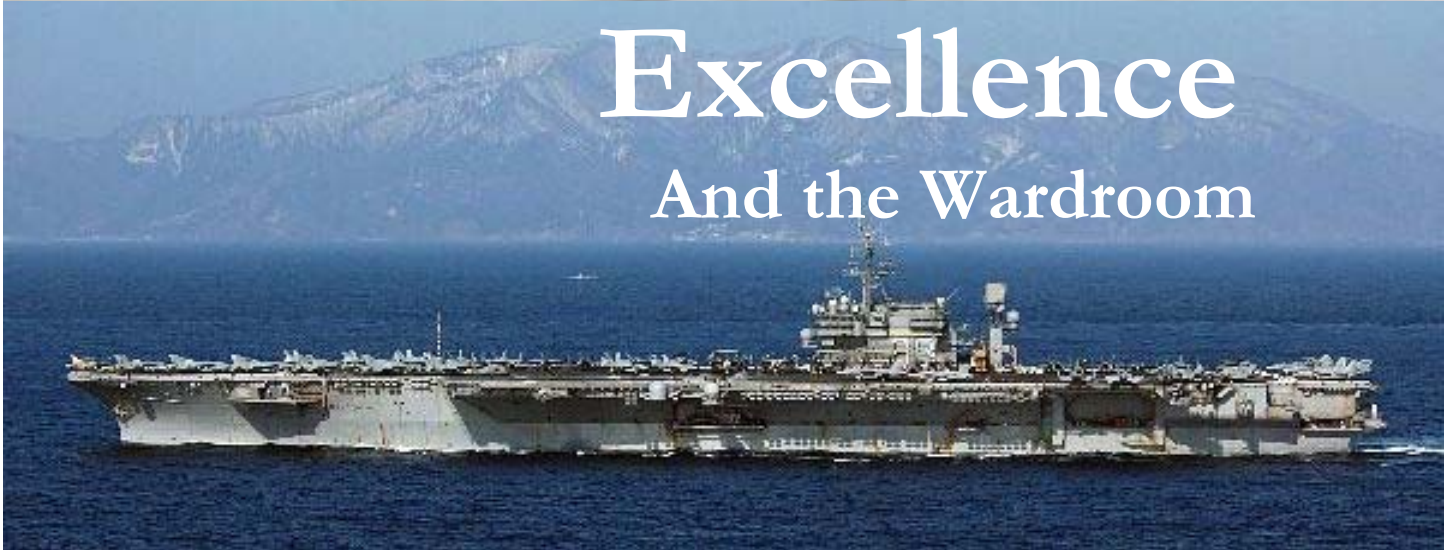




Command

Excellence

And the Wardroom



Foreword

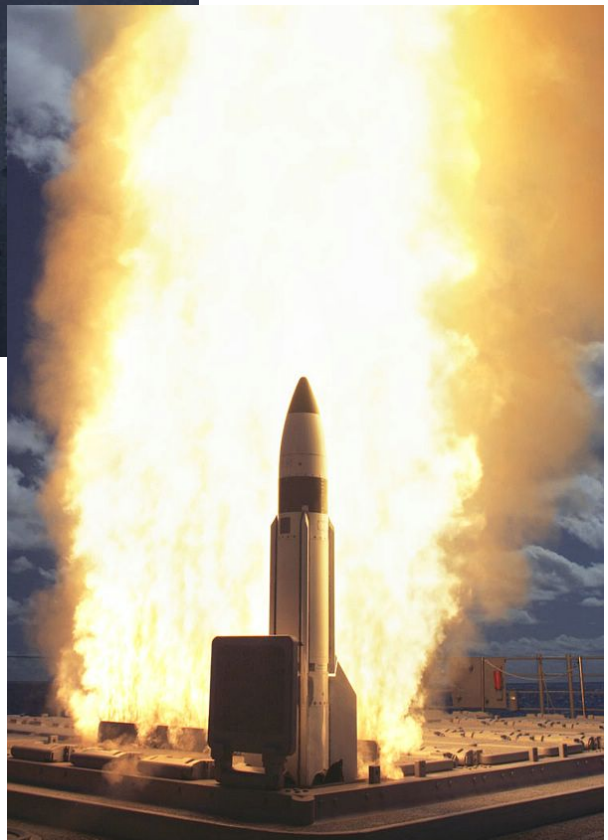
Close examination of our best commands clearly illustrates proven leadership principles, performance and achievements that are attainable by the entire Navy. Outstanding commands maintain superior combat readiness and effectively accomplish their missions with uniformly high esprit de corps and morale. Their retention is high and their safety records strong.

Outstanding commands result from top-down leadership that emphasizes people working together to achieve command excellence. We know this because the Navy has conducted a study of its superior commands. This text provides information on how the major components of People, Relationships and Activities can make a difference between an outstanding command and an average one. Strong wardrooms (officers and chief petty officers) are one of the most vital assets a superior command possesses.

The elements of excellence outlined in this publication are sound and are present in our top achieving commands throughout our Navy. It is people who make the difference between average and superior performance in their units. The performance of each individual does make a difference. Individual and collective commitment to excellence through involved leadership and open-direct communication are essential. The key is teamwork and recognition of each team member's role. This requires enlightened leadership at all levels but it must start at the top and be echoed through the officer and chief petty officer wardroom to be successful. I ask you to digest these proven lessons learned from our top performers, apply them to your commands and spread the word.

