

# EVAL MYTHS

**BUSTED**

## *Fleet Master Chief April Beldo Shares Her Thoughts on Common Eval Misconceptions*

*From Defense Media Activity*

With the fleet having wrapped up its annual E-5 periodic evaluations and the chief petty officer selection board eligible list now released, the staff at All Hands Magazine thought now would be a good time to address some common myths about enlisted evaluations.

We recently interviewed Fleet Master Chief April Beldo, the fleet master chief for manpower, personnel, training and education, to get her thoughts on six evaluation myths.

**Myth 1: Because this is a Sailor's first evaluation at a new command, he or she should expect to get a "P" promotion recommendation when ranked against his or her peers.**

A: I would not say that it is a "given" that any Sailor's first evaluation at a command is automatically going to be a "P." I have seen where that is not true. I have seen some first evaluations be "MPs."

What I would share though is we have to be practical about it. For instance, you have an RDC coming from Recruit Training Command. They've been there for three years and they're a hot runner "EP." Then they check in to VFA-136 as an AT1, let's say, and they've only been there for four months. Should that Sailor have the expectation that they get an "EP?" I don't think they should. I got it that you were an EP at RTC, but you've been here for four months. There are other Sailors that have been at that command for maybe a year or two and they're also front runners. So, we have to take that into consideration. The automatic "myth" is just not true.

Are there some commands that use that as a "going in" for recommendations to the ranking board? Sure. Remember, these are the first evals these guys are going to get at this command. They're going to be here for three or four years, and if they're on a ship, some of the sea intensive ratings are going to be there for five years. Are we setting that Sailor up? Is he or she going to be able to sustain that hot running [performance] for five years? We have to take all that into consideration. So, I don't think that it's automatic.

I think there is a lot of leadership thought that goes into how we rank our Sailors, and I have to trust that the command master chiefs and commanding officers out there are doing due diligence and really using integrity when they sit down and evaluate their personnel.

I believe a board member is going to look at Block 14 and Block 15 and it will tell them right there how long that evaluation period is for.

**Myth 2: Block 40, the individual trait average, is not as important as the promotion recommendation for a Sailor. Performance trait averages fluctuate based on where Sailors are ranked in a summary group, and are not a true reflection of a Sailor's individual performance.**

A: Some Sailors may have come to that conclusion because when we take advancement exams, for example, we are not looking at Block 40 for the individual trait average. We are calculating their PMA based on whether they were an "EP," "MP" or "P." So, that might be where that myth comes from. But let's talk about [Sailors] taking the E-7 exam and they get to the [CPO] selection board. And I'll tell you what, as a board member Block 40 meant a lot to me. Because I would compare Block 40 to the reporting senior's summary group average, and whether that Sailor was a "P," "MP" or an "EP," if they were well above that reporting senior's average I took that into account. That meant a lot to me.

So, I think maybe there are two stories there: for calculating your exam score, that's why we use the promotion recommendation. But, now that you're taking that chief's exam and you're making the board, I'm definitely looking at Block 40 to see what your individual trait average is. As we all know, we do make some very junior chief petty officers - seven or eight years. That board member will go back at least five years. I might see a second class eval. Is Block 40 then going to come into account for me? Absolutely, and I'm definitely going to be reading it.

Block 40 might not matter today, but is it going to matter in your future? So, let's not discount how important it is to work hard for every single trait.

**Myth 3: Block 41, assignment recommendations, are essentially meaningless and not taken into account by detailers or selection boards.**

A: If I have a Sailor that the chain of command does not feel that that individual does not perform at a rate where they would recommend them for a more responsible billet out in the fleet, I would be concerned. If the recommendation said "None" and "None," I would be concerned. So, it does matter, and I do think that board members do look at that.

That [block] also tells me, if I was a supervisor or LPO, what I am going to challenge that Sailor with for their next job. I know they're going to want to take on greater responsibility, what am I going to recommend them for; LPO at sea, RDC, instructor duty? But if I see "None" and "None" then I'm going to be concerned.

