



From the Desk of the Field Artillery CSM

Semi Centralized Promotions

One of the topics I continue to address during my engagements across the force is our historically low boarding/promotions of 13F and 13M to skill level two and three. This is not unique to our branch as the problem exists in various Career Management Fields across the Army. As the Army sets authorizations, based on projected requirements, they WILL meet those authorizations. As Field Artillery leaders, if we do not take action to correct these historically low trends, we will ultimately lose our ability to 'vote' on who becomes noncommissioned officers within our ranks. I don't want this to be overly negative, however I've been beating this drum since I came into this position almost a year ago. While some are working to get better, overall there has not been improvement. This is a call to action for all of us.

One of the tools currently in use is Command List Integration (CLI). Primary reason is a lack of Soldiers on the promotion recommended list. CLI is the forced integration of Soldiers onto the SGT/SSG list (one year past primary zone eligibility) without the Soldier having appeared before a promotion board. Soldiers who meet this criteria will be integrated onto the Sergeant/Staff Sergeant (SGT/SSG) standing list and awarded 39 and 14 points respectively. In order to attain more points, Soldiers with CLI status must appear before a promotion board; but they are still listed in a promotable status and will be promoted to help meet authorizations. This policy is still not enough to meet authorizations as we are not boarding enough Soldiers and CLI can't close the gap. Currently there is a draft policy at HRC to direct mandatory board appearance for all eligible SGTs and SSGs in an attempt to rectify the issue. Policy does not replace leadership. If we are to truly fix this issue and promote those eligible Soldiers who demonstrate potential to lead at the next level, we need to do so through engaged leadership at echelon. We have the eligible population available, yet for 30+ months, we've had this problem. So how do we get after it?

We can start by ensuring our 'eligible' population

is truly eligible. Basically, eligibility is the requisite time in service, time in grade (TIS/TIG), not flagged or barred and not on temporary profile. So let's start there. In February, for example, there were a total of 569 13F Soldiers 'eligible' for promotion to SGT. If we were able to hold a formation of all 569 of those Soldiers, conduct an APFT, ABCP, check for temporary profiles and screen for derogatory info, how many do you think we would discover were not truly 'eligible'? Bottom line is your eligible population with HRC is what it is on paper, if leaders have not taken the appropriate action(s) to flag or bar Soldiers who are not meeting basic Army standards, then they appear in your eligible population. We need to take the emotion out of it and uniformly enforce the standards with appropriate administrative actions where they are necessary – and this needs to be routine action at the Company, Battery, Troop level, not a surge operation. First Sergeants and Platoon Sergeants, this is your responsibility to initiate and follow through with your commanders.

The next step is getting past the 'excuse' level. When I query junior leaders as to why we're not boarding Soldiers, I get the typical responses of a) 'they're not ready' b) 'they haven't demonstrated leadership' or c) 'they don't want to go to the board'. When a NCO gives me either "a" or "b", my immediate response is "What have you done about it?" which more often than not is met by some convoluted response which doesn't answer the question. We make the mistake of looking for the Soldier who we can take out of a box and stand them up in front of the board and they're good to go. Fact of the matter is, none of us were 'ready' to lead at the next position before we were boarded/selected – the Army promotes/selects on POTENTIAL to lead at the next level. I'll be the first to tell you, I have never felt completely 'ready' for my next position, current one included. However, the Army determined I had the potential, promoted/

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selected me, and I continued/continue to learn and develop at the next level through mentorship, counseling, coaching and experiences.

First line leaders, here's a tip – you've got to engage and invest to get past "a" and "b". Your Soldiers will develop with or without your help, but they will only GROW with your presence. Just telling them they ain't ready or they haven't demonstrated leadership without providing them with a plan that you are involved in, ain't gonna make it happen. I'm not talking about spoon feeding them, I'm talking about LEADING them. It takes some thought and yes some of your time, but can be done for the most part within your current training schedule.

For example, SPC Snuffy, next week on Monday, you will be in charge of supervising PV2 Jones and PFC Smith conducting PMCS of the section commo equipment during command maintenance, here are the 5988E and the TMs you will need, I'll be there to observe and assist if needed. On Wednesday, you will lead PRT. Here's the platoon schedule and the FM 7-22. You will back brief me NLT COB on Thursday this week to ensure you can appropriately demonstrate/conduct the exercises and I can ensure you have all the resources you will need. I will supervise you in each instance and following each event we will conduct performance oriented counseling. Boom. Perfect chance for SPC Snuffy to demonstrate leadership and how 'ready' they are; you'll have documented evidence of SPC Snuffy's performance that can either enforce/disprove your initial assessment of his/her potential – all done within the current schedule. Sergeant and Staff Sergeants, this is your responsibility – figure it out, be creative to nest your opportunities within the time you have – take action and make it routine. You may be surprised at how well your Soldiers will get after it and begin to look for other ways they can 'take charge'.

For the last excuse "don't want to", why are we asking them? I get it if they are on the short final to ETS, but that's only a segment of the population. For the SPCs that say they don't want to become NCOs, run them through the same developmental plan as we did with SPC Snuffy. If they dork it up on purpose, well then you have the counseling to take administra-

tive action and get them out of the eligible pool. Many of them, may probably surprise you and themselves and show that maybe they do have the potential and maybe they do want to become a leader – don't let them shy away from it through excuses; make them show you through a supervised development plan. Kind of like mandatory fun – get them there and they might discover it ain't so bad, but they can't win if they don't play.

In addition, get involved in their board prep. Provide them TMs, ADPs and ADRPs along with guidance on how/what to study, don't just point them to the internet to find a study guide. Quiz them, give them questions constantly – this may help you improve your knowledge as well, because you'll have to do the prep to ensure you're on track. If you include all your Soldiers in this, it'll breed some healthy competition and that's always a good thing. It ain't gonna happen on its own, you gotta be part of the solution and part of the process. Sergeants, Staff Sergeants this is your responsibility to initiate and maintain.

We are all responsible, two levels down from our own positions, to ensure we and our subordinate leaders are effectively coaching and developing our subordinates to become leaders. We can't afford to just let it happen, or hope they'll develop on their own. They may, but it won't be the desired outcome to fix this problem or to create future effective leaders. If we want them to GROW, we gotta be there, we gotta be involved in the process. Failure to do so will result in continued decrease in skill level match, leader to led ratio, lagging career progression for all and most detrimental, a decrease in readiness. The entire NCO Corps owns the responsibility to get us back on azimuth, take an objective look at what you are doing/not doing at your level and take a personal interest and appropriate actions to reverse this untenable trend. If not, we'll lose our vote and like it or not, we'll be responsible for the end result. Let's do what NCOs do, train and lead Soldiers – exercise initiative in the absence of orders.

King of Battle!
Redleg 7



CSM Berk Parsons