

## FY22/23 IW Administrative Board Observations

Note: this document includes combined observations from the FY22 O5/O6 MS/CMD Board and the FY23 O4 MS/XO/OIC Board, all executed in Nov/Dec 2021

**TALENT** within & across IW is both **EXCEPTIONAL** and **STRONG**. Margins for selection were small and narrow; records are increasingly well constructed and thus competitive.

### ENDURING FEATURES

- These boards are about IW community mission and leadership. FITRs in the aggregate should document and illuminate professional IMPACTS to the IW Community, the Navy, and achievement of IW war fighting and readiness outcomes. Clear and consistent messaging in the Officer's record on these impacts is the easiest way to support a board's determination of "fully" and "best" qualified.
- Community leadership provides clear guidance in the convening order to assist you with understanding what the community is looking for as you navigate your career. It is very important to read previous years' convening orders and tailor your FITRs in a way that clearly documents the attributes outlined in the Convening Order. Most importantly, make sure that you understand the difference between FULLY qualified vs BEST qualified. Boards are looking for those records that are BEST and FULLY qualified. Documented community "we value" in the FITR [ACQN, Space, Certs, Joint] as published in the Convening Order is helpful.
- Records should balance both exceptional performance in our most recent conflicts and performance in the context of our global strategic competitions. The rebalance to force development, force generation, and force employment around major combat operations in the maritime domain should continue to be communicated clearly to ALL IW wardrooms.
- Sustained superior performance (SSP) in all assignments is **CORE** to all communities. However, for our boards, SSP in milestone is the **KEY** to selection. SSP is defined as:
  - Consistent evaluations **ABOVE** Reporting Senior Cumulative Average (RSCA).
  - Hard AND soft breakouts - soft breakouts against all designators is important throughout your record, especially in 1-of-1 situations or very small IW summary groups. It adds context to the level of performance. This is especially true in O-4/O-5 milestone assignments when competing against other (non-IW) designators (e.g., CSG, Fleet staffs). **Soft breakouts must be reasonable and realistic to be accepted with certainty by Board members.**
  - Trending right in the FITRs (P, MP, to EP) over time and breaking above RSCA and group cumulative average. Trait averages below RSCA should be easy to understand (i.e. reason called out in FITR by Reporting Senior, be a first newly reported FITR, a

“Selected” report, etc.). If there is ambiguity in the situational context of an at-or-below RSCA report, then member should consider a Letter to the Board (LTB) with supporting documentation/information. Note: do not recommend a LTB when there is no substantiated context.

- Reporting seniors should use clear, direct, quantifiable language in Block 41. Are in you in MS? FDNF? Deployed? Afloat? Soft Breakout? CO recommendations for MS/Leadership (beyond block 40, per the above). Document leadership (#s, impact). Document expertise and command involvement. Explain ITA if not above RSCA and you feel the Officer is demonstrating above-RSCA performance.
- Career diversity that provided broad exposure to multiple key disciplines is a key factor in discerning the Officer’s ability to serve in a variety of positions; geographic diversity helps also. Tours should increase in scope, complexity, and responsibility across both an operationally and geographically diverse career. If an officer is being pulled early in their tour to fill a role in a more demanding job that should be clearly stated in the FITREP.
- Competitive, major staff tours/experience are always a good thing (OPNAV staff, Joint Staff, OSD, IFOR, 4-star Fleet staffs (USFF/CPF)). Breakouts annotated on those FITREPs tend to carry more weight than “one of ones.”
- Reporting Seniors must always actively MANAGE their RSCA and use it judiciously. If the RSCA is too high, then you cannot highlight a particularly stellar Officer. Protect your ability to “raise your voice.” Use “resetting or managing RSCA” for genuine adjustments and provide your policy as context, given that this (by itself) may be viewed skeptically by boards. Likewise, it is acceptable for a Reporting Senior to set a low Trait Average policy for selectees, but that policy should be set early and remain consistent over time – and be noted in the FITR.
- Officers in Joint assignments or assignments outside the Navy mainstream may need to “mentor up” on RSCA, hard breakouts, and soft breakouts. Do not assume that a non-Navy reporting senior understands the nuances of the Navy FITR system.
- Recommend that Reporting Seniors be introspective on their policy for assigning a “standard” trait average (e.g., all 3.0s) to those Officers selected for the next highest pay grade. While Reporting Seniors do tend to be very clear on their policy in-play and board members do understand those policies, it can then be hard to then clearly discern SSP in that record. That is exacerbated when an Officer receives multiple reports under the same policy across several reporting periods. We encourage reporting seniors to seek mentorship from community leaders on various policy options for “selected” FITRs.
- Ensure common and consistent recommendations for the next career milestone and COMMAND in Block 40 and 41. A high incidence of Officers being recommended for Command in blocks 40 and 41 was noted, even if all other indicators in the FITREP suggested they were not performing to that level (for example: someone with 24 months of FITRs below RSCA, but with a BLK 40 “Command” rec). Reporting Seniors should