Best wishes as we strive to achieve Navy-wide command excellence.

L. A. Edney
Vice Admiral
Chief of Naval Personnel





Introduction

A lot of factors make the difference between a top command and an average one. Two stories, one from Command A, and one from Command B, show us how a number of them come together in different ways.

COMMAND A

Seaman Jones wakes up early because he doesn't want to be late today for his division's pre-underway equipment tests. He double-checks the POD he picked up at 1400 yesterday to make sure he'd be on time. Two weeks ago he was working on one of the major systems when he thought it sounded "funny." He immediately told his chief, who picked right up on the problem. Everything was thoroughly checked out and what could have been a potentially big problem was caught early and corrected. Solving the problem had taken a lot of Seaman Jones' time the past couple of weeks; it even required staying late a few nights. He was happy to do it, knowing that what he did made a difference.

He'd felt good about the command right from the start. He and his folks had each received a letter welcoming him to the command. He was also assigned a command sponsor who took him around and introduced him to other men of the crew. The conversation he'd had with the CO on his first day helped him realize where his job fit in and that he was an important part of the command.

He'd learned early on that he didn't mind doing jobs he disliked, because people helped him understand what the job was, and how it served the command. Even on mess duty he felt he was part of the team. He was encouraged and supported in becoming qualified, and he knew his shipmates would help him learn his stuff for qualification. His shipmates were sincere in their interest in helping Seaman Jones. He knew they all wanted to do their part to make their command the best in the fleet. That feeling was contagious, and Jones felt it more every day.

As Seaman Jones went out the door he felt good. He knew his division wouldn't have any problems with its pre-underway equipment tests.



COMMAND B

Seaman Smith heard his alarm, but just rolled over. He lay there, wanting to go back to sleep, not really caring about his division's equipment tests today for the upcoming underway period. He reached over to read the POD he'd grabbed last night before leaving. He had to hang around to get it because it was late, as usual. As he scanned down the sheet he wasn't surprised to see that they had forgotten to put the test time down.

He hoped they'd pass their test without any hassles, but he wasn't very confident that they would. The "funny" sound he'd heard a couple of weeks ago wasn't checked out until last night. By then it was a major problem. He'd stayed late working on it, but he knew he didn't have enough time to do a thorough job. The chief had agreed to the testing today with threats that the part Smith had worked on "better hold up." Both the Chief and the DO were always ready to blame someone when anything went wrong.

Seaman Smith wished he'd been assigned to another command. Right from the start he'd felt like just another number. When he first showed up no one knew he was coming—it was two days before he was assigned his own bunk. He'd seen the CO walk by a couple of times, but knew that he was too busy to talk to any of the seamen.

While on mess duty he'd realized it was every man for himself. When he finally got around to working on his qualification, he got little help or encouragement. The word was that if you didn't qualify there was "hell to pay."

As Seaman Smith got out of bed he hoped that some way or another, his division would squeak by and pass their pre-underway equipment tests.



Command Excellence

You know some commands are better than others. You can feel it very soon after coming aboard. It shows itself in small ways, like the way people are first greeted, and in big ways, like preparing for and achieving every goal in an evolution.

You, as a member of the wardroom, play a big part in making a command outstanding. The wardroom coordinates the efforts of every aspect of the command. A wardroom can make or break the command's ability to carry out its mission.

Whether you are an incoming division officer or a second tour department head, you have some idea of what an outstanding wardroom can do for a command. You have a perspective on what you can do to make your command better.

COMMAND EXCELLENCE AND THE WARDROOM

This publication is targeted on the links between an outstanding wardroom and an outstanding command. It presents a summary of results from a major study conducted by the Navy on what distinguishes outstanding from average commands. Take a close look at what the differences really are between outstanding and average commands. As you do so, compare your own ideas and experience with what the Command Effectiveness Study actually found makes a difference.

THE COMMAND EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH

Since 1978, the Navy Leadership Division (NMPC-62) has been doing research on the differences between outstanding and average individual performance in the Navy. In this research, analyses of extensive interviews with officers and enlisted personnel in various billets determine the "competencies" (or characteristics) that distinguish top performers. Leadership and Management Education and Training (LMET) courses are based on these competencies.

Just having a group of individual superstars together does not guarantee a top performing command. How do you find out what really makes the difference in superior commands? The best way is to spend time in different commands, and find out what it is that superior commands do, that average commands do not. That is exactly the approach that the Command Effectiveness (CE) research took.

The first step in the CE research was to agree on criteria for an outstanding command. Expert panels, nominated by fleet commanders, agreed that a superior command had to have met the following criteria:

- Won the Battle "E" or been a runner-up
- Won a departmental "E"
- Passed major operational-readiness inspections or exercises
- Maintained command retention at a level equal to, or above, the fleet average.
- Maintained a strong safety record.
- Earned a general reputation as outstanding, as confirmed by flag officers in the chain of command

Research teams spent a week with each of 21 fleet commands from the three warfare communities (aviation, surface, and submarine) in the Atlantic and Pacific fleets. Team members met individually and in groups with people in the command, observed command activities, examined command documents and records, and administered surveys. Over 750 people were interviewed in 12 superior and 9 average commands.

