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1) Advancement Advantage / 28 APR 14

By Mark Faram, Navy Times

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1) Advancement Advantage / 28 APR 14

It's an up-or-out Navy. To stay in the game, you need to keep moving.

It may be tough to forecast when you'll put on your next stripe or your chief's anchors, but the latest statistics may help you gauge your chances, as well as tell whether you're in a hot-running or slogging along rate. Personnel officials provided Navy Times with the latest averages for when sailors advance to a given pay grade, and how long they spend in their current one until they get the nod. This data isn't interesting only to those on the deck plates. Officials are reviewing advancement times across the service to see that they are fair and meeting the fleet's needs.

Advancement looms large in the mind and on the to-do list of the Navy's top personnel officer, Vice Adm. Bill Moran. With the help of a fleet working panel, Moran is mulling changes to the petty officer advancement formula to reward technical knowledge more at the junior level and leadership skills at the more senior pay grades.

Personnel managers keep a close eye on how a rating is advancing to determine the health of individual skills and communities in the workforce.

"The Navy is a vacancy-driven advancement system," said Capt. Karan Schriver, the head of enlisted plans and policy for the chief of naval personnel, in an April 24 phone interview. "So it's not a factor in determining advancements, but we use this to look and see if we're having any at-risk communities when it comes to opening up advancement opportunity."

What it means

Schriver pointed out that sailors can boost their own chances, to some extent, by performing well, getting good evaluations and studying hard for advancement exams. This can stack the deck in their favor.

But there's still uncertainty in the process- and, until that list of names is published, a lot of nail-biting.

Before every chief petty officer selection board and the semiannual petty officer advancement lists, personnel experts and community managers do a deep scrub of every skill set in which sailors compete for advancement.

They set advancement quotas based on current vacancies and projections of future force structure changes. Ship retirements cut numbers. Ship commissioning's boost them.

Those quotas give eligible sailors an idea of their shot to advance, which ranges from zero to 100 per-cent.

This new data, provided by CNP, shows another side of the coin: how long it typically takes a sailor to advance for each rating and pay grade, from E-4 to E-9.

To give you a sense of the fastest and slowest career tracks, Navy Times listed the 10 highest and lowest times-in-grade for each pay grade - plus ties. One disclaimer - for some ratings, the data represent more than one advancement group. The machinist's mate rating data, for example, show all types of MMs in the surface and submarine communities, as well as conventional and nuclear power groups. This is also true for electrician's mates and electronics technicians.

Similarly, fire controlmen are combined in the data, but their advancement is split between conventional and Aegis.

In addition, many ratings such as cryptologic technician (interpretive), musician and logistics specialist advance separately in sub or surface groups - these, too, are combined in these statistics.

Twice a year for petty officers and once a year for chiefs, most enlisted compete to move up to the next pay grade - and everyone wants to know exactly what their chance to advance is. These figures are a good way to gauge that and assess how you're moving up the ranks compared with your shipmates.

Long-term changes

This information comes from the latest snapshot in time; officials say figures will fluctuate with manning levels and long-term force structure changes.

For example, the Seabees are facing broad cuts, including shuttering construction battalions, as the Navy repositions from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. For that reason, Seabee advancements have slowed, pushing their time-in-grade period higher than most other ratings.

On the other hand, there is growth in the cyber world and, by and large, ratings in the information dominance community are growing. This opens up opportunities and shortens advancement times.

Your shot depends on whether your rating and pay grade is properly manned, Schriver said.

For that reason, she suggests re-searching your community's health, including manning levels and advancement rates. All of this data can be found on the Navy Personnel Command's website.

"It's your career, and you need to have as much information as possible to help you make your career decisions," she said. "If your rating is advancing slower than average, you might want to get with your career counselor and look at options to move into something where opportunity is better and advancement is quicker."

Steadier advancements

Officials would love to attain gradual, healthy advancement across the force - an extremely difficult goal that's likely years away.

Moran, the personnel chief, wants sailors to be able to count on steady advancement across the board, with only minor fluctuations from year to year.

"Now our goal to get to that trust, balance, stability piece is, we have got to stabilize this process," Moran told Navy Times in a mid-February interview. "Put predictability into the advancement cycle and advancement percentages."

Moran said he's concerned by all the swings, as well as the cycles in which some skill sets advance all eligible sailors out of need while others have no opportunity at all.

"I do not like that picture. I think we ought to have something that gives every rate an opportunity to advance," he said. "We should not be auto-advancing people based on vacancies all the time."