ensure alignment with RSCA, soft and hard breakouts/stratifications, and leadership or milestone “push” language in Blocks 40 and 41 to avoid confusion in the messaging to the board. Flag Officers and Current CO's recommendations are highly valued when screening for command. **Inconsistencies** in recommendations leave the board to guess. Boards will also notice when the same Reporting Senior omits a command or MS recommendation, especially if they had already given one.

- Flag recommendations should only come from a Flag officer. Any other mention of Flag is wasted space and does not carry weight.
- ABSENCE of CMD or MS recommendations may be ambiguous; ambiguity leads to low confidence scores and low confidence scores lead to non-selection.

## **GENERAL**

- Documented **leadership** experience, influence, scope of responsibility & outcomes is an important factor [people, resources, missions, functions].
- Documented contributions to organizational transformation help us highlight individuals delivering our desired future. Our community health is directly tied to our agility and ability to focus/motivate teams on new strategically aligned outcomes.
- To be fully qualified for O5 command, your CMD QUAL must be COMPLETED and then ENDORSED by Commander, NAVIFOR. Recommend completion before wearing O-5 and greater than 60 days prior to board convening to ensure the Command Qualification reflects in your record. Please verify that it is in your record as expected and, if not, follow-up with your detailer. Completion of the CMD QUAL prior to screening for O4 XO/OIC is highly recommended.
- Reporting Seniors should take care to identify specific competencies as opposed to only using billet titles in blocks 29 and 41.
- FITRs need to contain clear language from Reporting seniors:
  - Clear, direct, quantifiable language in Block 41. Are in you in MS? FDNF? Deployed? Afloat? Soft Breakout? CO recommendations for MS/Leadership (beyond block 40, per the above). Document leadership (#s, impact). Document expertise and command involvement. Explain ITA if not above RSCA and you feel the Officer is demonstrating above-RSCA performance.
  - Reporting Seniors need to be clear in their opening and closing comments. If a member is marked below the RSCA due to policy (selects, etc.) or to set RSCA, this needs to be specifically/explicitly stated. The board should not be left to interpret any ambiguity on their own.