The results from superior-performing commands were compared with the results from average-performing commands. A Model for Command Excellence was developed to analyze these differences.



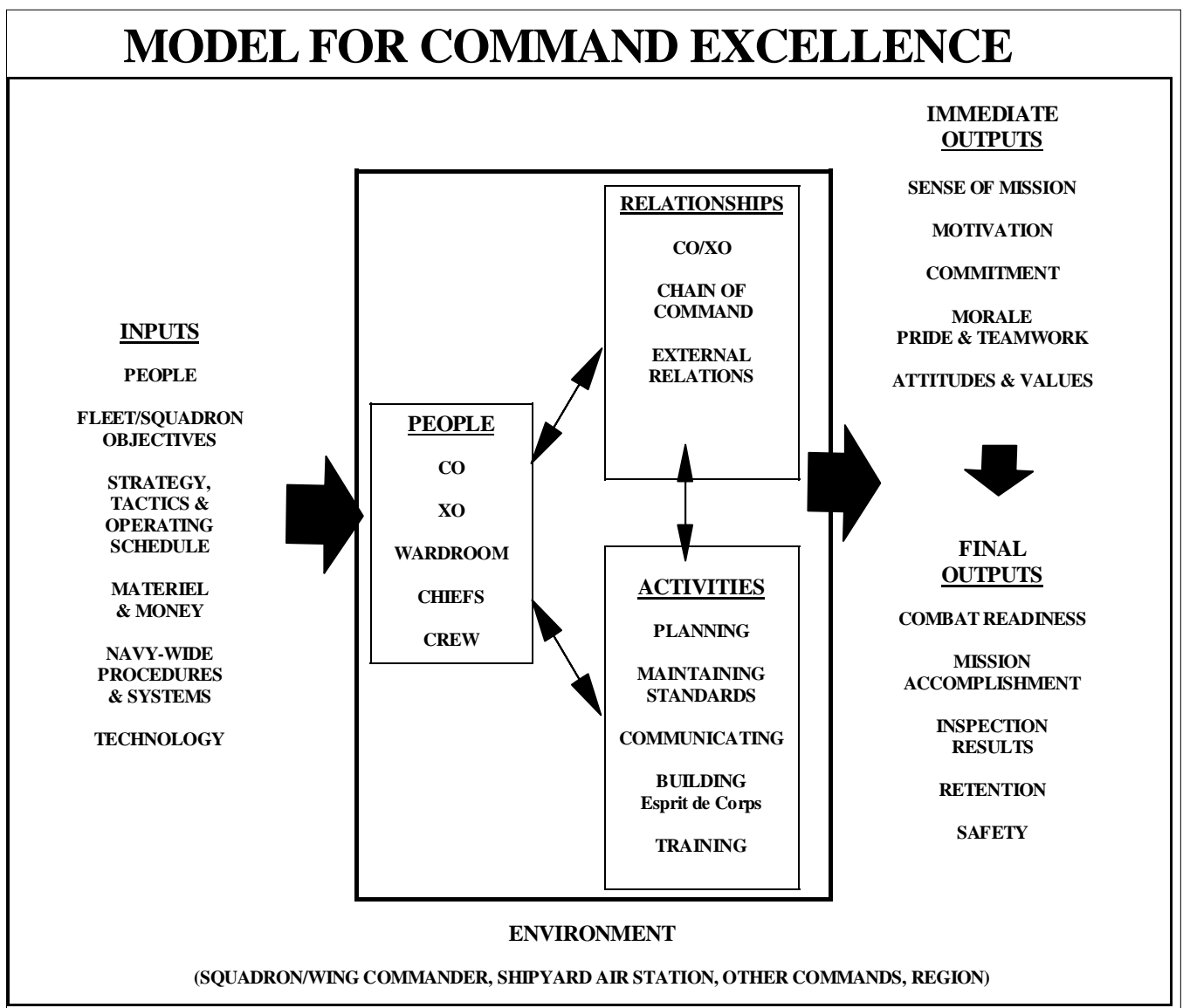


Model for Command Excellence

Each command studied had similar inputs. They all had similar fleet/squadron objectives, people assigned, material and money available to them, etc. But the *results*, or final outputs of each command, were different. Superior commands were distinguished by their combat readiness, mission accomplishment, inspection results, retention, and safety.

In the Model for Command Excellence, between the inputs and results, were factors the model termed intermediate outputs. The intermediate outputs of superior commands also distinguished them. People in the command had a sense of mission. They were motivated and committed to the command. Morale, pride, and teamwork were evident throughout the command. Attitudes and values of people on board reflected this. These intermediate outputs directly affected the final outputs. What accounts for the differences between them in superior and average commands?

Three areas make a difference between the results of superior and average commands: the people in the command, the relationships between them, and the activities they perform. "People" refers to the different people in the command. This includes the Commanding Officer (CO), the Executive Officer (XO), the Wardroom, the Chiefs Quarters, and the Crew. "Relationships" refers to the relationships between different groups of people and the ways these groups of people interact with each other. "Activities" include those things that people do that make the biggest differences between average and top commands. Five activities were identified: Planning, Maintaining Standards, Communicating, Building Esprit de Corps, and Training and Development.



