catalyzes broader cultural change within an organization (Battley, 2011). This feedback mechanism indirectly advocates for a cultural shift through its emphasis on self-awareness and behavior change. It prompts individuals to be more mindful and adaptable, fostering an environment where continuous self-improvement is encouraged. Consequently, this approach does not merely focus on individual development but hints at a more significant cultural transformation, advocating adaptability, growth, and self-awareness across the organization.

When thoughtfully implemented and managed, 360-degree feedback can be a potent catalyst for behavior change. Organizations should prioritize crafting a feedback process that is relevant, credible, and accountable, thereby increasing its likelihood of success. Moreover, continuous assessment of the feedback process is crucial for organizational learning and improvement over time. Organizations can employ several additional strategies to optimize the impact of 360-degree feedback. Providing specific and actionable feedback, developing concrete change plans, and offering ongoing support and coaching are all essential elements in facilitating behavior change.

b. Use of 360-Degree Feedback in the Military

The RAND Corporation was commissioned to conduct extensive research into the potential utilization of 360-degree assessments within the U.S. Military (Hardison et al., 2015). The results of their comprehensive investigation into the application of these assessments in a military context yielded invaluable insights and recommendations for their implementation. The authors provided a strong recommendation against integrating 360-degree assessments into the officer evaluation system for formal evaluation purposes, instead advocating for their continued use exclusively for professional development.

One paramount concern is the potential dilution of the developmental essence inherent in 360-degree assessments. The fundamental purpose of these assessments is to

furnish a comprehensive and impartial portrayal of an individual's performance and behaviors, to nurture personal and professional growth, to enhance organizational efficiency, and to foster constructive transformation. The prospect of introducing two distinct systems also introduces the risk of confounding assessors and imposing an additional survey-related burden on military personnel. Moreover, the absence of unambiguous directives on interpreting and applying 360-degree assessment results within the evaluation process exacerbates the complexity of this issue.

The potential ramifications of incorporating 360-degree assessments into selection boards and the promotion process elicit substantial concerns. The potential for anonymity and the possibility of inaccuracies in 360-degree ratings could introduce biased or unreliable information into promotion decisions. The nuanced context behind these ratings may not be readily apparent to board members, potentially eroding the fairness and precision of promotion determinations.

RAND asserts that 360-degree assessments are valuable for fostering personal growth and development within the military. They are a valuable tool for supporting leader development and aiding individuals in pursuing self-improvement objectives. These assessments can furnish a consolidated perspective on military leadership, facilitating the identification of areas needing developmental support or targeted interventions.

2. Mentoring

Effective mentoring relationships rely on several best practices to ensure they are meaningful and mutually beneficial. Clear objectives and expectations are foundational; mentors and mentees should work collaboratively to define specific goals and ensure alignment between the mentee's developmental needs and the mentor's expertise (Kram, 1983). Open and active communication plays a pivotal role, allowing for exchanging knowledge, feedback, and guidance. Both mentors and mentees must be encouraged to engage in dialogue, ask questions, share experiences, and provide constructive input (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

One fundamental principle is a tailored approach to mentoring. Recognizing that each mentee has unique learning preferences and needs, mentors should adapt their

guidance and support to cater to individual requirements, capitalizing on strengths and addressing areas for development (Zachary, 2006). Ongoing support and regular feedback are integral to the mentor-mentee dynamic, enabling the mentee to track their progress and make necessary adjustments to their developmental plans (Kram, 1983). A mentoring relationship thrives when built upon mutual respect and trust. This trust allows for open and honest discussions, which is critical for the free exchange of ideas and advice (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

Effective mentoring should focus on tangible skill development. Mentors should create opportunities for hands-on learning, enabling mentees to apply what they have learned in practical situations, thereby translating knowledge into competencies (Zachary, 2006). Accountability is another crucial aspect; mentors and mentees should be responsible for their commitments within the relationship. This sense of accountability fosters ownership and motivation to work diligently toward the defined goals (Kram, 1983). Lastly, regular evaluation and reflection on the mentoring relationship are vital for continuous improvement. Mentors and mentees should regularly assess progress, discuss challenges, and identify areas for growth and refinement, ensuring the relationship remains effective and valuable (Zachary, 2006).

Battley (2011) suggests that the effectiveness of 360-degree feedback is notably heightened when complemented by follow-up activities like facilitated feedback discussions, goal-setting sessions, and ongoing coaching. These supplementary steps significantly contribute to enhancing the impact of the feedback, facilitating behavior change and improvements in performance. Executive coaching, another influential strategy, is a personalized development approach where a manager partners with a qualified coach to achieve mutually identified goals that enhance professional performance and organizational effectiveness. This area has seen substantial evolution and growing popularity across various industries. The significance of accurate feedback interpretation, meaningful goal setting, and effective execution and evaluation of plans is emphasized to ensure lasting behavior change. Here, executive coaching plays a vital role by providing professional guidance and support, empowering individuals to reach their maximum potential.

3. Mission and Vision

Crafting mission and vision statements is a pivotal process that provides organizations with a sense of purpose and strategic direction. The first best practice is clarity and simplicity. These statements should be concise and straightforward, avoiding jargon or vague language. They should clearly communicate the organization's core purpose and its overarching aspirations, ensuring that they are easily understood by all stakeholders (Collins & Porras, 1996).

Another critical best practice is alignment with core values. Mission and vision statements should closely align with the organization's core values, which serve as the moral compass guiding actions and decisions. This alignment ensures consistency with the overall strategic direction and ethical standards (Van Wart, 2013).

Incorporating inspirational language is also essential, especially in vision statements. Vision statements should be designed to inspire and motivate stakeholders. They should vividly paint a compelling future picture, evoking passion and enthusiasm. Inspirational language can ignite a strong commitment to the organization's goals and serve as a driving force (Collins & Porras, 1996).

Taking a long-term perspective is a key best practice for vision statements. While mission statements describe the organization's present purpose, vision statements look into the future. A well-crafted vision should extend beyond short-term objectives and articulate the organization's long-term aspirations and impact (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Involving key stakeholders, such as employees, customers, and partners, in developing mission and vision statements is another valuable best practice. This inclusivity ensures a more comprehensive perspective and promotes a sense of ownership and alignment with the statements (Bart Baetz, 1998). Regularly reviewing and adapting mission and vision statements is vital. They should be periodically assessed to ensure they remain relevant and in alignment with changing organizational circumstances. Flexibility and adaptability are critical to sustaining their significance over time (Van Wart, 2013).

Authenticity and credibility are pivotal best practices. Both mission and vision statements must genuinely reflect the organization's purpose, and they should be seen as

credible and achievable by employees and external stakeholders. Authenticity ensures that the statements resonate and are trustworthy (Collins & Porras, 1996).

Lastly, translating these statements into specific goals and actions at all levels of the organization is essential. This cascading of mission and vision to goals and actions ensures that day-to-day activities support the overarching purpose and strategic direction, aligning the organization for success (Kouzes, 2007).

E. SUMMARY

This chapter has comprehensively explored vital concepts and best practices within OD. OD is a strategic beacon guiding organizations toward heightened effectiveness and performance within the ever-evolving business landscape. Notably, Leadership Development took center stage, underscoring leaders' pivotal role in shaping an organization's culture. It was evident that fostering effective leadership involves a commitment to continuous growth and creating an environment conducive to leadership development.

Additionally, the chapter spotlighted best practices, serving as a compass for organizations aiming to cultivate a culture of continuous improvement, align with their core mission, and inspire stakeholders to thrive in an ever-evolving business milieu. These practices, from leveraging 360-degree feedback for development and optimizing its military application to the art of mentoring and the crafting of mission and vision statements, were underpinned by principles of clarity, alignment with core values, inspiration, a forward-looking perspective, stakeholder engagement, routine review, authenticity, and translation into concrete goals and actions.

III. SURFACE WARFARE COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide an in-depth exploration of the Surface Warfare community, delving into the way officers' careers are molded, encompassing their career path and progression. Furthermore, this chapter will thoroughly examine the *SWO Career Manual* and *Surface Warfare Officer Requirements Document (SWORD)*, elucidating the key pillars and competencies that play a crucial role in SWO career advancement.

B. CAREER PATHS AND PROGRESSION

Information on the SWO career path and progression were taken from PERS-41 briefs found on the MyNavy HR NPC webpage and through the various experiences of officers.

Career development plays a pivotal role in shaping the success and capabilities of SWOs within the Navy. As aspiring leaders in the naval community, SWOs embark on diverse career paths that present numerous opportunities for growth and progression. The following paragraphs delve into the various aspects of career development in the Surface Warfare community, shedding light on the pathways, challenges, and strategies that contribute to a fulfilling and impactful naval career.

The career journey of a SWO commences with commissioning through service academies, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), or Officer Candidate School (OCS). Starting as division officers, they manage essential tasks and responsibilities within their divisions, refining both their leadership skills and expertise. As shown in Figure 1, SWOs progress in their career, taking on department head roles and eventually pursuing command opportunities. This progression demands continuous growth, adaptability, and a commitment to excellence as delineated in the *SWORD*. Each prescribed tour length can last between 18 and 24 months, with deployments, maintenance availabilities, and training phases occurring.