- Changes to promotion recommendation should be clearly stated. This can be due to promotion to the next rank or declining performance; make this clear to the board.
- Reporting Seniors should annotate if the Officer is in a milestone billet; it saves time and prevents guessing, given that milestone-designated billets can shift year-over-year.
- Specific to O4 XO/OIC screening, one of the best indicators the Board has to determine those best qualified for a leadership position is performance in O4 Milestone. Therefore, quantified/qualified write-ups in FITRs are extremely beneficial; generic / fluffy words are not. Check your record; if in Milestone and inside/close to the record cut-offs per Millington...send your last FITR to ensure the board has it. Additionally, be mindful of the fact that Milestone assignments change over time. Therefore, by the time your record comes before a board, it may be hard to discern what your milestone assignment was. If you are in your milestone assignment, wording in your FitRep Blk 41 highlighting the fact that this is your milestone assignment becomes extremely helpful.
- Taking the hard jobs matters. Successful performance in billets with increasing scope of responsibility and number of personnel led are strong indicators of success in Milestone and Leadership positions.
- It is expected that qualifications, graduate degrees, certifications, etc. are completed during your commensurate tours and assignments. If the navy sends you to graduate school, the expectation is that you will fulfill all requirements to complete your graduate degree.
- Officers MUST own their record. Officer Record maintenance remains extremely important in order to provide board members with the most accurate picture possible. It is incumbent upon the Officer to ensure the accuracy and completeness of their record. Ensure the OSR is complete with AQD/Sub-Specialty codes captured and up to date. There are only 24 spaces for AQDs/NOBCs, ensure your most important 24 are visible. Per NAVADMIN 247/20, an official photo in current grade is still required to be in the official service record but will not/not be used in any board proceedings. Officers should fully review their record and previous Convening Orders well before the board (and when they submit their FITR); Confirm that your career is appropriately documented. Document, document, document! Commanding Officers and Mentors should be active in guiding careers. Sloppy records send a signal.
- Letters to the Board (LTB) that clarify are of value and should use succinct verbiage. The best letters address missing items (Command Qualification, FITREPs, Degrees, JPME completion). Letters that address specific FITR issues should include documentation from the Reporting Senior that signed that report. Letters that do not address one of these issues tend to distract from the record, as a properly maintained record should stand on its

own merit. Do not send letters to the board containing your latest photo; it is not required for the board.

- An Officer that goes before the board and is not interested in a Milestone or Command assignment (for the FY they are being considered) and is not worldwide deployable in the context of official Navy programs (spousal Co-Lo, EFMP, etc.) should submit a letter requesting to have their record removed from consideration (“Don’t Pick Me” letter). This is a clear message to the board that preserves opportunity for others who desire and can support these assignments. This counts as a year of non-selection. For Command, this keeps an officer viable for future consideration if the member is eligible for additional screening “looks”. Officers should be careful in using a “Don’t Pick Me” for milestone screens as it could have career implications related to timing. That being said, it is the right thing to do if the Officer cannot answer the call to duty for the position they are being screened for. Commanding Officers, Detailers and Mentors should be active in ensuring this practice is widely understood.
- LTBs are due NLT 10 days prior to board convening. Do not wait until the last minute.

### **OCEANO Observations**

- Fully and best qualified convening order language – know it, mentor accordingly. Alignment across community leadership is key (Detailers, CO's, senior leaders and mentors).
- Block 41 language – leadership and technical expertise. Considerable convening order language focuses on leadership and technical expertise. It should be emphasized in blk 41: Technical expertise in terms of mission set, applying education and technical expertise to operational challenges, influencing decision-making, having strategic/DoD Level impact (Strategic Competition). Leadership in terms of # of Sailors, civilians; program policy; budget portfolio; leading peers, IPTs, etc. Can be annotated in blk 29 and blk 41.
- Block 40 – "Command" is 05 Command, "MAJCOM" is 06 Command.
- Recognize anomalies - downward trend in RSCA, regression in summary group, removing/changing a recommendation are all significant indicators. These indicators need explanation within blk 41 or a letter to the board or it will be interpreted as declining performance.

### **CW Observations**

- Superb talent from which to choose Officers for both milestone and command. Proven (rated) performance in leadership (CO, XO, OIC, DH) assignments, superior performance

in at-sea and shore milestone assignments, geographic diversity, and diversity across core CW disciplines remain the foundation of selected individuals.