As petty officers, when we prepare our brag sheets for our leadership we should be telling them what we're interested in also. Let us know what your desires are.

However, if I have a Sailor that struggles with physical fitness, I'm probably not going to recommend them for recruit division commander. We need to make sure that our Sailors are qualified for what we're recommending them for. Because we're sending them mixed messages when we say they're recommended for RDC or flag writer and they have some challenges. We need to be brutally honest with our Sailors so that they can aspire to get better. If I tell you that you're a "5.0" all the time, you're not going to do anything to get better.

**Myth 4: In order for PO1s to be selected by the CPO selection board, they must have the title "LPO" listed in Block 29, primary duties, from a deployable command, i.e. ship, squadron, NECC billet, etc. Also, LPOs who change positions from one evaluation cycle to the next, and no longer have the LPO title on their evaluation, should view this change as a detractor.**

A: In Block 29, each [rating] community has specific expectations of milestones they want their Sailors to reach. If I see an eval from a large command, like an aircraft carrier - I know in air department there are dozens of first class petty officers. They're probably not all going to get to be LPOs. The board members understand that. So, I'm not going to have LPO in Block 29, but in Block 43 that's where I really get to share information about what that Sailor is really doing. If there are still some leadership roles the Sailor holds that aren't LPO, that information should be captured in Block 43. For example, I see that an ABH1 has been aboard USS Carl Vinson for three years and hasn't been an LPO. OK, so I'm a little concerned, but when I turn the eval over and read Block 43, that command has done an outstanding job of describing what that Sailor did.

Now if I'm on a destroyer and I know there's only one PS1 working in admin. If they're not the LPO I'm concerned.

Leadership has a responsibility of setting Sailors up for success. The way I do that is by sharing information with them and giving them opportunities. Now, once I've given someone an opportunity, it's their responsibility to capitalize on that opportunity. So, if you're a first class petty officer and I'm trying to set you up for success and giving you an opportunity, and you're not rising to the challenge, I think I need to be brutally honest with you on that eval. Maybe you just don't have what it takes to be an LPO, and maybe that command is sending the selection board a message.

I don't think that just because you're not an LPO you're not going to make chief. That's what Block 43 is for, and that's why commands expand on what that Sailor is doing in whatever billet is listed in Block 29.

**Myth 5: Having a comment such as "Performing as an EP Sailor" in Block 43 is just as strong as getting an EP promotion recommendation in Block 45.**

A: I think this is very important. Sometimes you have a first class mess that's hitting on all cylinders. Someone's going to get a promotable and they're really an "EP." That's when I see that statement and it sends a message to the board to say "Don't even look at that P promotion recommendation." Let me talk about this EP Sailor, and he performs at a much higher level than I can give him credit for. When a commanding officer, department head or department LCPO is using a line like that, they mean what they're saying and sending a strong message to the board.

**Myth 6: Sailors do not get promoted with "P" promotion recommendations, especially if the evaluations are below a reporting senior's summary group average.**

A: I don't think that's a myth. That type of eval is also sending the board a message. You're not only saying that this Sailor is a "P," but also that they are below the reporting senior's summary group average. So, let's say that the summary group average is 4.00. And this Sailor is coming in at 3.17. There's a big difference between a 3.17 and a 3.86. The 3.86 is very close to the reporting senior's average, so that Sailor I would give him the benefit of the doubt. But if that commanding officer is giving me a 3.17, he's probably telling me something, and that Sailor is probably not ready right now to be promoted.

If the myth is "Sailors don't get promoted with P promotion recommendations," then that is a myth. Because I've seen some "Ps" that were above or at the reporting senior's average get selected. But if you're below the reporting senior's average, then you're probably not doing everything that you need to be doing.

My final thought on this topic is that we should all be familiar with the evaluation instruction, BUPERS Instruction 1610.10C. It is our responsibility to understand what the instruction says, and then guide our evaluation processes accordingly.