

“From my View” – The Warrant Officer Corps Future

by CW5 John Sparkman

Fellow Warrant Officers,

I have communicated with many of you over the past year, whether it was in person at the Warrant Officer Career Center, while TDY to any number of conferences, or via electrons over the Warrant Officer Leader Development Network email forum. I thought I would take this opportunity to distill and synopsise a fair amount of that dialogue in this fine journal. Many thanks to Messieurs Ray Bell and Franks Meeks for offering me the opportunity.

I feel strongly that the future looks bright for the Army, and for the Warrant Officer Corps. The initiatives that resulted from the ADS XXI effort, and the ongoing Army Training & Leader Development Panel study project hold great promise for positive change. The senior Army leadership, and the staff and cadre of every Branch schoolhouse are already thinking ahead, and planning & preparing for modernization and transformation.

An overhaul of the warrant officer education system is on the way, beefing up the quality and quantity of branch-specific technical training. I foresee the following:

- Revised, published, and better-defined warrant officer duties, skill sets, standards, responsibilities & authorities, by pay grade.
- Assignment-oriented training.
- Frequent technical upgrades.
- Schooling with industry.
- More opportunities for civilian education.
- Thanks in large part to the efforts of the USWOA, better pay and compensation.
- A more attractive program for NCO's accessing to be warrants.
- A more robust warrant officer recruiting program.

There are great things on the horizon.

All that said, there are a great number of you who have expressed the sentiment (and rightly so) that "Most of these changes are still a few years away yet. The quality and quantity of warrant officer accessions is ridiculously low NOW, many fine warrant officers are struggling with their role in the Army NOW, most could use some mentoring and advice NOW, while we're waiting for all these wonderful changes to take place, just what can I do NOW to make things better?"

I'm glad you asked. In my humble opinion, here is a short list of things that I believe will help to make a difference:

1. Senior warrant officers, get out of the office, at least one day of the week, and visit the junior warrants in your organization or at your installation. Doesn't matter if they are (heretofore) perfect strangers, or whether they are tech warrants or aviators, just get out there and talk to them. Feel them out about their job satisfaction, challenges, training opportunities, and command climate. Whether you have any useful advice or not, you'd be surprised at how much they appreciate your time and attention.

2. Senior warrant officers, consider forming a Warrant Officer Leader Development Council (WOLDC) at your site or installation. The principal benefits to having a WOLDC on site are;

a. A council of senior warrant officers to oversee the leader development and professional development of all the warrant officers in the region or installation. Helping junior warrant officers to solve their problems at the appropriate level. Planning and hosting of OPD's (and WOPD's as appropriate). Being an advocate for warrant officer issues and communicating solutions to the command. Supporting the Warrant Officer recruiting effort.

b. Command recognition of and active participation in the process.

c. A feeder mechanism for issues of strategic (Army-level) importance to the WOLDC Executive Council. The Executive Council is composed of CW5 members from the Active Component, ARNG, and OCAR. (Current membership is listed on the WOLDN Web Site at www-cgsc.army.mil/cal/LDO/WOLDN/woldn.htm.)

This council is in a unique position to help satellite organizations to solve problems at the lowest level, and (if appropriate) to make recommendations to the Senior Army Leadership for action and resolution.

There are only a half dozen WOLDC's in existence across the Active Army, and merely double that in the USAR and ARNG. (The ARNG equivalent to this program is the Warrant Officer Advisory Council, and functions within each State or Region.) Email me, and I'll send you a draft charter for your WOLDC. You can re-draft or modify it as you see fit. Form your council, meet quarterly or as often as you desire, and make a difference in your community.

3. All warrant officers, join the U.S. Warrant Officers Association, and encourage others to do so as well. Contribute to the sheer numbers of voting members that will help the USWOA leadership in their efforts to improve our pay, compensation, benefits, and retirement prospects. Give to that organization, and you'll be contributing to your community and Corps.

4. Warrant officers, you have the well-earned reputation for being honesty-brokers. Put that moniker to good use. Tell it like it is, and encourage your fellow soldier, NCO's, and branch officers to do the same.

Help to make this Army an organization that we can all be proud of, instead of an organization that thousands of young captains and junior enlisted soldiers are bailing-out of. Junior officers and junior enlisted are leaving the Army in near-record numbers lately, and they do so because they;

a. Aren't having any fun.

b. Aren't particularly impressed with the amount of careerism and rhetoric that often passes for leadership in the modern Army. (And I'm talking about all ranks, levels, and components here, so don't anybody get your feelings hurt. Or maybe you should.)

c. Are worn-out by the current OPTEMPO or operational pace.

d. Don't feel like their family needs come first. Or even second.

e. Aren't impressed with the amount of integrity on display in the organization. (Ever read a brutally honest OER or NCOER, or are they all full of flowery praise and heavily inflated versions of reality? Attended a QTB or USR lately? Was everyone telling the boss the blunt truth, or were they telling the boss what they thought the boss wanted to hear?)

In summation; Be the honesty broker. Tell it like it is at all times, and encourage others to. Set the example for others to follow, and you will help build an Army that we can be proud to be a part of.

5. Finally, and please stay with me, stop thinking about JUST the warrant officer corps, and think about the good of the whole organization, the good of the whole Army. (It doesn't do much good to try and improve things for just WO's. Without a quality Army to be a part of, it won't matter whether they call us Chief, Mister, WO's LDO's, RLO's or Exalted Grand Poo-Bah's, nobody's going to hang around long enough to care.)

We warrant officers can be the hinge-pin for the future of a proud and technically-sharp Army of the future, we just need to step up to the plate.

I thank you for your time and attention, and welcome future dialogue with you. If you would like to participate in the WOLDN email forum, kindly send a message to woldn@leavenworth.army.mil. Tell us your name, rank, MOS, telephone number, and most importantly, your AKO email address, and you will be promptly enrolled. Retirees are welcome to join as well. Keep up the good work, I am proud to serve with you.

About the Author:

CW5 John Sparkman, Chair, WO Leader Development Network, Center for Army Leadership, Ft. Leavenworth, KS 66027, (913) 758-3210, DSN 585-3210, john.sparkman@leavenworth.army.mil, or john.sparkman@us.army.mil