People

The CO and XO undoubtedly have tremendous impact on the command. They are key to command excellence. But other people play a big role as well. The wardroom in particular must translate command policies in order to implement them. Let's look at the characteristics of outstanding wardrooms.

OUTSTANDING WARDROOMS ARE COHESIVE

In superior commands the people in the wardroom work together. Competition to be the best individually is always there, but people in the top wardrooms also make sure they help each other out. Top department heads work out a give-and-take with each other, and work to help their division officers succeed in their jobs. Everyone in the top wardroom keeps the command's mission in mind. That mission takes precedence over individual glory.

"Right now... you can walk into the wardroom during the less formal periods, like just before or after lunch, and you'll see four or five guys just shooting the breeze... What they are doing is actually productive. They are learning to like each other and that's a big part of the battle. You learn that early on that; let's say in the DH role, if the other department heads like you, they're not going to be backstabbing you. You're not going to have to watch your number concerning the rest of the department heads, and the whole thing starts to be productive because you start to function on an informal basis." (CAPT, CO, Surface)



"We use department heads to be another set of eyes. One of them would review the tag-out log, one would review the electrical safety program, and one would review the gauge calibration program... It got the department heads interested in what was going on in the other departments. You have to have knowledge before you can have interest. And, it got our people used to talking with someone who had been a total stranger."

(LT, DH, Engineering, Surface)

You shouldn't underestimate the importance of department heads in top wardrooms bringing division officers along. In the short-run it may be quicker to by-pass a new division officer and go directly to the division chief to get something done. But in the long-run, time invested up front on building a sense of responsibility and ownership in new division officers means more people willing and able to share the load, and a stronger over-all wardroom. More experienced members of top wardrooms don't allow DOs to get to the point where their mistakes might turn into major problems. In average wardrooms everyone flounders along on their own. Here's one department head describing how he works closely with the division officers in his wardroom to help them plan:

"I try to sit down and help them prioritize, plan, monitor their progress, and I try to keep them informed so they know the big picture. It takes continual counseling. You sit with them and say, 'OK, let's review the projects you're working on. Where are you with each of these projects?' Then you may need to tell them. 'I think you need to change your priorities on this one. We've got to get that other one done first. I understand that you want this other one very badly, but it's not going to produce results.' You have to explain to them what's going to be visible and what's not. If I see there's something they're not going to be able to do. I usually grab them and say, 'Let's go talk to the XO and tell him what the problems are.' Then we follow the guidance that we get from him."
(LCDR, DH, Operations – Navigation, Submarine)

OUTSTANDING WARDROOMS MATCH CO-XO RELATIONSHIP

In top wardrooms, COs and XOs get respect. Junior officers model themselves after their superiors. Junior officers know that the command tone is set by the senior officers and they follow the tone set by their superiors. If the senior officers are formal, the wardroom respects that formality. If the senior officers prefer a more jovial atmosphere, junior officers go along.

Junior officers in top commands recognize that it is the CO's ship and do what they can to represent the CO's interests as completely as possible both inside and outside the command.

An Aviation Safety Department Head talks about the difficult decision to take a junior officer off the flight schedule to free up time for him to accomplish some division officer-related tasks:

"I said, 'We took you off the flight schedule so you can get these jobs done, and if you learn to spend your time right, we won't have to do this.' His priority was to become a naval aviator. To him, taking him off the flight schedule was a punishment because he didn't get to go out there and fly... I was carrying out the policy from the XO, the guidance I had received from the XO was that if he has to be taken off the flight schedule to get these jobs done, let's see that it happens. So I'm following my guidance. I guess I feel good. I'm doing what I am supposed to be doing. I'm helping him get the job done so that we look good as a squadron."
(LCDR, DH, Safety, Aviation)



OUTSTANDING WARDROOMS RAISE CONCERNS WITH THE CO AND XO

Top wardrooms recognize their responsibility to the CO and XO for keeping the command informed on issues. They are not afraid of raising concerns with the senior officers. Junior officers know they must keep the senior officers aware of issues that may affect the command. This does not mean that the JOs do not try to solve problems on their own. Rather, they recognize that it is the captain's command, and that he needs to be aware of potential problems.

Junior officers rarely go to the CO or XO about a problem without thinking about it and being prepared to present some sort of potential solution or alternative solutions. A junior officer relates how he kept his CO and XO up on the investigation of suspected security violations:

"I had been talking to the CO and XO as each break was made in the case. We ended up with a forgery involved in this thing. We finally got it adjudicated. I went to NIS and got them involved, which is what you have to do. And every time I would see a crack, I would say, 'Here's my probability, these are the assumptions that I'm working on.' I kept the CO and the XO involved during the whole investigation. There were no great shakes when the final report came in. In fact, more than anything else, when they requested it, I allowed them to read it in order to make sure they concurred... The CO does not take issue with us playing devil's advocate with him if, in fact, we have some valid reasons for doing so. So I approached them along the way. And I told the skipper I had two or three items that I was going to say in my recommendations that aren't real palatable and a couple of them put the squadron on report in the conclusions. I said, 'Skipper, if I'm going to broach this thing with the charter that I've gotten, I'm going to have to say them.' I got no flak whatsoever. He just said, 'Say them straightforward, saying we'll get them done.' That's what my plan was. That's how it was handled so there was no great shock when my report came in."
(LCDR, DH, Administration, Aviation)