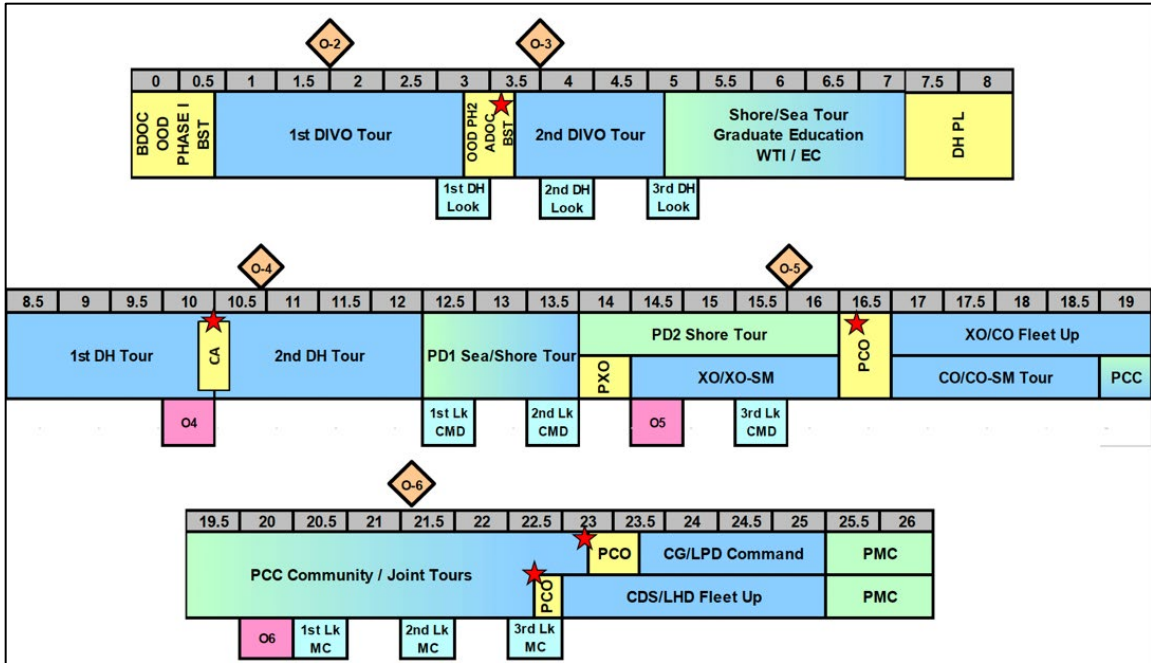


Figure 1. Legacy SWO Career Path. Source: Navy Personnel Command (2023).

Nuclear Trained Officers (NTOs) within the SWO community follow a specialized and distinct career trajectory. As shown in Figure 2, the trajectory is strategically designed to concentrate on providing dedicated support to nuclear entities, including training commands and carrier tours. At the onset of their careers, NTOs commence along the same path as traditional SWOs, participating in essential training such as BDOC and OOD Phase I, followed by a 1st DIVO sea tour. However, their career trajectory diverges significantly after this initial tour.

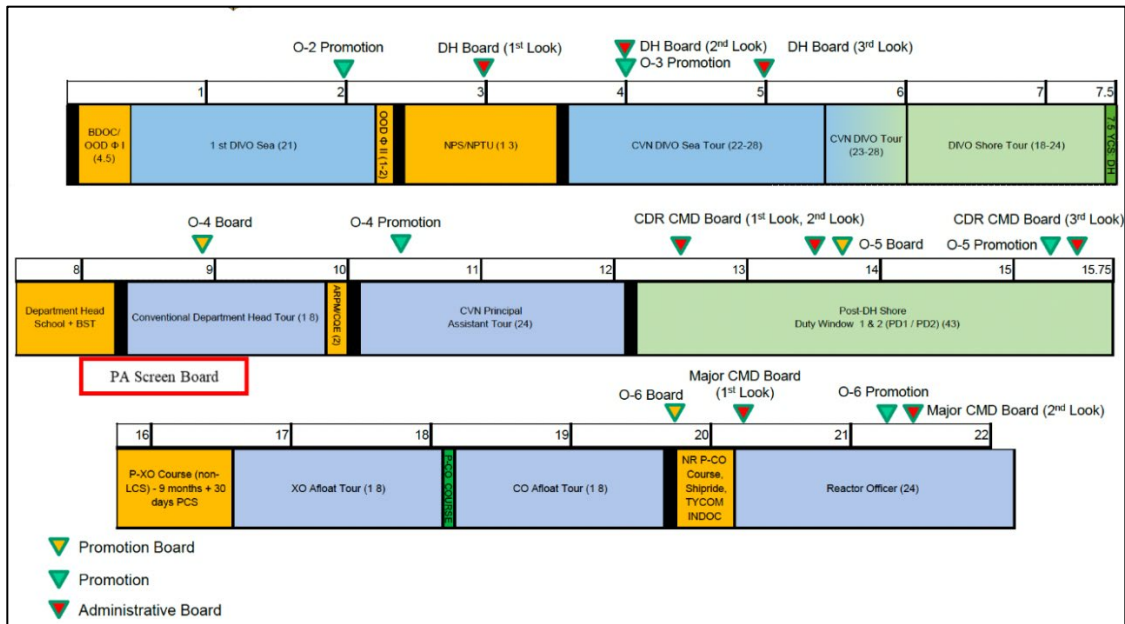


Figure 2. SWO(N) Career Path. Source: Navy Personnel Command (2023).

Upon completing their first tour, NTOs pursuing the nuclear career path undergo specialized training at the culmination of OOD Phase II by attending Nuclear Power School. This academic phase equips SWO NTOs with comprehensive knowledge of the fundamental principles governing nuclear propulsion plants. Following the successful completion of Nuclear Power School, graduates proceed to a CVN DIVO Tour, replacing the conventional second DIVO Tour they would have undertaken on a different career path. It is essential to note that the CVN DIVO Tour significantly contrasts with a conventional second DIVO Tour, as its primary emphasis lies on operating a nuclear propulsion plant rather than shiphandling or combat watchstanding.

Unlike their conventional SWO counterparts, SWO NTOs also embark on a shore tour and subsequently attend Department Head (DH) school. Post-DH school, they engage in a traditional DH tour, resembling the path of a regular SWO. However, instead of pursuing a second DH tour, SWO NTOs undertake a CVN Principal Assistant tour, once again honing their focus on the intricacies of a CVN nuclear propulsion plant. SWO NTOs conduct post-department head shore tours supporting various nuclear entities. If a SWO NTO qualifies for Commander (O-5) Command, they will execute a XO Afloat and CO Afloat tour, aligning with any other conventional SWO path. The specialized career path

of SWO NTOs ensures a comprehensive and targeted focus on operating and managing nuclear propulsion systems within the SWO community, delineating a unique and crucial role within the naval hierarchy.

C. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The Surface Warfare Community provides comprehensive training and education programs. Most of the training to develop SWOs occurs in Newport, RI at the Surface Warfare Schools Command. Key training opportunity occur at certain milestones throughout an officer's career.

Initial training begins with the Basic Division Officer Course (BDOC), equipping them with fundamental skills and knowledge. The purpose of this curriculum is to baseline all new SWOs from the various commissioning sources. Additionally, some officers will go through billet specialty training (BST), such as shiphandling or engineering courses, further enhancing their expertise in specific areas. Upon completing BDOC and BST, officers will report to their first ship, where they receive additional hands-on training on their way to becoming full qualified SWOs.

Between DIVO tours, fully qualified SWOs attend the Advanced Division Officer Course (ADOC), a program emphasizing shiphandling and watchstanding skills. Additionally, the Navy actively encourages SWOs to pursue advanced educational opportunities, such as postgraduate degrees and professional certifications. This support fosters their intellectual development, preparing them to tackle complex challenges.

Following ADOC, the next training milestone for SWOs occurs during Department Head (DH) School. This program ensures a comprehensive understanding of SWO knowledge, covering diverse areas like shiphandling, navigation, engineering, and other pertinent topics. Given the diverse nature of the SWO community, individual career paths vary significantly. SWOs undergo different shore tours, some of which may not directly relate to the SWO community.

During breaks between DH tours, SWOs return to SWSC to undergo a Command Assessment (CA). This assessment includes a five-part written exam, a navigation

scenario, and a tactical assessment (Commander, Naval Surface Forces, 2018). Another opportunity for training at SWSC arises during the Prospective Executive Officer (PXO) and Prospective Commanding Officer (PCO) curriculums, focusing on emphasizing roles in those specific positions.

D. SURFACE WARFARE OFFICER CAREER MANUAL

This section aims to provide a succinct overview of the key focal points within the *SWO Career Manual*. Although the document delves into specialized areas of interest, the ensuing paragraphs aim to offer a comprehensive glimpse into the content of each chapter of this instructional guide. The following information was taken from *COMNAVSURFORINST 1412.7A, Surface Warfare Officer Career Manual* dated 22 November 2021.

The *SWO Career Manual*, promulgated by CNSF, is a governing document for SWOs that outlines specific requirements and milestones, ensuring a well-defined path from initial entry into the community to significant command positions. This allows standardization and consistency within the ranks and ensures that every SWO is held to a uniform set of standards and expectations, which is critical in maintaining the Navy's operational readiness and effectiveness.

The document is broken up into five chapters: 1) Watchstander Proficiency Requirements, 2) Mariner Skills Logbook Requirements, 3) SWO Qualification and Authority to Wear the Insignia, 4) SWO Milestone Mariner Skills Assessments, Evaluations, and Competency Checks, and 5) Surface Force Command Requirements (Commander, Naval Surface Forces, 2021).

The first chapter underscores the SWO community's commitment to the proficiency and readiness of its watchstanders. The chapter sets stringent minimum proficiency requirements, ensuring personnel meet qualifications and excel in their respective roles. The chapter also highlights the Navy's commitment to ongoing training and requalification.

The second chapter explores the intricate framework of Mariner Skills Proficiency. This chapter serves as a guide for implementing and assessing mariner skills within the SWO community, emphasizing the critical role that proficiency standards play in ensuring the readiness and effectiveness of naval operations. This chapter articulates the specific mariner skills proficiency standards that SWOs must uphold. These standards encompass various competencies, including navigation, shiphandling, and seamanship.

Third chapter of the document underlines the formalized procedures and criteria related to the qualification and designation of officers as SWOs. It is a fundamental guideline outlining the prerequisites and expectations for officers seeking qualification. This chapter aligns with broader naval objectives of ensuring that SWOs possess the skills and knowledge required to excel in their roles, ultimately contributing to the readiness and effectiveness of the Surface Force.

The SWO qualification process is distributed among several entities, with CNSF holding the critical role of establishing the SWO qualification policy and providing oversight. Type Commanders (TYCOMs) are pivotal in maintaining consistent qualification standards. At the same time, SWSC serves as the executive agent responsible for managing SWO training and qualification processes. Individual ship Commanding Officers are integral in applying the chapter's provisions within their commands and overseeing SWO training and qualification matters. This distribution of responsibilities reflects the complex interplay between centralized policy-setting and decentralized implementation within the naval structure.

Chapter four of the document delineates a comprehensive program for SWO Milestone Mariner Skills Assessments, Evaluations, and Competency Checks within SWO career progression. This chapter serves as a fundamental guide to establishing these assessment processes and aims to define their purpose, responsibilities, and key definitions. These assessments serve as critical waypoints within the career progression of SWOs, designed to ensure that they continually maintain and enhance their proficiency in the essential skills required for safe and effective navigation and ship operation.