Moran said that picture is improving. It's light-years better, he said, than just four years ago - when the Navy was in the teeth of the latest drawdown.

With the end strength picture looking steady for now, and no cuts on the horizon, sailors can look at data like the quotas or these average advancement times with more confidence that the figures will be similar to what they'll see going forward.

In the meantime, Moran said he'll work on ironing out the Navy's haves and have-nots.

"We are going to have fewer over manned ratings and fewer under-manned ratings across the fleet overtime, but it is going to take us a little while to get there," Moran said. "But there is a dramatic difference between where we were in 2010 and where we are today. But the numbers of those highly over manned rates today are significantly better - less than half of what we had back in 2010."

As the numbers of undermanned and over manned ratings in the service decline, he said advancement across the board will stay roughly where it has been recently for each pay grade. The selection rates will drop from record highs to what officials say are more sustainable and typical levels, as has been the case with this year's E-8 and E-9 boards.

"And I see that probably sticking around for a few more cycles and then, hopefully, stabilizing at a new norm that is still very healthy," Moran said.

2) No Such Thing As Too Much Feedback... / 29 APR 14 [\[LINK\]](#)

By Vice Adm. Bill Moran, Chief of Naval Personnel

Had the opportunity last week to get out of DC and spend a few days down in Hampton Roads—visiting with Sailors on the Norfolk waterfront and the Oceana flight line. These short, but rewarding visits to fleet concentration areas go a long way in helping us get reconnected with Sailors and families, so that we keep the Fleet's needs at the forefront of what we are working.

During all hands calls on [USS Fort McHenry](#), at [Strike Fighter Wing Atlantic](#) and at the AUSN Career Development Seminar, Fleet Beldo and I spent time talking about Sailor career paths, the latest advancement trends and initiatives underway to further reduce gaps at sea and incentivize sea duty. We had lunch with a dozen command triads to discuss how to continue to strengthen their authority and reduce administrative burden to help improve quality of work and mission focus. I also had the opportunity to spend a few hours with more than 150 Oceana pilots and NFOs to talk about their futures — and just as importantly how their spouses viewed their service.

Many of the same topics and questions discussed at Oceana last week were raised and thoughtfully explored in the ["Keep a Weather Eye on the Horizon"](#) paper recently posted on the U.S. Naval Institute Blog and discussed, I'm sure, in wardrooms and on mess decks around the fleet.

Specific feedback, whether given in person or via the internet, on why people stay and why they may want to go is helpful and needed as my staff works through the challenge of how to aggressively retain the right Sailors for the Navy of today and tomorrow. Understanding what motivates their service is critical as we develop programs and policies intended to balance and stabilize retention.

The thousands of questions, emails, tweets, and blog comments we get each month helps us better understand your priorities and directly feeds into what topics and policies we go after and attack.

So I'm encouraged that along with the "official" polling, crowdsourcing and surveying that my staff in DC and Millington does on a regular basis, a group of interested and motivated folks are going a step further and taking their own independent look by asking their Shipmates what they think first hand.

Their website, www.dodretention.org, lays out exactly what will be asked, how the data will be crunched and what use it will go to. I won't speak on their behalf— but I am interested in what they learn.

Experts from our detailing and community management shops have provided information and insight to help develop questions, but we are not officially encouraging Sailors to take the survey, so as not to infringe on the independence and democratic nature of the effort.

I look forward to reviewing the results, bouncing it off the feedback from all hands calls and incorporating the right lessons into the work that we are doing here at headquarters. Thank you to those who are working this information gathering effort and to all of those who thoughtfully and passionately work through and advance ideas on their own time to help make our Navy better—blog posts, social media comments, Proceedings articles and our own surveys are important.

These efforts are in the proud tradition of professional discourse and help keep our Navy sharp and relevant.

Please keep the ideas and feedback coming—see you in the Fleet.

CNP

3) Campaign targets growing misuse of prescription drugs / 29 APR 14 [\[LINK\]](#)

By Lance Bacon, Navy Times

The Navy is kicking off a campaign to curb misuse of prescription drugs after concerning trends among sailors since the service began testing for more drugs two years ago.

Five hundred and twenty-four sailors have popped positive for illegal prescription drug usage in the first seven months of this fiscal year — and the Navy is on track to surpass last year's total.

That has Navy experts racing to find out what's going on before it's too late.