OUTSTANDING WARDROOMS TAKE INITIATIVE

Junior officers in superior commands take the lead in solving problems in the command or in finding ways to improve the effectiveness of their department and the command. They do not feel that they should wait for someone else to do what is necessary. They are ready to make things happen themselves. They anticipate problems and try to prevent them before they occur. A junior officer talks about how he got the information to help his submarine do well in a Training Readiness Evaluation (TRE):

"...at that point we could see the TRE coming nine months downstream. So I went to the Captain and said, 'You know, this is our first TRE and it's going to be tough. Another sub has one coming up in November. Why don't I get on board and be an inspector, and we'll get an idea of what's going on?' So we asked the squadron if I could ride for it and they said, 'Sure you could ride, as a matter of fact, you can be an inspector.' So I went on the other sub's TRE as a Navigation and Operations Inspector, and saw various things, saw where they made their mistakes, and saw where they did some good things. So we learned a lot from that. And then we kind of geared ourselves up for the TRE and meshed that training program with our pre-deployment training plan and whatever else we could do to bring ourselves up after six months in a shipyard."
(DH, Navigation and Operations, Submarine)

"The idea is to support the Captain, and anything that can be seen as supporting him is going to be good. If something I do is maybe not understood, or if I haven't briefed him thoroughly on. 'This is what I'm doing, and this is why I'm doing it; it may be perceived as being lacking in support. And that has a negative impact on my performance.'" (LT, DH. Surface)

OUTSTANDING WARDROOMS DO DETAILED PLANNING

Planning is one of the major duties of junior officers. What distinguishes the wardroom in superior commands is the approach they take to planning. First and foremost, the planning is detailed. Junior officers collect enough information to get specific about who is to do what, where, and when. Even though things may happen to cause plans to change, junior officers attempt to nail down as many details as possible ahead of time.

Important elements in detailed projections are the ways plans affect other departments. The wardroom talks that through and prevents potential problems with conflicting plans before they occur. A submarine officer recounts how detailed planning made for an effective and efficient maintenance period:

"We planned everything out that we needed to do. We went into a two-week stand-down, and our upkeep didn't officially start until the Friday when I had my arrival conference. Well, we'd essentially done our upkeep. And in this particular case we'd planned it out with the CPOs while we were at sea. I had three meetings where I had the CPOs and the division officers all together. What we did in the first one was to identify all the areas and things like that. They went away and a few days later each one of them had individually talked to me about their jobs. We all got together to coordinate the effort and to resolve any conflicts and then everyone went away to make those corrections. The third time we got together we said OK, this is what we have to do. So the third session, which was a couple of days before we pulled in, was basically getting all the details straightened out and arranged. We had everything all planned out. That's when I made up my chart so everybody knew what everyone else was doing and I also factored in that I knew the boat was doing. In fact, the CO uses my schedule for making sure that he is up to speed on what's going on, because generally I find that other departments affect me as far as what maintenance I can do and if I know when inspections are, or when there are spaces available, or what equipment they need, then I can plan around it and it's just easier for my people to have that information so we can do it." (LCDR, DH, Engineering, Submarine)

OUTSTANDING WARDROOMS TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR WORK GROUP PERFORMANCE

Members of superior wardrooms take responsibility for the results of their departments and divisions. They delegate to their people in order to make things happen. This sense of responsibility gets transmitted down the chain of command, so everyone feels the importance of meeting deadlines and getting the work done well. Junior officers monitor their subordinates' performance and hold their subordinates accountable. They acknowledge the contribution of those in their departments and divisions. But the junior officers will take the heat if things do not work out. The following anecdote illustrates how top junior officers take responsibility for work-group performance.

Shortly after his arrival, the personnel officer in an aviation squadron was asked by his CO about the status of back pay for men who would be leaving soon. When the personnel officer asked the yeoman responsible, he was told that the claims had all been submitted. He reported this to the CO and said they were just waiting for the money to arrive. A few days later, however, he noticed several claims on the yeoman's desk that were several months old. They had been returned because they had not been filled out properly. Further investigation revealed that there were numerous outstanding travel claims, and this was why men had not been paid for the previous four detachments.

After going over some of the returned claims with the yeoman, the personnel officer concluded that the yeoman did not understand how to do the paperwork properly and had just stuffed it in his drawer and ignored it as long as no one bugged him about it. The next thing the officer did was to confront the first-class petty officer responsible for supervising the yeoman to find out why he had not caught the problem. He then arranged for the problem to be fixed:

"As soon as I found out things were as bad as they were, I marched right back down to the skipper's office and said, 'I'm sorry, but I didn't give you the straight word. This is what happened, and this is what I'm doing to take care of it.' I felt I was obligated to go back to him and tell him what was going on—not only that we did it wrong but that it was three months overdue. Although I wasn't there when it happened, by" being the guy that's in charge, it's still my responsibility. I was embarrassed that it had gotten out of hand."
(LCDR, DH, Aviation)