Chapter five of the *SWO Career Manual* provides a comprehensive outline of the requirements and procedures governing the qualification of SWOs for command roles in the U.S. Navy. The primary purpose of Chapter five is to define the prerequisites, processes, and expectations for SWOs aspiring to take on command roles, including Early Command (EC), Commander Command (CDR CMD), and Major Command Afloat (MC). Command within the Navy is recognized as an intricate and demanding role that encompasses a wide array of skills. These skills range from seamanship and warfighting to resource management, judgment, endurance, and leadership. As such, qualification for command is reserved for officers who have demonstrated an exceptional track record of performance during multiple sea tours and have met the specified criteria.

E. SURFACE WARFARE OFFICER REQUIREMENTS DOCUMENT (SWORD)

The following information was taken from COMNAVSURFORINST 1412.4A, Surface Warfare Officer Requirements Document.

CNSF assumes ultimate responsibility for overseeing the training and career advancement of SWOs within the U.S. Navy. This stewardship is characterized by the delineation of essential competencies by the SWO community, shaping the trajectory of officers' careers. The SWO career path is structured into five distinct career milestones, each accompanied by its own set of objectives and priorities: 1) Division Officer, 2) Department Head, 3) Executive Officer, 4) Commanding Officer, and 5) Major Command.

The *SWORD* serves as a pivotal tool in this process, highlighting four foundational pillars: "Fight," "Drive," "Manage," and "Command" (Commander, Naval Surface Forces, 2018) Each of these pillars comprises specific competencies, categorically evaluated based on varying skill levels. Although it is important to note that the *SWORD* does not prescribe a rigid path for SWO career progression, it functions as an invaluable guide. It aids SWOs in cultivating a comprehensive spectrum of knowledge and proficiencies necessary for success in any SWO billet they may assume.

The *SWORD* is designed with flexibility and adaptability in mind, enabling it to remain current and relevant in the face of evolving fleet capabilities and emerging threats.

This adaptability ensures that SWOs can continually refine and expand their skill sets to meet the dynamic demands of their roles within the service.

1. Pillars and Core Competencies

The *SWORD* Pillars embody the fundamental and supplementary proficiencies expected of SWOs within the U.S. Navy. The “Fight” pillar is dedicated to cultivating tactical expertise and other essential proficiencies within the naval warfare context. All SWOs are expected to achieve expertise in naval warfare. The “Drive” pillar underscores the acquisition of skills vital for the safe and efficient operation of a ship, encompassing seamanship and navigation. Specific skill sets encompass bridge resource management and deck program oversight. While not all SWOs will be directly responsible for deck equipment, a foundational understanding is imperative.

The “Manage” pillar delves into ship maintenance and material management, engineering, damage control, combat systems, and supply management, all of which are pivotal in ensuring the ship’s operational readiness. Lastly, the “Command” pillar stands as the cornerstone of leadership and management, a profound comprehension of Navy regulations, and various facets of professional development and safety. All pillars have individual line items, as shown in Figure 3.

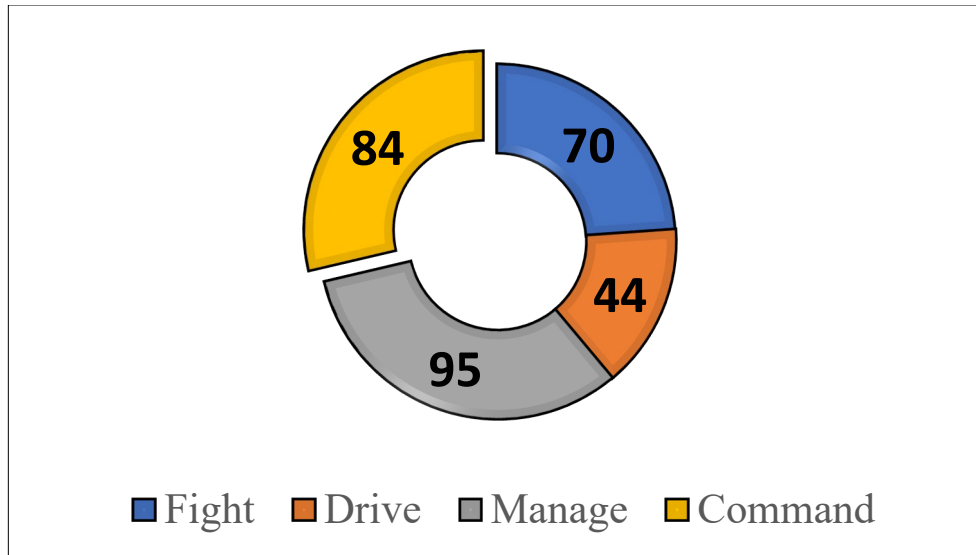


Figure 3. Breakdown of SWORD Pillars by Number of Line Items. Adapted from COMNAVSURFORINST 1412.4A, Surface Warfare Officer Requirements Document (2018).

2. Skill Level and Grading Scale

Within each competency, a clearly defined task has been meticulously delineated, outlining the precise expectations of the individual. Additionally, references are provided to serve as an invaluable guide for the officer, directing them to the knowledge available within that specific area or field. These reference sources span a spectrum, encompassing Personnel Qualification Standards (PQS), Navy Tactical Techniques and Procedures (NTTP), and an array of service directives.

To gauge proficiency in each competency, a judicious grading system has been instituted, shown in Figure 4. This system employs a range of qualitative descriptors, numerically graded from 1 to 4, essentially transitioning from basic proficiency to the pinnacle of mastery. This approach ensures a comprehensive evaluation of the officer's competence and their journey towards excellence within the designated competencies.

Skill Level Definition			
Basic	Intermediate	Advanced	Master
Conduct Single-Ship/Integrated Air Missile Defense (IAMD) operations in accordance with DIMS/ADC tasking. Execute IAMD operations as a supporting shipboard watchstander. Understand battlespace and threats as related to IAMD.	Conduct Single-Ship/Integrated Air Missile Defense (IAMD) operations in accordance with DIMS/ADC tasking. Execute IAMD operations as a shipboard warfare coordinator. Understand battlespace and threats as related to IAMD.	Conduct Single-Ship/Integrated Air Missile Defense (IAMD) operations in accordance with DIMS/ADC tasking. Oversee shipboard actions in execution of IAMD operations as TAO/XO/CO. Conduct planning of IAMD operations. Understand force battlespace and threats as related to IAMD. Generate ADC tasking for DIMS.	Conduct Integrated Air Missile Defense (IAMD) operations. Oversee Integrated, Multi-Ship and Joint/Coalition execution of IAMD Ops as Warfare Commander. Plan and direct IAMD operations. Direct ADC tasking via DIMS.

Figure 4. Skill Level Definition for Air Warfare. Source: COMNAVSURFORINST 1412.4A, Surface Warfare Officer Requirements Document (2018).

At every pivotal juncture in their careers, SWOs are held to a predetermined standard of proficiency, shown in Figure 5. The trajectory of an SWO’s professional journey necessitates the gradual cultivation of a comprehensive repertoire of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) at each assignment. This progression signifies a relentless commitment to personal and professional development, allowing SWOs to progressively enhance their competencies and expertise as they navigate through their careers.

Required Skill Level							
1st Tour Divo	2nd Tour Divo	1st Tour DH	2nd Tour DH	Early Command	XO/CO	Major Command Ship	Major Command Staff
1	2	3	3	3	4	4	3

Figure 5. Example Required Skill Level for Air Warfare Competency. Source: COMNAVSURFORINST 1412.4A, Surface Warfare Officer Requirements Document (2018).

F. MEASURING PERFORMANCE IN THE SWO COMMUNITY

1. Navy Performance Evaluations

Information on Navy Performance Evaluations was gathered from a Proceedings Article from December 2017 and BUPERS Instruction 1610.10F Change Transmittal 1 released on 18 August 2022.

In the U.S. Navy, officers are evaluated using fitness reports (FITREP). Fitness reporting has a history that dates to the inception of the U.S. Navy, born out of the essential need for a capable officer corps to lead and command naval vessels. This foundational requirement was first formalized in the Navy Regulations of 1893, which laid down the groundwork for fitness reports. Throughout the Navy's existence, this system underwent a series of transformations and refinements, all aimed at better discerning an officer's performance and capabilities (Cordial, 2017).

One significant milestone in the evolution of FITREPs occurred in 1996 when the system was restructured to include forced distribution within promotion groups. This change marked a pivotal moment in enhancing the fairness, transparency, and effectiveness of the assessment process for evaluating officer performance. Importantly, these improvements have always been driven by a dual purpose: to serve the interests of both the military organization and the individual officers undergoing evaluation, ensuring a more equitable and beneficial system for all parties involved. While there have been minor tweaks to the processes since then, the form developed in 1996 closely resembles the one still in use today (Cordial, 2017).

Officers undergo comprehensive evaluations using standardized forms known as NAVPERS 1610/2 and NAVPERS 1610/5 Fitness Report and Counseling Record. These evaluation forms vary based on rank: Warrant Officers through Captains employ a unified assessment format, whereas Rear Admirals follow a distinct evaluation framework that changes based on the CNO's directive.

These evaluations employ a precise 5-point rating scale, with 5.0 representing the highest attainable score. Officers' performance is assessed across a spectrum of critical traits, including:

- **Professional Expertise:** Demonstrating mastery and proficiency in their field.
- **Command or Organizational Climate/Equal Opportunity:** Fostering a conducive environment, promoting equality, and maintaining organizational cohesion.
- **Military Bearing/Character:** Exhibiting exemplary military demeanor and unwavering ethical standards.
- **Teamwork:** Collaborating effectively within their team or unit.
- **Mission Accomplishment and Initiative:** Successfully achieving mission objectives while displaying proactive problem-solving.
- **Leadership:** Providing visionary and effective guidance to their subordinates.
- **Tactical Performance:** Exhibiting competence in tactical operations and strategy.

These evaluations offer a designated space for reporting superiors to provide comments, offering a nuanced perspective on the officer's performance. Additionally, there is a section within the document dedicated to conveying promotion recommendations, ensuring that these assessments contribute to career progression decisions.

Per BUPERSINST guidelines, Commanding Officers and OICs are vested with the discretion to employ counseling methods that align with their judgment. Midterm counseling sessions are scheduled in the interim period between FITREP reporting cycles, serving the pivotal role of delivering constructive feedback and identifying avenues for further enhancement. This mid-term counseling affords the servicemember a proactive opportunity to effect improvements ahead of the upcoming reporting period. As stipulated in the instruction, FITREPs assume a crucial role in career-related actions, encompassing promotions and special assignments.

