

Plain talk about your board packet

by Maj. Cerie Kimball

Command, professional development and promotion boards require significant attention to detail by the officer submitting a packet for review.

Opportunities continue to emerge for the Active Guard Reserve (AGR) officer to further their careers. Don't let an opportunity for higher rank, command, or professional schooling pass you by for ***your lack of attention and timeliness***.

You must be ever vigilant to insure your packet submission portrays you at the best advantage. Following are some basic tasks to incorporate into your plan of action for submission of your board packet.

First task: Read carefully the board's Memorandum of Instruction (MOI), i.e., know the problem. Each board may have slightly different instructions. It pays to read the instructions carefully to ascertain the "ins & outs" of your particular board.

Second task: Gather information for the packet and place in logical order as dictated on the MOL

Third task: Ask an experienced third party to critique your packet. Mail the packet yourself do not give this responsibility to someone else, no matter how much you trust him or her.

Last task: Submit your packet to the President of the Board, not your Personnel Management Officer (PMO). Allow sufficient time for receipt of your packet by the board before it convenes. Overnight mail arrives at AR-PERSCOM's front door not the office of the Board President, which normally takes a few extra days. Insure you backward planned adequately. The responsibility for a complete, correct, and timely packet submission rests on your shoulders.

Some tidbits on packet submission:

MILITARY COLOR PHOTOGRAPH. It should reflect your professionalism and ***current*** sharp appearance. It may also be wise if applicable (and required by the board) to submit a DA Form 5500-RI5501-R, Body Fat Content Worksheet so the selection board will be cognizant of your true body fat ratio.

MICROFICHE. Normally boards mail you a microfiche if one is available. It may behoove you to contact the Officer Record Clerks nine months prior to a board and request a microfiche. They can be reached at 1(800) 3254118 Ext. 5175 or e-mail ARO.Records@arpstl.army.mil You will need to furnish the Record Clerks with pertinent source documents missing from your fiche. Hopefully, these documents will be posted to your fiche prior to a board and mailed with your packet.

BLUF: review your fiche carefully and submit required items not on it. Remember that you must use the fiche sent by the board in determining what documents if any you need to forward to the board. Military and civilian education, awards, and evaluations are all critical documentation for boards and must be reflected on your fiche or submitted in hardcopy. An annotation on your ORB alone is not sufficient. In the final analysis, your fate depends on these key documents.

ORB (Officer Record Brief). Always be prepared for boards by keeping an up-to-date ORB. The Record Clerks can assist you in this endeavor. Take an old ORB; annotate changes in red, and forward with supporting documents to the Record Clerks. Again, please allow them sufficient lead-time to complete this task for you.

OER/AER. (Officer Evaluation Report/Academic Evaluation Report). The Record Clerks or your PMO may be able to assist with missing OERs if profiled copies are on your fiche. If not, you'll need to have your OER copies certified as true copies by the senior rater or PSNCO and forwarded for profiling at ARPERSCOM.

LETTER TO THE BOARD PRESIDENT. This is usually optional, but highly encouraged. Again, follow the basic guidelines set forth in your packet requirements. A letter should be neat, concise, and contain no misspelled words or grammatical errors. Use the ***KISS*** method, keeping it no longer than one page. As the DA Secretariat once indicated, "If it's important and not in your file, send a letter."

Officers must ensure their records (ORB-photo-fiche) are always up4o-date. As noted by a past board president, "Packets lacking ***required*** information, containing conflicting documents, or just plain sloppy give a negative perception." Equally bad as missing documentation, is forwarding extraneous information not outlined in the MOI. Just as your photograph is an extension of yourself, so are the documents you submit. Take the necessary time to submit a professional packet. Your PMO stands ready to assist you on packet interpretations and suggestions.

Stay in touch and always keep your address up4o-date. Remember, boards mail packets to the address in the system. If it isn't correct, you may never know you were sent a packet or it may arrive too late for proper submission. Don't make your PMO cringe when you say, "***Board? What board?***" Your PMO cannot perform miracles, so do your homework and don't wait until the last minute! To paraphrase a familiar saying, "A lack of prior planning on your part does not constitute an emergency for your PMO." PMOs normally handle 50 telephone inquiries/emails daily and may already have several emergencies on their plate. Ultimately, you and your PMO help each other to ensure you submit the best packet in a timely fashion.

Your PMO is ready to assist you. The e-mail address format is firstname.lastname@arpstl.army.mil

(Courtesy of the April 2000 HUB published by the Army Reserve Personnel Command, St. Louis, MO)

USAWOA Online 5/20/03