The "Prescription for Discharge" campaign aims to ensure sailors correctly take their meds, report prescriptions and dispose of unneeded extras.

The misuse and abuse of prescription medication is a growing concern throughout the Defense Department, and it has had substantial implications for readiness and the military health system.

Roughly 25 percent of sailors are prescribed some type of medication, according to LaNorfeia Parker, deputy director of the Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Office.

Approximately 0.7 percent of sailors confidentially reported "misuse" of prescription meds, according to the 2011 DoD Survey of Health Related Behaviors, which found the Navy's rates below the DoD average.

The group most at risk for drug abuse: sailors ages 18 to 25. Though they constitute 30 percent of the Navy, they account for 71 percent of positive drug tests.

When it comes to prescription drugs, the old salts are more likely to pop positive.

“Prescription drugs are more associated with ailments and age, so it is more prevalent in older populations,” Parker said.

Use only as directed

The drugs most frequently prescribed — amphetamines, hydrocodone, hydromorphones, oxycodone and oxymorphones — have many dangerous side effects.

Sedatives are the second most commonly used, with 9.8 percent of sailors reporting using them in 2011. Of those, 0.6 percent reported misuse.

Both stimulants and anabolic steroids were used by fewer than 5 percent of service members.

Sailor focus groups also raised troubling issues.

They found that many sailors thought it was OK to take medication that had been prescribed to a family member. They associated the label of “illicit drugs” with marijuana, cocaine and methamphetamine — not a little pill taken for a backache or a headache.

Not so, officials say: If your name is not on the bottle, don’t take it. And if your name is on the bottle, take it only as directed.

“We do have an aggressive urinalysis program,” Parker said. “The probability of someone being caught misusing is extremely high. We really want to sailors to take heed.”

The Navy in 2012 added two commonly abused and highly addictive prescription drugs to standard urinalysis tests: benzodiazepines (such as such as Ambien, Xanax and Valium) and hydrocodones (such as Xanax and Vicodin).

Any valid prescription obtained off base must be documented in your service record, officials said. This will help manage your medications and prevent problems when you pop positive on a urinalysis.

Another goal: properly disposing of unneeded meds. Having those meds stick around in your medicine cabinet or under your bunk increases the propensity for misuse.

4) Introducing the “Broken Links” Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Video Series / 30 APR 14 [\[LINK\]](#)

By Rear Adm. Sean Buck, Director, 21st Century Sailor Office

To further illuminate the negative impacts of sexual assaults on the Fleet, the Navy Office of Information is releasing “Broken Links,” a series of short videos profiling individuals who, either personally or professionally, have been affected by sexual assault.

In line with the Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) theme this year, “Live Our Values: Step Up to Stop Sexual Assault,” our hope is that Broken Links will encourage Sailors and civilians to help prevent these crimes by speaking up and stepping in if they see inappropriate or potentially dangerous situations which could lead to a sexual assault.

We know that sexual assault is a crime that destroys trust, divides teams, and degrades operational effectiveness. These profiles go beyond the talking points. You’ll see real people in their own words—not actors—who survived an assault or know somebody who has. You’ll see the committed professionals who help repair the damage from these crimes—to the victim and to the command. You’ll see why it’s so important to step up for your shipmates and stop sexual assault.

The Broken Links profiles are based off of interviews with a survivor, a Victim Advocate, a CO of a ship rocked by a sexual assault, and others. This series, like any unit or ship, is a living story, and is symbolized by links in a chain. Our Navy is full of symbolism wrapped around chains, like the anchor chains holding us securely where we need to be. Every person is one link, and if a link gets broken, the chain is weaker. No one is unaffected when there is a sexual assault within a command.

Each Broken Links video will allow its subject to narrate his or her own story and share how he or she has been affected by sexual assault or has responded to the crime on behalf of the victim or the command. Each profile will reinforce the responsibility we all have to stand up for our shipmates. We are releasing the first profile today as we conclude SAAM 2014, and we will release more videos periodically throughout the next few months. While SAAM may officially only last one month, our commitment to awareness and our vigilance against these crimes lasts year-round.

Broken Links’ first video, profiling Cryptologic Technician – Collection First Class Bonnie McCammond, is contained below, and can also be found on the SAPR homepage at Navy.mil. CTR1 McCammond bravely shares her story of surviving sexual assault and finding the courage to speak out. Her powerful narrative reinforces the urgency for all sailors to step up to stop sexual assault.

VIDEO: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2czUvIOSBX4>

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