THE CHIEFS QUARTERS

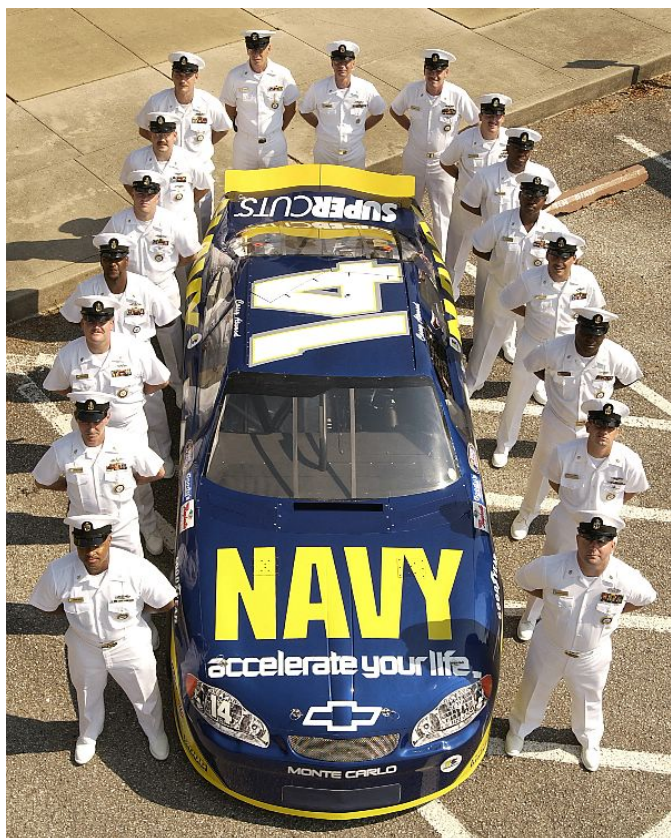
The Chiefs quarters in top commands are recognized for their contribution to the command. Chief Petty Officers are the linchpin between officers and enlisted personnel. In top commands, their status is recognized and fully utilized.

The Chiefs quarters plays an especially important role with new division officers. The Chiefs in top commands support and develop new division officers. This activity is encouraged by the commands and supported by department heads in superior wardrooms.

Chiefs plan a special role in the enforcement of standards, especially military standards. The wardroom backs up the chiefs in the enforcement of standards. A submarine navigation-operations department head talks about his radioman chief:

"The radioman chief was fantastic. I think of some of the good things we've done in Radio Central that he was directly responsible for, and of some of the things I saw him do that really trained me. And this is traditional. You expect the Chiefs to train you. I'd say, 'We need to get this and this done today.' And he'd give it to the junior guys and make them do it; he'd make them get on the circuit and talk; he'd make them do those things. He was bringing them along the whole time. They were being trained and groomed and the whole works. The same guys are with us now, and they will be for a couple of years. These guys are fantastic and they've got to be the best radio crew on the East Coast. I think that Chief is primarily responsible because he assigned them things to do. He checked that they were done. If they weren't done right, he'd have them done again. He was a real leader. I was impressed. I'd work with him any day of the week."

(LCDR, DH, Navigation-Operations, Submarine)



THE CREW

Outstanding crews respond to the leadership of the command. In superior commands, the crew is committed to command goals. They are motivated and work as a team. What you really see in superior commands is the crew's feeling of ownership for their spaces.

Part of the big difference seen in top commands is how the crew functions. Superior crews know where they are going and what they need to do to get themselves there. It's easy to see. You see a real willingness to put in the extra effort to get the job done right. An officer talks about a situation where crew teamwork really shows:

"I think another factor is teamwork. You can't do anything if people don't know what they are supposed to do and don't respond correctly to their jobs. I think one of the things that we emphasize is, if a man has a certain job in a casualty situation, that he is expected to do that job and know how to do it. In fact, a man not only knows his job, but other people's jobs. And if something happened to his immediate supervisor, he could take over as a supervisor, if the situation required it."
(LCDR, DH, Engineering, Submarine)



Relationships Between Levels

Up to now we've looked at how different groups and levels within the command contribute to command excellence. Command excellence isn't just the sum of the parts, not just how well these different groups and levels do on their own, it's how they work together as well, and it's the relationships between these groups.

One of those key relationships is how the CO and XO work together – this sets the tone for the command. Earlier, we talked about how members of the wardroom do what they can to fit the tone and style established by the senior officers. But two other relationships are important to wardroom effectiveness: the chain of command and external relationships.

THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

In outstanding commands, the chain of command is respected, and it's flexible as well. Respect for the chain of command is important at every level, but it is crucial to the wardroom in relationships between the department heads, division officers and Chiefs. It may seem easier for department heads to work directly with their Chiefs. This may happen occasionally. The problem is when it becomes a common occurrence in average commands. Wardrooms in superior commands resist the temptation to bypass division officers. Department head reinforce the importance of keeping division officer involved in the chain of command.

In superior commands, the wardroom makes sure information comes up the chain of command, as well as ensuring that information gets down the chain of command. Finally, superior commands delegate more responsibility down the chain of command than average commands do. An aviation officer illustrates appropriate use of the chain of command:

"The guy complained about it at a safety meeting. The Safety Chief wrote it up in his action items. It came to me. I screened it. I went in and talked to the skipper about it. Showed him the minutes. The skipper said, 'That's really not fair. The guy really had a valid thing. Why don't you pursue it?' I did. I pursued it. I talked it up and eventually I came out with a memo, not from the skipper, but from the Safety Officer, saying what the policy was going to be on hearing protection – when you wear it, when you don't wear it, clarifying the situation. Then the skipper followed up in an AOM (All Officers Meeting)." (LCDR, DH, Safety, Aviation)



EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Superior commands work hard at establishing and maintaining ties with the larger Navy community. The Commanding Officer sets the tone and takes the lead in this activity. Wardroom members support the CO in this activity, following his lead and the tone set by him.

