

**FY03 APPLY BOARD LESSONS LEARNED**  
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**What makes a Strong Record?**

\*Take Responsibility for your Record. The Reviewers/Briefers on the Board only have access to your Official BUPERS Record, your Apply Board application and any letters you sent to the President of the Board. They do not look at anything else. If your Official Record is incomplete, unreadable or incorrect you may have seriously hurt your opportunity to be assigned a billet. Not only may a poorly maintained Record be missing key information but it also reflects poorly on your interest and dedication. Review your Record periodically. Maintain a clean, updated Official Record.

\*Command – Command –Command. Seek leadership positions early and often. If you can't be in command be the OIC, GLCO, SELRES Coordinator or XO.

\*Take the Tough Jobs. Not all billets are equal. Any command job is preferable to a non-command job but otherwise the billets getting the most respect are ACOS' on the Geographic and Fleet Commanders staffs, the AADCs and the Battle Group staffs. High visibility units such as the Navy Command Center, Harbor Defense Commands and Inshore Boat and Inshore Undersea Warfare units also get attention. Finally, any surface type command unit or their supporting commands such as PHIBGRU, SURFLANT and SURFPAC are considered noteworthy.

\*Don't Homestead. Build a balanced career. Get experience on staffs, operational units and joint commands. Don't stay anywhere more than 3-4 years and always seek out the leadership positions. The one sub-community where "homesteading" appears permissible today is in Naval Coastal Warfare. The "Brown Navy" is a dramatically growing specialty but remember this could change someday and then you're trapped without the qualifications needed for other jobs.

\*Stay Operational. Never forget that we are warriors and need to keep our war fighting qualifications reasonably current. Don't get stuck in administrative, research or political jobs too long. If you do you'll get stereotyped. At a minimum, arrange AT's on exercise Battle Staffs or at warfare schools.

\*Early Promote. Earn Early Promote recommendations. Don't accept a grader giving you a lower than deserved promotion recommendation to help a more senior officer. If you believe you deserve an Early Promote recommendation ask for it and if you are marked lower request an explanation. Stand up for yourself and your career. Remember, however, that while Early Promote recommendations are always preferred, a Must Promote or Promote recommendation is not disastrous as long as there are positive comments in the graders text and your next FITREP shows clear improvement.

\*Cumulative Score Above Graders Average. Earn a cumulative score above the graders average. Above average scores will help offset the negative connotations of a lower promotion recommendation.

\*Break out from the Pack. At some point in your career you must show you have broken out from the pack and when grouped with other officers are being consistently ranked in the top quartile. The more senior you become the more important a break out becomes. If you “stay in the pack” you “sit in the back”.

\*Apply for NOBCs. If you have earned an NOBC apply for it and get it into your Official Record. Many billets have NOBC requirements. Sometimes the NOBC requirement can be waived but not always. The bottom line is that those that have the NOBC necessary for a billet in their record have a big advantage over those who do not.

\*Do Extra. Exhibit a willingness to go the extra mile. If you can, do additional ATs or ADTs. Also, serving on a Selection Board or Naval Reserve Working Group shows commitment above and beyond the average officer.

\*Selection for Special Programs. Being selected for special programs such as the Naval War College, the National Defense University, the Naval Reserve Advanced Management Seminar, the Senior Naval Reserve Officer Orientation Course or a Selection Board helps differentiate you from the crowd. Apply for these programs. They're educational, fun and career enhancing.

\*NEPLO is not the Kiss of Death. NEPLO billets used to be dead end or twilight tours. This is no longer the case. There is life after NEPLO today. However, they are still not viewed as top tier billets.

\*The Board understands VTU. Most Board members have served time in the VTU. It is not bad to be in the VTU you just don't want to stay there for an extended period of time. If you are in the VTU get yourself assigned TAD to another unit where you can fill a leadership position or take on a special project. Instead of a dull VTU FITREP, you give yourself the opportunity of getting an impressive FITREP from the other unit listing your accomplishments and extra effort. Also use your time in the VTU to do special things such as attending the Naval War College or participating in a major exercise. ADT money is available for VTU members for events such as these. In short, turn lemons into lemonade. Don't sit in back and complain – create opportunities for yourself.

\*\*\*Special note - The earlier you can serve on a Selection Board as a recorder or as a member the better. It looks good in your record and it teaches you the importance of career management.

## **What makes a Complete Application?**

\*Apply for the Maximum Number of Billets. Apply for every billet you would be willing to accept - up to the 35 billet maximum. Do not apply for only your top picks and then indicate that you would be willing to accept other billets for which you haven't applied. On the first pass the Board will only consider you for billets for which you have applied. If the Board comes back on later passes to consider you for billets for which you have not applied there may be few, if any, billets left.

\*Complete the History Section. Do not leave the History section of the application incomplete. The Board uses the career history you provide on your application and not your Official Record during the slating process. When dealing with candidates of equal or similar confidence factors, the information in the History Section may be the determining factor in who is assigned the billet.

\*Do not expect a Designator Waiver. Designator waivers are very rare. The Board assumes the Gaining Command has a good reason for limiting billets to specific designators

\*NOBC Waivers are Occasionally Granted. You can apply for billets if you are lacking the required NOBC. On occasion applicants who lack the required NOBC are assigned a billet if 1) the assignment of the NOBC is pending (be sure to notate this in the comments section), 2) the career history indicates significant related billet experience, or 3) the Board determines that the NOBC requirement is an unnecessary and onerous.

\*No Repeat Tour Assignments. Do not apply for a second tour in the same billet. You will only be reassigned to the same billet if you are currently the "Interim Fill". Interim fills have a very good chance of being reassigned to the billet but you must make sure that the Board is aware that your current assignment is an interim assignment. Notate your interim fill status in the comments section or in a Letter to the Board.

\*Use Letters to the Board Judiciously. Letters to the Board will be read. Use Letters to the Board to provide missing FITREPS, NOBCs, pending NOBCs, and qualifications. You may also use a letter to explain something unique in your record but only provide an explanation if it helps your case. Gaining Command letters of recommendation may also on occasion be of value to you. Remember that third party letters of recommendation can not be sent directly to the Board they must be sent to you for your submission. Do not send complaining letters, long letters full of extraneous information, or copies of information which is already in your Official Record. Your letter should help your Reviewer/Briefer sell you to the Board – not make him or her mad at you.

\*LT's and LCDR's can Apply for Junior Billets. There are few Ensigns or LTj.g.'s in the Naval Reserve but there are several OIC billets in those pay grades. A LT or LCDR has a chance of being assigned to one of these junior OIC billets if one is available. Often LT's and LCDR's won't apply for these billets because they believe they are not eligible for them. Any command billet is good – apply for the junior OIC billets if you are an 0-4 or below.

\*LCDR's and CDR's should not Apply for Senior Billets. The Board will not assign LCDR's to CDR billets and CDR's to Captain billets unless you are a selectee for the senior grade. Do not waste your billet selections on senior billets. If there is a compelling rationale to break this rule against “one up” assignments for a specific billet you must make this argument in a Letter to the President to the Board.