NAVPERS 1610/19 serves as an optional resource available to servicemembers. Its primary objective revolves around pinpointing individual strengths, pinpointing areas with room for enhancement, and setting sights on future goals. This versatile instrument can provide valuable guidance to SWOs, offering a roadmap for actionable strategies. It is essential to note, however, that its effectiveness is contingent on the input provided by both the servicemember and the supervisor, and its completion does not automatically guarantee improvements towards a better FITREP or professional development.

a. Design and Implementation

Information on Fitness Reports was gathered from BUPERS Instruction 1610.10F Change Transmittal 1 released on 18 August 2022.

While there are three types of reports, the focus here is on the standard report typically encountered regular reporting periods. FITREPs are now conveniently processed through eNAVFIT, a recent program implementation designed to streamline documentation procedures. Commanding Officers (COs) have the latitude to establish their own guidelines for FITREP implementation, but ultimately, they must adhere to the schedule provided by PERS.

Service members are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of their records, particularly in confirming the submission of a FITREP. Although officers are not obligated to compose their own performance reviews, it is advantageous for them to contribute their insights when preparing their reports, as specific guidelines grant them this privilege. EVALMAN serves as a valuable resource outlining the input required for an officer fitness report.

The reporting period extends from the conclusion of the last regular report to the final day of the reporting month corresponding to the officer's rank. Performance attributes within Blocks 33-39 hold officers accountable, with each trait rated on a scale of 5.0, with 5.0 denoting the highest score. Block 40 offers the reporting senior an opportunity to recommend the officer for their next career milestone, commonly being department head for DIVOs.

Block 41 serves as a space for the reporting senior to provide comments on the individual under evaluation. EVALMAN provides comprehensive guidance on crafting these comments. For a Surface Warfare Officer (SWO), the CO's remarks may encompass specific areas of operational performance, leadership, and notable achievements earned between FITREP cycles.

Officers are expected to furnish essential information, such as primary duties, the number of personnel supervised, equipment responsibilities, and other role-specific duties within their warfare community and shipboard job. For instance, a SWO DIVO serving as the Main Propulsion Officer on an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer is likely to oversee a substantial number of personnel and crucial equipment essential to ship operations. Additional requested input may cover operational readiness, management, training outcomes, inspection results, and contributions specific to the command's mission.

Before submitting reports to PERS, COs conduct debriefs with their officers, discussing their FITREP results. The debrief process may vary but generally revolves around an officer's performance since the last submitted report. EVALMAN provides guidance on conducting mid-term or closeout counseling, with COs utilizing PERS-provided worksheets and the NAVPERS 1610/19 Military Individual Development Plan to outline actionable steps for the officers they counsel.

2. SWSC 360 Design and Implementation

The information was gathered from a thesis conducted by Hanisko and Mulanax (2021).

SWOs go through their first experience with the SWSC 360-degree feedback assessment between DIVO tours. Before leaving the command, officers must complete the assessment by completing a self-assessment questionnaire and picking their raters (Hanisko & Mulanax, 2021). To create a complete report, officers must select raters, including one superior officer, at least two peers, and two subordinates. Chosen raters then get emails to share feedback on the assessed division officer.

During ADOC, JOs have a debrief on their 360-degree assessment through a one-on-one coaching session with a SWSC coach. The 360 Program Manager coordinates the selection and training of these coaches, usually O-3 SWOs. In the coaching session, the coach shares the feedback report with the division officer, bringing together all ratings, including the self-rating (Hanisko & Mulanax, 2021).

The purpose of the coaching session is to help the JO understand the differences between self-assessment and others' evaluations (Hanisko & Mulanax, 2021). The report points out crucial competencies based on the officer's ranking compared to those assigned by other raters. It then breaks down competencies from highest to lowest scores, comparing the officer's scores with raters' scores for each question used in the assessment (Hanisko & Mulanax, 2021). The JO can decide whether to keep or toss the report, as it is not saved in any official database related to promotion.

3. Key Differences

a. Purpose

FITREPs serve a fundamental purpose within the Navy. These evaluations are designed to comprehensively assess the performance of service members, providing a snapshot of their abilities and readiness for career advancement. The primary goal is to thoroughly evaluate an officer's performance over a specified reporting period. In contrast, SWSC 360-degree assessments have a distinct purpose. In its current form, SWSC 360-degree feedback is specifically tailored for junior SWOs during the transition between division officer tours. However, the main objective of the SWSC 360 is not formal evaluation but personal and professional development. These assessments focus on collecting feedback from diverse sources to provide junior officers with valuable insights into their performance and areas for growth.

b. Assessment Participants

The primary participants of FITREPs are Commanding Officers (COs) and the officers they evaluate. While DHs and Executive Officer (XO) can provide additional input, the CO overall assesses the performance of their subordinates and is responsible for

ensuring that the information on the evaluation is correct. In contrast, 360-degree Assessments involve a broader range of participants. Junior SWOs who are the subjects of the assessment complete a self-assessment questionnaire. They also select raters consisting of one superior officer, a minimum of two peers, and two subordinates. This inclusive approach ensures a multi-perspective evaluation.

c. Timing

FITREPS occur at regular reporting periods, following the schedule provided by PERS. These evaluations assess an officer's performance over a specific reporting period. In contrast, SWSC 360 begins before junior SWOs complete their first division officer tour and continue during their training. Ratings must be completed before junior officers arrive at SWSC to avoid delays in the assessment process. This timing allows for a comprehensive feedback report to be generated and discussed during coaching sessions. Prior to a SWO departing the ship, a detaching FITREP is submitted on their behalf. Most likely, a SWO will receive some sort of feedback prior to leaving. This information may conflict with data gathered from SWSC 360.

d. Reporting and Documentation

An officer's performance is documented via FITREPs, which include specific attributes and recommendations for career milestones. These reports serve as formal records of an officer's performance. Conversely, 360-degree Assessments do not result in formal documentation for promotion purposes. The feedback collected from multiple sources is compiled into a feedback report used for personal and professional development plans. It is not saved on any official promotion database.

e. Key Focus

The critical focus of FITREPs is to assess overall performance attributes, readiness for career milestones, and specific achievements. These evaluations formally assess an officer's capabilities and achievements during a specific reporting period. On the other hand, the critical focus of SWSC 360 is focused on collecting feedback from various perspectives to help junior officers in their personal and professional development. The

emphasis is on gaining insights into the division officer’s performance, understanding disparities between self-assessment and evaluations by others, and crafting personalized development goals. This assessment is not primarily for promotion but for individual growth and improvement.

G. CHALLENGES IN OFFICER RETENTION

In 2022, CNSF conducted a comprehensive survey involving SWOs from various ranks to gain insights into their satisfaction levels and areas of community discontent (LaGrone, 2023). The findings revealed several significant factors that dissuade junior officers from actively pursuing command roles. These factors include burdensome requirements, a perceived lack of autonomy, extended periods away from home, heightened stress levels, and a problematic culture within the SWO community. Notably, the desire to assume command is at its lowest among JOs who have served in commissioned roles for two to four years. This group also exhibits the highest inclination to contemplate leaving the Navy; see Figure 6.



Figure 6. SWO Community Desire for Command Based on Rank. Source: Commander, Naval Surface Forces (2023).

When delving into matters concerning professional development, it is evident that most JOs have contentment in areas such as their retirement plan, salary, medical insurance, and housing allowance. However, a substantial amount of dissatisfaction exists regarding bonuses, family support services, the blended retirement system, and options for graduate education, see Figure 7 (Commander, Naval Surface Forces, 2023).

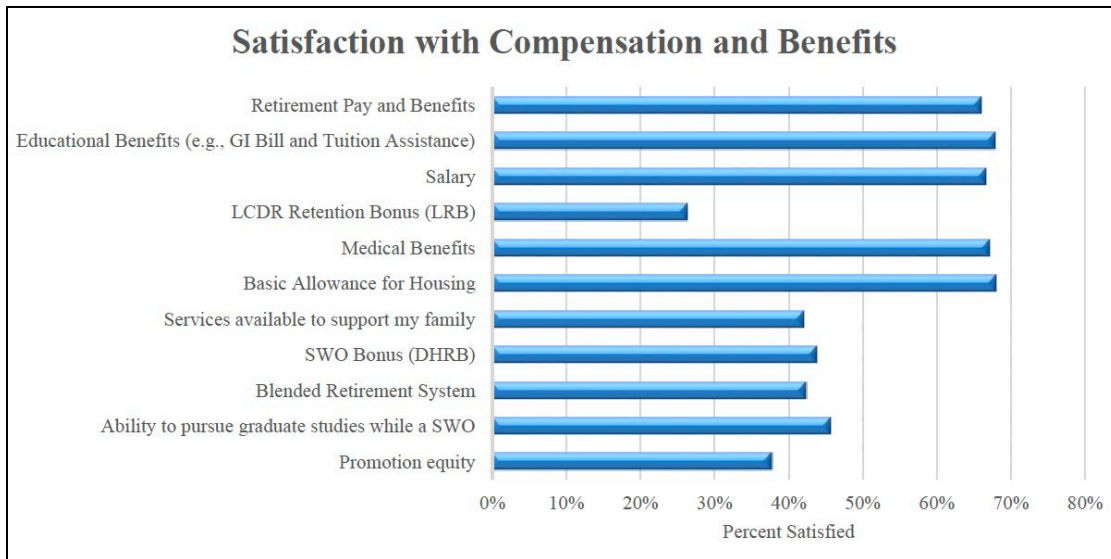


Figure 7. JO Satisfaction with Compensation and Benefits. Source: Commander, Naval Surface Forces (2023).

A particularly noteworthy revelation is that a substantial proportion (83%) of JOs harbor doubts about the retention of top-tier talent in the role of DHs, and a majority (71%) share concerns that the promotion system may not be firmly rooted in actual performance metrics (Commander, Naval Surface Forces, 2023). These sentiments vary among ranks, with ensigns and lieutenant commanders expressing a more favorable outlook, while LTJGs exhibit a more pessimistic perspective, see Figure 8.