- Documenting progress towards Joint Qualification is necessary. Our current precept is written with JPME Phase I as a requirement for several boards, but JQO progress is emphasized and is a discriminator. Suggestion: completion of JPME Phase I before the O5 Milestone board. Officers must understand that Joint progress is highly valued and must be demonstrated in a record.
- Career Diversity counts ((Cyber/SIGINT/EW), (Fleet/National/COCOM)). Understand the potential impact to your career if you select one track and stick with it. Commanding Officers at both the O-5 and O-6 level MUST have all expertise in all three core areas: SIGINT, Cyber and EW.
- Post grad STEM and JNT, ACQ and Space are valued.
- Commanding Officers at the O-6 level must have SSP in an O5 MS as well as a completed Master's degree (or higher) and JPME Ph I.
- JQO completion should be desired as an O6 Commanding Officer. At a minimum, JPME 1 completion must be a requirement for FULLY qualified officers.
- The best way to document a Milestone is with the AQD. Officers must engage the detailer to get the AQD in their record as soon as the MS is complete. Do not let board members guess whether you're in or completing a MS tour as those types of billets change year-to-year.
- In addition to Advanced education degrees, advanced technical certificates are also valued (CISSP, Ethical Hacker, etc.).
- For the O-5 Milestone screen board, the BEST candidates will show JPME I completion and the FULLY qualified candidates will have shown SSP in O4 Milestone.
- For the O-5 Executive Officer board, SSP in O4 MS and O5 MS assignments are required to be FULLY qualified. As there are not enough OIC or like assignments around, the scope of previous leadership responsibilities should be considered a key discriminator for BEST qualified (i.e. Department Head for 200 Sailors at one of our major NIOCs).
- The BEST qualified officers for O5 XO should also have JPME 1 complete.
- Officers should take advantage of all opportunities to earn Acquisition AQDs.
- Ensure documentation of all core disciplines throughout your career in Block 41 of Fitness Reports.

## **IP Observations**

- Competition for IP Command and Milestone billets is fierce. Our community is fortunate to have many highly-talented and experienced Officers. Documented sustained superior performance, a variety of assignments in mission core areas, and documented increases in scope and complexity in assignments, but in particular MS, are reflected in the best qualified records.
- Demonstrating expertise in multiple IP core competencies enhances the “best qualified” qualities of a record. Demonstrated success in leading IP core missions afloat, expeditionary, and ashore shows a powerful commitment to IW and Fleet success. The strongest records document, in FITRs, the quantity of Sailors and civilians led. They also document significant qualitative mission impacts to the Fleet, DoDIN, etc.
- Advanced technical education that enhances IP skills, i.e. STEM degrees from accredited institutions, are valued. Grade-appropriate IP community qualifications are expected. JPME Phase I required for O6 MS. Progress toward/ completion of JPME/JQO highly desirable.
- Space and Acquisition experience is desired when taken in the context of an already best-qualified Officer record.

### **Intelligence Observations**

- Noted exceptional talent at all levels - those selected have stellar records which reflect sustained superior performance, and demonstrable impact within the IWC, Fleet, and Intelligence Community. While each record is unique, there are some consistent themes:
  - SSP as reflected by:
    - Consistently Above RSCA
    - Left –to – Right trend with EP result
    - Leadership/Command/Flag recs from seniors
    - Career diversity and Strategic Competition overtones
    - Increasing scope of responsibility and complexity
    - Competitive breakout – Hard is best, Soft is expected
    - Document OpIntel skills and impact
    - Warfighting competence and Deep expertise
- The most selective cut is at the O-5 Command Board. As such, Reporting Seniors need to give the board an understanding via Block 41 of how the Officer is performing as a leader – specifically traits and characteristics that demonstrate their leadership. This gives the briefer “handles” to explain to the board how they are demonstrating leadership performance, not just designator specific performance, and ultimately how they set themselves apart from other eligibles.

- Reporting Seniors should ensure block 41 provides concrete examples of how the service member is demonstrating leadership. Community senior officers should communicate to the force what we expect a service member to demonstrate that indicates they are performing as a leader. IOT ensure officers understand what is expected and can incorporate those aspects of leadership into their professional development and performance plans. Officers should seek mentorship and discuss FQ and BQ criteria to ensure they are tracking for what is a very competitive board selection process.
- In Intel O-5 milestone FITREPS there was a high incidence of Visual Observer references. While important, it dominated in a number of FITRs and edged-out the broader cross-intel disciplines they should be demonstrating at the O-5 level in a milestone assignment.