Junior officers build networks outside the command to learn and keep up on issues that may affect the command. They keep themselves abreast of what is happening at their level in the squadron or wing and keep their CO or XO in "formed of any relevant developments. Junior officers in top wardrooms find ways to promote the command to outsiders. They are aware of what the command is doing well, and are not shy about letting others be aware of it. They speak up for the interests of the command whenever appropriate.

A surface officer talks about when to observe the chain of command strictly, and when flexibility is warranted:

I talk to the squadron basically every day. I keep track of things in the wind. This afternoon, I'm going to go over and talk to the squadron about schedules. I make a point of at least talking to the squadron scheduler twice a week, if not more. And that's even if it is just a phone call. I call them up and ask them if anything is going on that I should know about, or just ask him how his family's doing or whatever. But I do touch base with my counterpart in the squadron, and the operations type that the squadron picked. I would say, on an average of two times a week. I normally stop in once a week, actually face to face, look at the squadron once a week. (LT, DH, Combat Systems, Surface)

"I have a lot of lines of communication here and that's why I careful when I jump the chain of command. I don't want to step on people's toes. OK? You have a specific chain of command that you're permitted to follow, and the only way you can get around a chain of command is to keep other people informed. You don't want to step on the guy's toes. Like if I go to the EN1, the First Class Engineman, I've just jumped two people in the chain of command. I've jumped the Auxiliaries Officer and I've jumped the Chief Engineman. So, unless I want to get them teed off at me, then I have to say – as soon as I take care of what I had to go to the First Class for – that I'd better get in contact with the Senior Chief and the Auxiliaries Officer and say, 'Hey Look, I had to ask the First Class about this because of thus and such. OK? He gave me this answer. Do you feel that's correct? Otherwise, they'll feel like they are cut out. They'll disappear. And you do need them. Even though you cut them out for something really minor, you're going to need them for a lot of major things. They'll become insulted. You've got to worry about feelings...The chain of command is very important because if you don't use the chain of command and people don't perceive their responsibility, consequently, the reports stop coming in and they stop doing their other functions as well. The chain of command is what makes it work." (LT, DH, Engineering, Surface)

"To prepare for our brief, I went to see how the other boat did theirs, which was not very well. I said, 'Why don't we make a slide show for our brief that will knock their socks off? We need to improve our photo capability anyway, so this will give us some practice under time pressure.' We ended up with about 15 slides in a top secret format. The admiral said it was the best he had ever seen. We've also been asked to do it on the fleet level. It's been good publicity for the command." (LCDR, DH, Navigation-Operations, Submarine)



Activities

Activities-what members of the command actually do on their jobs-were another focus of the Command Effectiveness Study. Top commands were distinguished from average ones on the basis of five activity areas: Planning, Maintaining Standards, Building Esprit de Corps, Communication, and Training and Development. In superior commands the wardroom figures importantly in each of these areas.

PLANNING

Planning is an important part of the junior officer job. Earlier, we discussed how junior officers in superior commands paid attention to the details of planning and made them as specific as possible.

The wardroom is involved in other aspects of planning that are critical to effective functioning in superior commands. Junior officers make sure that planning takes place on a regularly scheduled basis. The time and place for planning meetings is known and officers make it a priority to get to the meetings with the information they need for the planning activity that is to be accomplished. These officers get this information from soliciting inputs from all levels of the command. Junior officers in superior wardrooms realize that details essential for planning often come from the chief's quarters and the crew. Members of superior wardrooms work closely to obtain those inputs to make plans as clear and useful as possible.

The wardroom works to plan in advance and to make sure immediate plans the long-range goals of the command. The wardroom sees that the word out about plans and follows through to ensure that plans are carried out. Wherever possible, systems are put into place to implement plans.

"There are programs instituted in this ship that exist for every ship in the Navy". I'll bet you if you walk down in the waterfront here, you won't find them as operational or as effective as ours. Take the fitness program for example. We organized the program, set up dates, established appointments with medical reps, came up with straggler dates, and what not. Also, I'll bet you there's not another ship here that has an enlisted safety committee that meets once a month even. Ours meets at least that often." (LT, DO, Surface)



"We always have weekly planning board meetings where we map out the week. Usually the XO determines what the ship's limiting factors are for the next week and we decide how to handle them as a group." (LT, DO. Submarine)



MAINTAINING STANDARDS

In superior commands people believe in doing things the best way possible. They want to do the job right. Maintaining and improving standards is a way of life. They do not wait until just before an inspection to enforce standards.

Department heads and division officers in superior wardrooms are key to setting and maintaining standards. Standards are clear and consistent. People know what is important and what is not. Enforcement of standards is done with an eye for fairness and justice. Goals are continuously being improved upon. They are realistic, but always maintained at a high level. Once a challenge is met, people are given positive feedback and another appropriately challenging goal is established.