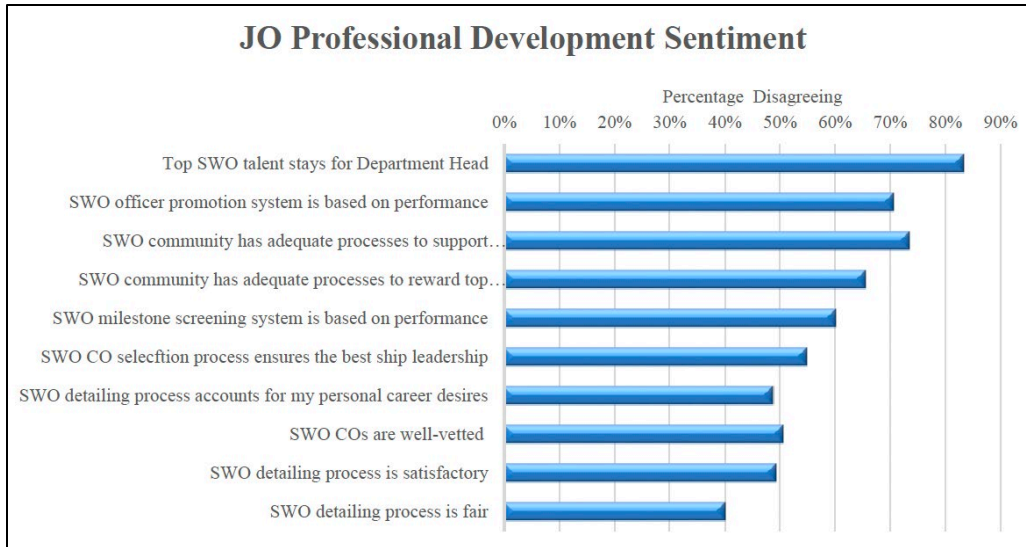


Figure 8. Professional Development Responses from 2022 Surveys. Source: Commander, Naval Surface Forces (2023).

H. SUMMARY

The development and progression of SWOs within the Navy constitute a pivotal facet in shaping their success and capabilities. As potential leaders in the naval community, SWOs traverse diverse career pathways that present abundant opportunities for growth and advancement.

The *SWO Career Manual* functions as a comprehensive requirements document, specifying essential benchmarks at various career milestones. Meanwhile, the *SWORD*, in its current form, operates as a practical guideline designed to assist in fulfilling these specified requirements. Within the *SWORD*, it is explicitly articulated as a broad yet integral guide that significantly contributes to the developmental progression at each crucial stage of one's career.

The comprehensive exploration of the career development, training frameworks, governing manuals, and evaluation processes offers a thorough understanding of the multifaceted journey and the commitment required for SWOs to excel in their roles within the Navy. These strategic insights and standards serve as foundational pillars, ensuring the continual growth and proficiency of SWOs as they navigate their impactful and fulfilling careers within the naval community.

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IV. SWO DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

A. INTRODUCTION

In previous chapters, I discussed the factors influencing OD, the sorts of feedback in the SWO community, the general essence of 360-degree assessments, and the SWO community and the guidance that promulgates the expectations, the *SWO Career Manual* and *SWORD*. In this chapter, I will undertake a thorough analysis of the guidance in relation to best practices. Additionally, we will introduce innovative concepts that offer promise for enhancing future processes.

B. COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT

1. Organizational Purpose and Long-Term Objectives

The *SWO Career Manual* and *SWORD* both have essential distinct purposes. As stated in the *SWO Career Manual*, the purpose is: “To establish the single Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) community governing document providing the requirements and milestones of SWO’s from accession through major command. This is a significant revision to previous policy and should be reviewed in its entirety” (Commander, Naval Surface Forces, 2021). This statement outlines the primary goal or intention of establishing a comprehensive document that governs the SWO community and defines the necessary criteria, expectations, and significant milestones that SWOs should meet and experience throughout their careers, starting from their entry into service until they potentially assume a major command role. The revisions took place following the major collisions in the 7th Fleet AOR in 2018 and from the recommendations of the GAO (Government Accountability Office, 2021).

In the context of OD, this initiative implies a structured approach to managing and guiding the career development and progression of SWOs. It indicates an attempt to standardize the journey and milestones for these officers, ensuring they meet specific requirements and critical developmental points throughout their careers. Creating a unified governing document could streamline and align the development of SWOs, possibly

leading to increased consistency, career readiness, and overall professional growth within the Surface Warfare Officer community.

As Collins and Porras (1996), the mission and vision should clearly communicate the organization's core purpose and overarching aspirations, ensuring that all stakeholders easily understand them. The emphasis on this governing document can relate to these concepts by articulating the mission of setting clear and defined objectives for SWOs and realizing the vision of a well-structured and consistent career development path. In its current state, requirements are set, but what is the actual purpose of this instruction? If a SWO meets every criterion in the manual, does this guarantee them command? Other requirements are not stated in the instruction, including statutory boards and various Department of the Navy requirements.

Van Wart (2013) suggested the idea of alignment with core values. The real question is: What are the core values of the SWO community? The instructions are in place, but there is no messaging from CNSF, also known as "SWO Boss," on the community's mission and vision. The direction helps align individual career paths with the overarching goals of the SWO community, ensuring that officers' career development contributes to the broader organizational mission and vision. This also serves as a guide to shaping future leaders and their roles within the scope of the SWO community's mission and vision.

Stated directly from the *SWORD*, the purpose is, "To define the competencies of a Surface Warfare Officer (SWO) during career progression from Division Officer to Major Commander. This directive is a complete revision and should be reviewed in its entirety" (Commander, Naval Surface Forces, 2018). This statement outlines the objective of clearly defining the skill sets, abilities, and proficiencies required of a SWO at different stages of their career.

This directive implies an initiative to specify the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary for SWOs at various career stages. This is crucial for their professional development and organizational effectiveness. Defining competencies helps guide and shape the training, assessments, and career paths of SWOs. This can lead to a more structured and strategic approach to talent development, ensuring that the necessary skills

are cultivated across career progression levels, thereby fostering more competent and well-prepared officers.

While the *SWORD* has a stated purpose, the instruction provides a note for additional context:

The *SWORD* is NOT prescriptive to SWO career progression. It is neither a precept for selection boards or promotion, nor a replacement for the personnel qualification system (PQS). Additionally, the *SWORD* does not define level of knowledge requirements for any specific billet (Gunnery Officer, Navigator, Electrical Officer, etc.). Rather, the *SWORD* outlines the knowledge and skills that EVERY SWO shall develop and be capable of demonstrating across his or her career milestone assignments regardless of billet, ship class, or warfare area specialty. Additionally, the *SWORD* will change as new capabilities are added to the Fleet and as potential threats to the United States evolve and mature. (Commander, Naval Surface Forces, 2021)

The document is outlined as a set of requirements, clearly defining the essential attributes expected of a SWO. Denying the prescriptive nature of the *SWORD* to SWO career progression seems counterintuitive since the qualities outlined in the *SWORD* are often the focal points assessed during selection boards. Although selection and promotion boards highly consider the content within FITREPs, it is widely acknowledged that performance at sea significantly influences SWO career advancement (Navy Personnel Command, 2023). Prior to statutory selection boards, the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) releases the community brief that identifies what each community values in their officers. The SWO community places great emphasis on successful sea tours. Prior to promotion to Lieutenant Commander (LCDR), the board members will value an officer's time at sea while serving as a DIVO, while the Commander (CDR) board members will value time at sea while serving as DH.



Surface Warfare Officer Community Values

- **Valued achievements prior to LIEUTENANT COMMANDER**
 - Screened for Department Head (DH) with a DH contract signed or already serving in a DH Afloat milestone
 - Timing may not allow all officers in zone to have a FITREP as a DH, or may have a short “P” or NOB FITREP. This should not be viewed negatively.
 - Successful DIVO sea tours and SWO Production Tours training individuals and units are highly valued
 - Graduate Education is highly valued, but may result in NOB FITREPs. This should not be viewed negatively.
 - Some DHs transfer to Surface Warfare Schools Command up to 12 months prior to their class convening dates as a means of mitigating PCS costs. These short tours may result in Promotable or NOB FITREPS and should not be viewed negatively.
- **Valued achievements prior to COMMANDER**
 - Consistent superior performance (EP/MP) at sea as a DH Afloat (two DH tours or single longer tour)
 - Post-DHs in afloat DESRON / PHIBRON billets are top performers and highly valued
 - ALL ADMIN BOARD SELECTIONS for CO, XO, and XO-SM are essential to SWO COMMANDER inventory and should be viewed positively. AQD “LK8” identifies admin milestone screening.
 - All O5 milestone screened officers (including XO-USS, CVN / LHA/D CICO, C51, AUXO and DCA) remain eligible for CDR CMD AFLOAT until their 3rd look and are needed for future CDR operational/afloat staff billets
 - DH breakout performance must be considered for officers who have not screened for a CDR milestone
- **Valued achievements prior to CAPTAIN**
 - Serving in or successfully completed a CDR CO tour onboard a ship is most valued, followed by CO-SM
 - CO-SM officers with sustained superior performance (EP/MP) in command are highly valued and needed as CAPTs
 - Successful completion of challenging ACU/NBU, Aegis Ashore, NTAG, MSRON, Brig, and Ceremonial Guard command has direct applicability to NBG, theater BMD, CNRC Region, and MESH MAJCOM
 - Assistant Reactor Officer (ARO) served or serving SWO CO-SMs are leading CVN Sailors in critical operational assignments and are highly valued
 - Officers successfully serving in community, operational, or challenging joint assignments following their CO tour
 - Demonstrated leadership in shore and/or joint assignments

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Figure 9. SWO Community Values. Source: Navy Personnel Command (2023).

2. Leadership and Professional Development

Upon a comprehensive review of the *SWO Career Manual* and *SWORD*, it becomes evident that there is an insufficient emphasis on leadership development. The *SWORD* has four major pillars consisting of 293-line items. Within those line items, only 16 address professional development, shown in Figure 10. It is important to note that these line items addressing professional development are mainly administrative tasks, to include the use of Navy programs and understanding career options for Sailors. One line item titled “Leadership Traits” requires officers to “Lead Sailors within a shipboard organization as part of a Joint Force” (Commander, Naval Surface Forces, 2018). While these line items exist for the qualities of what SWOs should strive for, no specific area addresses specific leadership characteristics expected.

