

## Admin Officer Guide: “Tips & Tricks” to Ask the Triad upon Reporting

### INTRODUCTION

As an Administrative Officer (AO), you will oversee multiple command-level programs, many of which directly impact Sailors’ careers. It is critical that you are aligned with the command Triad to clearly understand their intent, guiding vision, and command priorities while minimizing rework and redundancy. This guide provides key questions to help establish early alignment with the triad and set the tone for a successful tour as an AO. The questions you ask should reflect initiative, an understanding of the administrative mission, and a commitment to supporting the command’s objectives and culture. Information gathered through these discussions can also help inform updates to command-level directives and administrative processes. Prior to engaging with the Triad, reviewing previously approved command products is strongly recommended to better understand their writing styles, preferences, and established trends.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Vision.** Every Commanding Officer (CO) has a vision for how they want the command to operate. As the AO, it is important to understand that vision and how it influences your role in executing the command’s priorities. Use your initial check-in meeting with the CO to gain clarity on their expectations, how you fit into their vision, and what actions you can take as the AO to effectively support and implement it at your level.
- **Expectations.** Proactively engage the command Triad to ensure your efforts are fully aligned with their strategic priorities and command objectives. Focus on understanding key readiness indicators, including critical timelines and schedules, to effectively anticipate requirements, synchronize administrative actions, and execute your responsibilities as the AO in direct support of the command’s mission.
- **Command priorities.** Inquire about the Triad’s top priorities and goals, both short- and long-term, to ensure you clearly understand the command’s direction. Ask what actions you can take as the AO to support those priorities, contribute to the team’s success, and ensure administrative efforts are aligned with the command’s mission and objectives.
- **Problem areas.** The command Triad may provide a different perspective on potential problem areas than the individual you are relieving. Engage them to identify any concerns, inefficiencies, or challenges they have observed within your division or department. The Command Master Chief or Senior Enlisted Leader can also provide valuable insight into ongoing personnel issues, training gaps, or challenges affecting your Sailors. Additionally, it is a best practice to ask about the current command climate and any systemic issues within your purview as the AO that you can address, improve, or recommend policy changes to correct.
- **Reportable items and communication.** Understand which items the command Triad expects to be notified of immediately, particularly those related to your administrative and personnel responsibilities. It is also important to know the Triad’s preferred methods of communication based on the level of urgency, such as when a phone call is required versus when a text message or email is appropriate. Effective, proactive communication is critical to success in the AO role. When bringing issues to the triad’s attention, be prepared to present well-thought-out Courses of Action to facilitate informed decision-making. Additionally, the AO will often have visibility on sensitive command programs such as the Family Advocacy Program, Command Managed Equal Opportunity, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response, Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor, Physical Fitness Assessment matters, and pregnancy notifications. It is essential to understand how the triad expects these matters to be routed, communicated, briefed, and debriefed.

- **Delegation authority.** Ask and understand how the CO prefers to delegate matters and ensure you have a clear understanding of which items they expect to review personally.

- **Evals.** Understand the Triad's evaluation preferences and ensure those expectations are clearly communicated and enforced throughout the department. Prior to meeting with the Triad, review several evaluations, fitness reports, and Reporting Senior Cumulative Average (RSCA) spreadsheets to identify writing preferences, trends, and any areas where improvements or adjustments may be recommended.

- Understand the COs writing style to include their preference on white space and opening and closing statements.
- Discuss RSCA Management to include identifying target averages for each paygrade. If you identified areas of concern, such as a high RSCA for a paygrade, get input on acceptable ways to lower it such as 3.0 all frocked reports.
- Ask about how they would like to conduct mid-term counseling and evaluation/fitness report debriefs; and whether they want to be involved or delegate it. If the CO opts to delegate their authority, discuss how they prefer to handle the delegation. Ensure the delegation aligns with guidance provided in the Navy Performance Evaluation System instruction.

- **Awards.** Not every CO has the same philosophy regarding awards, so it is important for the AO to understand the CO's approach. Prior to meeting with the CO, review previously approved awards to identify writing styles and preferences, such as the use of quantifiable data versus more general narrative write-ups. You should also seek to understand the CO's policy on appropriate award levels based on scope of responsibility, as well as any guidelines for exceptions. Additionally, discuss the CO's expectations for the Awards Board process, including preferred award levels for board consideration, board composition, and the desired frequency or periodicity for conducting award boards.

- **Directives.** Recognizing that the directives implementation and review process is a collaborative effort, inquire how the command Triad prefers to review directives. Understand which directives the CO is comfortable delegating for signature and which require their direct approval. Additionally, clarify how the CO prefers to review directives they will sign, such as receiving printed copies with track changes or including a summary of changes memorandum with the routing folder.

- **Pay.** Ask the command Triad what level of Sailor pay issues they expect to be notified of and what thresholds warrant their awareness. Additionally, understand the level of background information and detail they require when these issues are briefed to ensure they are properly informed to make decisions or provide guidance. A good rule of thumb is that if you make your CO/Triad aware of a problem, you should also have a plan of action in place to resolve the problem.

## CLOSING

In your role as the AO, it is important to establish yourself as a professional and mission-focused officer while taking the opportunity to learn the expectations of the command Triad upon check-in. While previous tours and best practices can be valuable, it is advisable to hold those perspectives in reserve until you have gained a clear understanding of your current triad's priorities and leadership style. Approach your initial meeting with preparation, humility, and a willingness to listen, demonstrating your readiness to learn and support the command's vision and objectives.