



# Career Speak

## Six-Part Series Focuses on Managing Reserve Career

CAREER SPEAK is a six-part series of articles that will appear in future issues of *The Reservist* in support of a broader Reserve Junior Officer (RJO) Career Management Program initiative. The series will discuss successful career strategies and important how-to's in managing your Reserve career. Enlisted members are also encouraged to read this series to gain insight, especially if considering the Selected Reserve Direct Commission program in the future.

### Part 1:

#### Are YOU Running Your Career?

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No one has published a how-to manual for inexperienced Reserve Junior Officers (RJOs) seeking “best qualified” status as determined at Inactive Duty Promotion List (IDPL) promotion boards. In fact, you will not find textbooks explaining the nuances of successful career management at any Reserve officer level. Lacking formal references or official guidance, Reserve officers are forced to figure things out the old fashioned way ... on the job and by trial and error.

As you know, that can be a prescription for career disaster, not success. You are better than that, and you want a better approach to your career. To seize success, you need to be as passionate and proactive managing your own career as you are about managing your health, family and civilian career.

#### First and Foremost — Take Control of Your Career!

Let us begin with one of the most basic of all career management questions: “**Who is running my career?**” When was the last time (if ever) that you actually asked yourself that question? Was your answer the Coast Guard? Maybe it was the folks at the Reserve Personnel Management (RPM) Division at Coast Guard Personnel Command? Maybe your servicing Integrated Support Command (ISC)? Maybe no one? If you are stumbling for an answer, then you could be in big trouble. However, if your immediate response was, **I AM**, then there is hope you may reach the rank of commander or captain in 20 years if that is your Reserve career goal coupled together with a real passion to make it happen.

#### Let Your Passion Drive Success

Let us ask another important question. Does your career plan focus and target your career goals on maximizing professional growth, training and educational opportunities? Does your plan affirm your willingness to be a risk taker? Moreover, does your plan specifically articulate the importance of your reputation, character and values system? Can you create a career plan that addresses so many principles of behavior? Absolutely! This challenge becomes your first step in creating your new career management strategy.

Embedded in your new career image is your personal reputation and how you want senior leadership to view you over the length of your career. Make no mistake about it — articulating and maintaining your personal reputation is a critical element in the success of your career. Once you have established a positive reputation, you must next focus on and package yourself for attaining “best qualified” achievement levels on every task, assignment or challenge put before you. Do not hesitate to seek out opportunities or challenges that others avoid, even if some risk is involved.

#### Promotion Boards are Neither Mysterious nor Mythical

You’ve heard the old saying about “location, location, location.” Well, when it comes to promotion boards, it’s all about your record, your record, your record! Accurate and timely OERs, resumes and communications to boards are critical. Ask any outstanding RJO and/or any successful Senior Reserve Officer (SRO) that has been through the promotion board process (at least twice) successfully. They get it. **CAREER SPEAK will focus on “promotion boards” in an upcoming article.**

#### Your Personnel Record is Your Marketing Package

Your next step is to validate the completeness of your personnel record. One quick way to do this is to contact CGPC-OPM-adm for assistance. Additionally, if you are in the Washington D.C. area, contact the Coast Guard Personnel Command and arrange to visit and personally review your record. You would be surprised at the number of records that are found to be incomplete when reviewed before promotion boards. Prior to almost every board, RPM staff members are required to call Reserve officers, or their commands, searching for missing OERs that are critical to the promotion process.

Furthermore, while not required (but strongly recommended), resumes and “communication” letters are often missing. It is well known throughout the Reserve community that for Reserve officers, resumes and letters to the board are highly encouraged. **CAREER SPEAK will also address the importance of complete OERs and supporting documents in an upcoming article.**

#### The Importance of Mentors/Personal Board of Directors

A key step in building a career plan is recruiting a successful Senior Reserve Officer as your primary career mentor. Then, establish a personal Board of Directors (BOD) to assist you in setting your correct course and speed. Add to that board your spouse (or significant other), a Reserve Outstanding Junior Officer (ROJO), and your most trusted friend who really cares about you and your Reserve career success. Make sure your board members have your permission to properly motivate you if you are slacking off. As a round table exercise, identify those required skills, competencies, education and training targeted to enhance lifelong

career growth. Add achievable timelines and milestones that reaffirm your dedication and commitment. Next, program yourself over the next 24 months to build out pathways to “best qualified” status. Write your Individual Development Plan (IDP) and share it with your BOD. The IDP should be part of your personnel record. **CAREER SPEAK will address the “art of mentoring” in an upcoming article.**

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#### Finally, Broaden Your Horizons

Try writing a page or two about what you would like to do the rest of your Reserve career. You will open up a new range of possibilities. It is OK to begin to crystallize your dreams and aspirations. You need to choose the road you intend to travel. If your intention is to become a successful Senior Reserve Officer, put into action your personal career management plan. Now feel the release of new energy, passion and optimism — and go for it!

Semper Paratus!