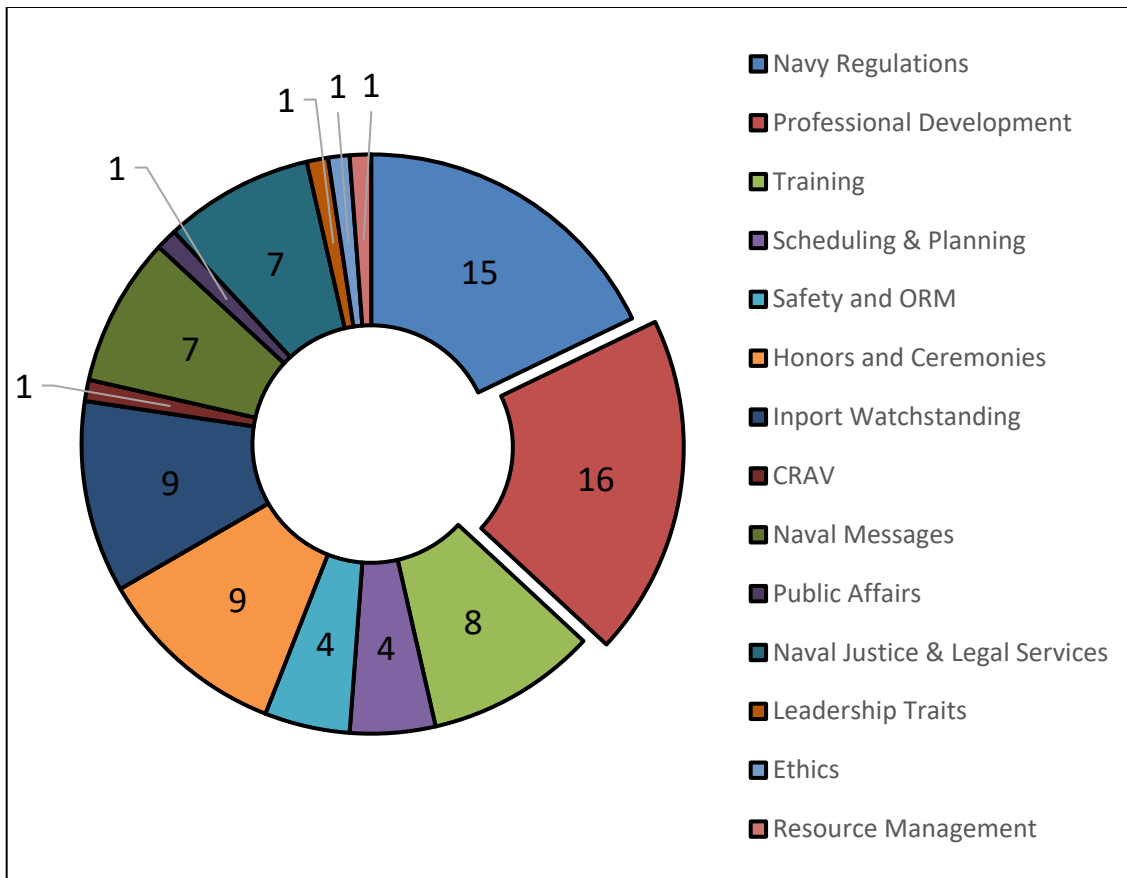


Figure 10. Breakdown of Command Pillar by Core/Supporting Competencies. Adapted from COMNAVSURFORINST 1412.4A, Surface Warfare Officer Requirements Document (2018).

While acknowledging the focus on essential qualities expected of SWOs, such as the ability to navigate a ship safely and demonstrate tactical proficiency in the combat information center, these directives lack significant attention to crucial leadership traits necessary within a military organization. A notable gap remains apparent despite evaluating SWOs’ leadership abilities through FITREPS and potential 360-degree assessments.

As previously highlighted in Chapter II, the organization’s mission and vision clearly outline priorities and core values. Van Wart (2013) argued that aligning mission and vision with the core values serves as a moral compass for actions and decisions. It is reasonable to infer that the organization holds in high regard the key pillars identified in the *SWORD*. While proficiency as a SWO in the Navy holds significance, the essential

attributes of a leader are equally pivotal. A discernible need exists for a more pronounced emphasis on leadership development within the SWO career guidelines and assessment frameworks.

3. SWSC 360 and SWORD Integration

Building upon existing research, it is vital to fine-tune the SWSC 360-degree assessment, with a specific focus on two pivotal aspects: 1) The *SWORD*, and 2) the SWO Career Path. Notably, the SWO career trajectory has undergone scrutiny by reputable entities like the GAO, highlighting the need for ongoing improvements and opportunities for transformation (Government Accountability Office, 2021).

One of the primary concerns in need of immediate attention is the deployment of the current 360-degree assessment. Presently, this evaluation is exclusively administered during an officer's transition from their 1st DIVO tour to their 2nd DIVO tour. However, this timing can be quite variable among SWOs due to the diverse nature of the SWO community. While conventional SWOs typically attend the ADOC, SWO NTOs are required to complete Nuclear Power School in Charleston, South Carolina. Subsequently, after concluding their 2nd DIVO tour, SWOs are devoid of another 360-degree assessment until they enroll in the DH school, which further compounds the variability, taking place anywhere between the 7.5 and 9-year mark in their career progression.

While it is arguable that shore duty assignments differ significantly among officers, the feedback derived from a standardized 360-degree assessment remains relevant to each officer's development. Battley (2011) suggests that feedback is significantly enhanced when combined with follow-on activities, to include coaching sessions. Ideally, upon completion of their first DH tour, SWOs should undergo another assessment before embarking on their second DH tour. This process affords the officer the invaluable opportunity to assimilate essential feedback prior to starting a demanding leadership tour.

Irrespective of whether an officer transitions between commands or takes on a fleet-up assignment, the feedback gleaned from these assessments can play a pivotal role in shaping and enhancing the officer's overall development. As part of the career path, after fulfilling DH assignments, SWOs typically engage in a three-year shore duty assignment

before advancing to PXO School. At this stage, there should be a heightened emphasis on receiving timely and relevant feedback. Although shore duty may not inherently provide as robust or pertinent feedback as sea duty, a well-refined process can ensure that additional coaching and assessments are integrated during the school phase, aiding SWOs in their continuous professional growth and performance improvement.

4. Assessment and Feedback

Effective implementation of the SWSC 360-Assessment is crucial to maximize its impact on personal development. Battley (2011) emphasizes the significance of feedback training for raters and recipients. Extensive training can facilitate accurate feedback delivery and reception, ensuring that the assessment process contributes positively to an officer's personal growth. Moreover, as Battley (2011) highlighted, coupling 360-degree assessments with targeted executive coaching can amplify the impact on behavior change and leadership skill development. Bracken and Rose (2011) argue that the effectiveness of 360-degree feedback is maximized when it adheres to specific principles:

1. **Relevance:** Aligning the assessment with an individual's goals and objectives. The SWSC 360-Assessment should align with the goals and objectives of the community – this includes the *SWORD*, encompassing the progression of officers.
2. **Credibility and Accuracy:** Ensuring the assessment's trustworthiness and precision.
3. **Specific and Actionable:** Offering concrete and actionable suggestions for improvement.
4. **Well-Timed and Targeted:** Providing feedback at opportune moments and focusing on pertinent areas. While the assessment is being conducted post-first division officer tour, there is potential to drive further reviews during an officer's career that serve as touchpoints.
5. **Voluntary and Confidential:** Ensuring that participation is voluntary, and feedback is confidential. The current process requires the participant to

request the involvement from the previous command, which prevents anonymity.

6. Supported by the Organization: Nurturing a culture where the organization endorses and values the assessment process. While SWSC is an echelon below CNSF, the promulgation of instructions and further guidance should come from the overall entity in charge of the community.

SWOs undergo annual assessments via the FITREP System, which predominantly relies on feedback from the reporting senior, typically the CO. However, research strongly advocates for a more comprehensive and practical approach to utilizing 360-degree feedback (Bracken et al., 2016). While FITREPs offer a snapshot of an officer's promotion and some promise of feedback during debriefs, the depth and quality of feedback significantly improve with 360-degree assessments.

The efficacy of 360-degree feedback, as highlighted by Bracken and Rose (2011), depends on specific factors: relevance to the career field, credibility, specificity, timeliness, voluntariness, confidentiality, and organizational support. Evaluating the current feedback framework, the FITREP system has been relevant to naval service but has not adequately adapted to current needs over its two-decade existence. In contrast, the updated SWSC 360 better aligns with the present requirements of the SWO community, although it lacks an official guiding instruction for its application.

The limitations of FITREP Block 41 provide restricted commentary on a year's work, primarily controlled by the reporting senior, thus limiting specific and actionable steps for improvement. Conversely, SWSC 360 can potentially address competencies outlined in the *SWORD*, offering a more focused and actionable approach. While FITREPs are Navy-supported, SWSC 360 receives endorsement from CNSF. However, the absence of documented information on SWSC 360's usage, guidelines, and role within the SWO community underscores the crucial necessity for clearly defined guidance governing the implementation and objectives of 360-degree assessments.

5. Mentoring and Coaching

Chapter II highlighted the significant benefits of effective mentoring and coaching within the SWO community. These approaches offer invaluable insights into an individual's strengths and areas for development. While mentorship opportunities are available within the ship's wardroom, some officers might hesitate to seek guidance from their superiors. External mentors can play a crucial role in providing direction for career progression, often stepping in to offer guidance beyond the immediate chain of command. In Chapter III, it was emphasized that a typical SWO might receive some form of mentoring through FITREP debriefs or the SWSC 360 program. However, it is essential to recognize that while FITREP debriefs and mid-term counseling serve as guiding elements to improve formal evaluations, they are not designated mentoring or coaching sessions.

FITREPs serve as a meticulously crafted narrative, strategically designed to encapsulate an officer's professional journey while aligning seamlessly with the Navy's imperative to identify and advance the most qualified individuals for key roles. These comprehensive evaluations not only play a pivotal role in shaping an officer's official record but also stand as a cornerstone in the decision-making processes of Administrative and Statutory Boards responsible for promotions. Reporting Seniors, usually the COs, exercise careful consideration in determining the content of FITREPs, recognizing the potential influence of this information during selection board evaluations. The SWSC 360 program, aimed at professional development, is undergoing restructuring, particularly for junior officers. The assessment occurs between DIVO tours, meaning an SWO may only experience a single coaching session throughout their career if this pattern continues. This limitation warrants consideration for a more comprehensive coaching approach in the career trajectory of SWOs.

6. Career Path Guidance

Through comprehensive research encompassing SWO instructions and various documentation, it becomes evident that the *SWO Career Manual* stands as the singular authoritative document governing the specific requisites for SWOs. Tasked with overseeing the career advancement of SWOs, PERS-41, a branch within Navy Personnel

Command (NPC), holds the responsibility for establishing guidelines that shape the SWO pipeline, including the prescribed tour lengths. While PERS-41 manages the assignment of SWOs to specific billets, their duty extends to collaborating with CNSF concerning SWO career progression. As stipulated in the *SWO Career Manual*, PERS-41 plays a significant role in ensuring comprehensive training for all SWOs and meticulously documenting an officer's professional experience.

However, the information regarding career paths available on PERS-41's webpage appears fragmented across different sections, making it less accessible for individuals seeking a clear and coherent understanding. Consolidating and centralizing the guidelines within a single instruction, such as the *SWO Career Manual*, holds the potential to greatly benefit career progression among SWOs. This unification would offer a more streamlined and easily navigable source, providing a valuable resource for SWOs as they navigate their career paths.

C. SUMMARY

The current guidance for SWOs emphasizes the *SWO Career Manual* and the *SWORD* as pivotal documents guiding career progression. These documents aim to establish criteria, milestones, and competencies essential for a SWO's career development, aligning with the organizational goals and mission. However, several critical aspects require attention and enhancement. The *SWO Career Manual* sets out essential goals and milestones for SWOs, ensuring career standardization, yet it lacks clarity on specific career progression outcomes and further requirements beyond the stated criteria. Similarly, the *SWORD* defines the competencies expected at various career stages but is not given due importance, despite its potential to shape career paths effectively.

Regarding the SWSC 360-degree assessment, the current implementation lacks consistency and occurs at varying career stages. Establishing a more consistent and frequent assessment system can provide invaluable feedback for career development and progression. Enhancing coaching opportunities and mentoring beyond formal assessments could further aid SWOs in their professional growth. The existing guidance from PERS-41 and the *SWO Career Manual*, while vital, lacks consolidation and accessibility. A more

centralized and comprehensive guideline would greatly benefit SWOs, providing a clearer understanding of their career paths.

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V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY

The exploration of OD emphasized the critical role of leadership in shaping organizational culture and effectiveness in a dynamic business landscape. This theory extends to the military context, specifically in the U.S. Navy, where SWOs rely on documents like the *SWO Career Manual*, *SWORD*, and various underlying documents for career guidance. While these resources outline vital benchmarks and competencies, they lack specific career outcome clarity and require better integration for effective career shaping.

The SWSC 360-degree assessment, although in place, lacks consistency and needs standardization at various career stages for valuable feedback. To further aid SWOs in their professional growth, enhancing coaching and mentoring opportunities beyond formal assessments is vital. While significant, the existing guidance for SWOs lacks clarity, consolidation, and accessibility. Establishing a more centralized and comprehensive guideline would give SWOs a clearer understanding of their career paths, promoting their development and proficiency within the naval community. Ultimately, a more structured and integrated approach to career guidance, feedback mechanisms, and mentoring will greatly benefit SWO career progression and success within the Navy.

B. CONCLUSIONS

1. **How can the *SWO Career Manual* be enhanced to create a talent management-oriented career continuum encompassing an individual's trajectory?**

- a. ***Conclusion***

When hearing the term “SWO Career Manual,” one would think of a comprehensive and structured guide specifically designed for SWOs to guide their careers. It should encompass detailed instructions, qualification criteria, and milestones crucial for SWOs’ career progression. The instruction should set standardized expectations and serve as a go-to resource for SWOs, providing clear pathways and requirements as they progress

through their naval careers. Additionally, this manual should be fundamental in shaping and ensuring the readiness and effectiveness of SWOs, aligning them with the Navy's operational standards and goals.

The manual's current state delves into certain requirements vice instilling a pathway for SWOs to follow. The limitation with the current instruction is that more can be added to ensure a transparent understanding of community goals and values. Implementing a competency-based assessment structure would enable SWOs to understand their strengths and areas for development. This could include periodic assessments to identify skill gaps and personalize training plans to fill those gaps.

There should be skill transition guidance, providing instruction on how skills acquired at each career stage contribute to the next phase of their career. This could involve comprehensive documentation on how skills learned as a DIVO, for instance, are relevant or can be developed further as they transition to higher roles.

As mentioned before, mentoring is an important aspect of OD. Encouraging mentorship programs and facilitating networking opportunities within the SWO community can be an integral part of career progression. Schein (2019) highlighted the responsibilities of leaders and the need for their continuous personal growth and creation of a conducive culture for leadership development. He mentioned that leaders need to invest in their own development through activities like reading, workshops, conferences, and mentorship. These events play a crucial role in fostering a learning culture within their organizations. This involves providing opportunities for employees to learn, grow, and assume leadership roles. Schein (2019) underscored that leaders are not only beneficiaries of leadership development but also stewards, creating an environment that nurtures and supports leadership growth. While network events occur annually, there is not enough emphasis or messaging to maximize effectiveness. This could be incorporated into the manual, emphasizing the importance of networking, and learning from experienced leaders.

The manual should incorporate periodic career reviews. This could help SWOs to reflect on their progress, and these reviews can serve as checkpoints to discuss future career

moves, development plans, and identify any potential roadblocks. In the SWOS 360 current state, the assessment is only being offered in between division officer tours while different assessments are being used for the follow-on milestones.

2. How can implementing the *SWORD* and the *SWO Career Manual* enhance the personal development of officers in the Surface Warfare community and maximize its impact through effective strategies?

a. Conclusion

Currently, there's a lack of complete guidance for the professional development of SWOs within the community. Although several documents touch on career progression, none offer a comprehensive view of a SWO's career path. While the *SWO Career Manual* sets milestone requirements, it doesn't cover the wide range of opportunities available to SWOs. The challenges during a sea tour bring multiple competing priorities for SWOs. While both the *SWO Career Manual* and the *SWORD* outline various requirements, these documents should ideally be foundational guides for early-career SWOs to shape their own professional paths.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Streamlined Guidance

The idea of streamlined guidance is about simplifying and organizing the information that SWOs rely on for their career advancement. Currently, guidance for SWOs is spread across different documents like the *SWO Career Manual*, *SWORD*, and career briefs from PERS-41. While these documents offer essential information, they are scattered and not easily accessible in one place. Streamlined guidance means gathering all the critical information, expectations, and milestones into a single, easy-to-access resource. This consolidated document would provide SWOs with a clear and straightforward understanding of what they need to achieve at each stage of their career. While multiple entities play a role in shaping the SWO community, the primary guidance should come from the highest level, CNSF, with support from entities like SWSC and PERS-41. SWSC oversees SWO training and can offer guidance on skill levels at different milestones, while PERS-41 provides information on available opportunities and billets. Recognizing the

community's ongoing changes to meet service needs, this document can be updated annually to stay current. By simplifying the guidance, the Navy could create a more user-friendly system. This one-stop resource would help SWOs understand what's expected of them as they progress in their careers and how they can best prepare and move forward.

2. Conduct Additional Assessments

Research on 360-degree assessments collectively suggests that fostering a development-oriented culture within the SWO community is pivotal for maximizing the impact of 360-degree assessments. Battley (2011) emphasizes the role of the feedback environment, highlighting the need for a culture that encourages open communication and values constructive feedback. Integrating the SWSC 360-Assessment into the Surface Warfare community's professional development framework and ensuring that it aligns with the Navy's core values and mission can contribute to creating an environment conducive to personal growth.

Existing literature highlights the success of 360-degree assessments. The potential of enhancing the SWSC 360-Assessment is to create a talent management-oriented career path and foster the personal development of junior officers. Extending the assessment's influence beyond initial career phases, implementing effective strategies, and cultivating a culture of development is essential. By tailoring assessments, offering comprehensive feedback training, and leveraging executive coaching, the Navy can harness the power of 360-degree evaluations to identify, develop, and retain top talent while nurturing the growth of its junior officers for a successful and impactful career in the Surface Warfare community.

360-degree assessments have been recognized for their ability to provide a comprehensive view of an individual's strengths, weaknesses, and leadership behaviors. Battley (2011) suggests that the feedback environment plays a pivotal role in determining the effectiveness of 360-degree assessments. SWSC should be the custodian of 360-degree assessments, serving as the community's representative for SWO training. Over time, a crucial step would involve integrating PERS-41 into the 360-degree assessments, thereby expanding opportunities for diverse SWOs. While the primary focus of this research

centered on the SWO career path within sea duty, it's important to note that SWOs have diverse opportunities available, spanning roles in recruiting, acquisitions, and various other career fields. Integrating 360-degree assessments within talent management practices can contribute to a holistic evaluation of junior officers' leadership skills, aiding in talent identification, development, and succession planning.

3. Alignment of SWORD with 360-degree Feedback

The relationship between the *SWORD* and the 360-degree feedback system is an important area that requires further explanation. Both the *SWORD* and SWSC 360 hold significant potential for guiding the career paths of SWOs. Aligning these two elements can profoundly affect how SWOs develop in their careers within the SWO community. The *SWORD* outlines the skills and competencies of SWOs at different career stages. Its purpose is to establish a clear framework for the essential knowledge and abilities each SWO should have as they progress in their careers. Integrating these competencies into the 360-degree feedback system could significantly enhance the assessment's value. Integrating the competencies outlined in the *SWORD* within this feedback process could provide a more comprehensive assessment. For example, SWOs could receive feedback on their leadership abilities and how well they meet the specific competencies outlined in the *SWORD*. This alignment could better evaluate an officer's readiness and proficiency in meeting the designated requirements.

As the *SWORD* adapts to new capabilities and emerging threats, integrating these updated competencies into the 360-degree feedback system could ensure that assessments remain relevant and up-to-date. This synchronization could provide SWOs with ongoing feedback and guidance that directly matches the changing demands of their roles within the Navy. Aligning the *SWORD* with the 360-degree feedback system could create a more tailored and continuously evolving evaluation process. This integration could provide SWOs with a clearer understanding of how they measure against the established criteria, supporting more focused and effective career development.

4. Integration with Higher Initiatives

This research focused on professional development, as well as coaching and mentoring within the junior officer's corps of the SWO community. If there's a move to broaden the initiative, either SWSC or CNSF would need to create a more comprehensive program that includes the entire community across all ranks. Currently, initiatives like MyNavy Coaching at the Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP) office could potentially help the SWO community achieve their coaching goals (*MyNavy Coaching*, n.d.). The MyNavy Coaching pilot program is still in its early stages of development.

D. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. **Voices from the Fleet:** This presents an opportunity for research to delve into the motivations and perceptions of junior officers and their superiors regarding these initiatives. By analyzing the impact of self-selectivity on officers' sense of ownership and commitment, evaluating the effectiveness of leadership development in honing essential skills, and understanding the influence of mentoring and coaching in fostering a supportive environment, such research could provide invaluable insights into creating strategies that not only address the retention challenge but also foster a thriving and engaged SWO community.
2. **Study of the SWORD and implications of career progression:** Although the *SWORD* intricately details a comprehensive set of competencies, the most recent revision dates to 2018. Each SWO, irrespective of their career milestone, is expected to grasp 293-line items encompassing a broad spectrum of competencies. Dedicated research is needed to optimize its effectiveness to discern the most critical competencies and determine which facets can elicit pertinent feedback, leveraging insights from previous studies. Moreover, research should explore how the *SWORD* aligns with and influences career progression within the SWO community.

3. **Professional Development Framework:** Research a structured and strategic plan or system designed to enhance and refine an individual's or the SWO community's skills, knowledge, and competencies. This framework may encompass various elements such as training programs, mentorship, skill-building initiatives, career advancement pathways, feedback mechanisms, and ongoing learning and development tools. The aim is to facilitate personal and professional growth, ensuring SWOs remain adaptable, relevant, and practical in their respective roles.
4. **Long-Term Study of Updated 360-degree Assessments:** A comprehensive study is warranted to revamp the SWSC 360-degree assessment to better align with the evolving needs of the SWO community and to analyze its impact on the career trajectories of JOs ascending through the ranks. This study should aim to pinpoint how feedback from the assessment has influenced and shaped the career paths of these officers.

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APPENDIX. NAVPERS 1610/2 FITNESS REPORT AND COUNSELING RECORD (W2-O6)

Save Form Clear Form

FITNESS REPORT & COUNSELING RECORD (W2 - O6)

RCS BUPERS 1610-1

1. Name (Last, First MI Suffix)				2. Grade/Rate		3. Desig		4. SSN			
5. ACT <input type="checkbox"/>		FTS <input type="checkbox"/>		INACT <input type="checkbox"/>		AT/ADSW/265 <input type="checkbox"/>		6. UIC			
7. Ship/Station				8. Promotion Status		9. Date Reported					
10. Occasion for Report		11. Detachment of Individual <input type="checkbox"/>		12. Detachment of Reporting Senior <input type="checkbox"/>		13. Special <input type="checkbox"/>		14. Period of Report			
10. Periodic <input type="checkbox"/>								15. From: To:			
16. Not Observed Report <input type="checkbox"/>		17. Regular <input type="checkbox"/>		18. Concurrent <input type="checkbox"/>		19. Ops Cdr <input type="checkbox"/>		20. Physical Readiness			
22. Reporting Senior (Last, FI MI)		23. Grade		24. Desig		25. Title		26. UIC			
								27. SSN			
28. Command employment and command achievements											
29. Primary/Collateral/Watchstanding duties. (Enter Primary duty abbreviation in box.)											
For Mid-term Counseling Use. (When completing FITREP Enter 30 and 31 from counseling worksheet sign 32.)				30. Date Counseled		31. Counselor		32. Signature of Individual Counseled			
PERFORMANCE TRAITS: 1.0 – Below standards / not progressing or UNSAT in any one standard; 2.0 – Does not yet meet all 3.0 standards; 3.0 – Meets all 3.0 standards; 4.0 – Exceeds most 3.0 standards; 5.0 – Meets overall criteria and most of the specific standards for 5.0. Standards are not all inclusive.											
PERFORMANCE TRAITS		1.0* Below Standards		2.0 Pro-gressing		3.0 Meets Standards		4.0 Above Standards		5.0 Greatly Exceeds Standards	
33. PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE: Professional knowledge, proficiency, and qualifications.		- Lacks basic professional knowledge to perform effectively. - Cannot apply basic skills. - Fails to develop professionally or achieve timely qualifications.				- Has thorough professional knowledge. Competently performs both routine and new tasks. - Steadily improves skills, achieves timely qualifications.				- Recognized expert, sought after to solve difficult problems. - Exceptionally skilled, develops and executes innovative ideas. - Achieves early/highly advanced qualifications.	
NOB <input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
34. COMMAND OR ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: Professional knowledge, proficiency, and qualifications.		- Actions counter to Navy's retention/reenlistment goals. - Uninvolved with mentoring or professional development of subordinates. - Actions counter to good order and discipline and negatively affect Command/Organizational climate. - Demonstrates exclusionary behavior. - Fails to value differences from cultural diversity.				- Positive leadership supports Navy's increased retention goals. Active in decreasing attrition. - Actions adequately encourage/support subordinates' personal/professional growth. - Demonstrates appreciation for contributions of Navy personnel. Positive influence on Command climate. - Values differences as strengths. - Fosters atmosphere of acceptance/inclusion per EO/EEO policy.				- Measurably contributes to Navy's increased retention and reduced attrition objectives. - Proactive leader/exemplary mentor. Involved in subordinates' personal development leading to professional growth/sustained commitment. - Initiates support programs for military, civilian, and families to achieve exceptional Command and Organizational climate. - The model of achievement. Develops unit cohesion by valuing differences as strengths.	
NOB <input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
35. MILITARY BEARING CHARACTER: Appearance, conduct, physical fitness, adherence to Navy Core Values.		- Consistently unsatisfactory appearance. - Unsatisfactory demeanor or conduct. - Unable to meet one or more physical readiness standards. - Fails to live up to one or more Navy Core Values: HONOR, COURAGE, COMMITMENT.				- Excellent personal appearance. - Excellent demeanor or conduct. - Complies with physical readiness program. - Always lives up to Navy Core Values: HONOR, COURAGE, COMMITMENT.				- Exemplary personal appearance. - Exemplary representative of Navy. - A leader in physical readiness. - Exemplifies Navy Core Values: HONOR, COURAGE, COMMITMENT.	
NOB <input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
36. TEAMWORK: Contributions towards team building and team results.		- Creates conflict, unwilling to work with others, puts self above team. - Fails to understand team goals or teamwork techniques. - Does not take direction well.				- Reinforces others' efforts, meets personal commitments to team. - Understands team goals, employs good teamwork techniques. - Accepts and offers team direction.				- Team builder, inspires cooperation and progress. - Talented mentor, focuses goals and techniques for team. - The best at accepting and offering team direction.	
NOB <input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
37. MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT AND INITIATIVE: Taking initiative, planning/prioritizing, achieving mission.		- Lacks initiative. - Unable to plan or prioritize. - Does not maintain readiness. - Fails to get the job done.				- Takes initiative to meet goals. - Plans/prioritizes effectively. - Maintains high state of readiness. - Always gets the job done.				- Develops innovative ways to accomplish mission. - Plans/prioritizes with exceptional skill and foresight. - Maintains superior readiness, even with limited resources. - Gets jobs done earlier and far better than expected.	
NOB <input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	

NAVPERS 1610/2 (11-11)

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY-PRIVACY ACT SENSITIVE.

FITNESS REPORT & COUNSELING RECORD (W2 - O6) (cont 'd)

RCS BUPERS 1610-1

1. Name (Last, First MI Suffix)	2. Grade/Rate	3. Desig	4. SSN
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PERFORMANCE TRAITS	1.0* Below Standards	2.0 Pro- gressing	3.0 Meets Standards	4.0 Above Standards	5.0 Greatly Exceeds Standards
38. LEADERSHIP: Organizing, motivating and developing others to accomplish goals. NOB <input type="checkbox"/>	- Neglects growth/development or welfare of subordinates. - Fails to organize, creates problems for subordinates. - Does not set or achieve goals relevant to command mission and vision. - Lacks ability to cope with or tolerate stress. - Inadequate communicator. - Tolerates hazards or unsafe practices.	<input type="checkbox"/>	- Effectively stimulates growth/development in subordinates. - Organizes successfully implementing process improvements and efficiencies. - Sets/achieves useful, realistic goals that support command mission. - Performs well in stressful situations. - Clear, timely communicator. - Ensures safety of personnel and equipment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	- Inspiring motivator and trainer, subordinates reach highest level of growth and development. - Superb organizer, great foresight, develops process improvements and efficiencies. - Leadership achievements dramatically further command mission and vision. - Perseveres through the toughest challenges and inspires others. - Exceptional communicator. - Makes subordinates safety-conscious, maintains top safety record. - Constantly improves the personal and professional lives of others.
39. TACTICAL PERFORMANCE: (Warfare qualified officers only) Basic and tactical employment of weapons systems. NOB <input type="checkbox"/>	- Has difficulty attaining qualifications expected for rank and experience. - Has difficulty in ship(s), aircraft or weapons systems employment. - Warfare skills in specialty are below standards compared to others of same rank and experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	- Attains qualifications as required and expected. - Capably employs ship(s), aircraft, or weapons systems. Equal to others in warfare knowledge and employment. - Warfare skills in specialty equal to others of same rank and experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	- Fully qualified at appropriate level for rank and experience. - Innovatively employs ship(s), aircraft, or weapons systems. Well above others in warfare knowledge and employment. - Warfare skills in specialty exceed others of same rank and experience.

40. I recommend screening this individual for next career milestone(s) as follows: (Maximum of two) Recommendations may be for competitive schools or duty assignments such as LCPO, DEPT CPO, SEA, CMC, CWO, LDO, Dept Head, XO, OIC, CO, Major Command, War College, PG School.

41. COMMENTS ON PERFORMANCE. *All 1.0 marks, three 2.0 marks, and 2.0 marks in Block 37 must be specifically substantiated in comments. Comments must be verifiable. Font must be 10 or 12 pitch (10 to 12 point) only. Use upper and lower case. Font 10 ▼

Promotion Recommendation	NOB	Significant Problems	Progressing	Promotable	Must Promote	Early Promote	44. Reporting Senior Address
42. INDIVIDUAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
43. SUMMARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

45. Signature of Reporting Senior	46. Signature of individual evaluated. "I have seen this report, been apprised of my performance, and understand my right to make a statement." I intend to submit a statement <input type="checkbox"/> do not intend to submit a statement <input type="checkbox"/>
Date:	Date:

Member Trait Average: 0.00	Summary Group Average:	Date:
----------------------------	------------------------	-------

47. Typed name, grade, command, UIC, and signature of Regular Reporting Senior on Concurrent Report

Date:

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