Feedback, both positive and negative, on goals is a hallmark of top commands. Activities are monitored on a regular basis. Performance problems do not get out of hand because they are remedied at the first sign of difficulty. Everyone is encouraged to take responsibility for enforcing standards and seeing that things are done right in the command. An aviation officer talks about setting standards and holding people accountable.

A Submarine Officer reports on his monitoring of training activities:

"I try to get to each of the division's training, and I normally stay about 10 to 15 minutes during the training to make sure that things are the way I like to have it. I check it and if it's not, and we regroup and then they do it over." (LCDR DH, Engineering, Submarine)

"So we formed a ship's 'Tiger Team': three people from each division giving us a 21-man working force. We divided them into three groups of seven people each, put a senior petty officer in charge of them, went down and said, 'OK, what we want you, to do is clean the bilges. We want to be able to eat out of the bilges.' Most petty officers are shrewd enough to know that that means you don't want to see dirt, grease, or grime. And he directs their control. That's their job: their task is to clean those bilges. It's a pretty rotten job, and it's not in their field. They're not going to get any pats on the back from inspectors for the engineering bilges being clean. So the Captain was down there continuously, patting them on the back. Same with the Chief Engineer, same with myself. A lot of morale boosting, down there telling them what a great job they're doing for us, really appreciating it, and plugging the old ship's evolution. Plus, it's not too hard to motivate people to clean anymore."
(LT, DH, Engineering, Surface)



"... If I set a priority, that's the priority. In general terms, you're responsible. The better your paper work is, the easier it's going to be on all of us down the road. . . . There's only one way for things to go out of this, department, and that's correctly. . . . The quality that I get from them has improved because I hold them accountable."
(LCDR, DH, Administration, Aviation)

COMMUNICATING

Top commands emphasize communication. They pay more attention to getting the word out to everyone than average commands do. As one chief put it, "We talk a lot to each other." This is also seen in the information put into the POD. A good POD often goes beyond the schedule to include upcoming events and recognition for advancements.

In top commands people give explanations. Junior officers know that people perform better when they understand that what they do fits in with the big picture. People are more willing to listen when debriefs are held after evolutions to discuss what went right and what could be improved.

The wardroom plays a significant role in seeing that communication gets up and down the chain of command as well as across departments and divisions. Officers often get out and about to see and hear what's happening in their areas. Personal issues that get in the way of work are worked out early on rather than swept under the rug in superior commands. An aviation safety officer emphasizes the need for informal communication and getting out and about:

"... I try to devote a certain part of the day to just being there. I try to get to most of the shops every day. When I'm there, I'm killing two birds with one stone. Hopefully, someone will say, 'I meant to ask you about this,' or 'How come we're doing this?' The other thing is I can ask, 'What do you think about this?' or 'What do you want to do about this?' Basically I believe I'm like a sponge: I just wander around and soak it all in. Then I go dump what I've found on someone, usually the skipper.

"Another thing I'm doing is making sure the Safety Chief is hitting on the things he's supposed to be doing. I make sure he takes a look at the line every day, checks the fire extinguishers every day, and checks the eyewash stations every day. Part of my day is also putting out the word on some item. It might be off the message board or a call from the wing safety officer or from the enlisted safety committee. And I'm always checking the flight schedule, making sure they're not screwing it up-like not having too junior a guy lead a hop, or when the last time someone was trained on something, or if someone not had enough rest. I'm like the watchdog of the schedule. Every day I put myself in the watchdog position." (LCDR, Safety Officer, Aviation)

BUILDING ESPRIT DE CORPS

Top commands have a sense of pride about themselves. Pride comes with success, but top commands do several things to build a sense of common purpose. It starts right when someone comes into the command. Attention is paid to the way new people are brought on board. That process is organized in advance, and starts before someone even steps aboard, with a letter or packet sent ahead to him.

Top wardrooms expect good things from their people. They expect people to contribute and to do a good job. Teamwork is emphasized. People are encouraged to work together to accomplish the command's mission.

Successes and achievements are recognized and played up to build a positive feeling about the command. In superior commands there are more occasions for rewards and recognition of accomplishments. Symbolic activities are used to build unity. Top commands encourage social activity and making what people do enjoyable. A submarine officer talks about building a positive attitude:

...I think the key to the thing was attitude. The ship came out of the shipyard with the best sea trials ever. We had an "Excellent" on our first trials. So the attitude on the ship was, 'We're not going to let ourselves do anything less than that.' So everyone was keyed up for it. We kept the training positive. We didn't throw around a lot of unnecessary stuff for people to deal with so. Everyone's attitude was just fantastic. It was like a football locker room sometimes. We'd have little pep talks and get people up."

(LCDR, DH, Navigation-Operations, Submarine)







TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Training in superior commands links directly to combat readiness. Training for training's sake is avoided. If a drill or exercise doesn't advance the combat readiness of the command, then it's changed around until it does.

Top commands don't question the value of training. The wardroom is key in coordinating training activities throughout the command. Each department commits itself to bringing its people up to speed. There is a give-and-take in working with other departments to coordinate training activities. Training is targeted to get personnel closer to combat readiness. This drives the effort to keep training realistic and practical.

In outstanding commands all levels are involved in training and development. The wardroom coordinates the training, but the involvement of junior enlisted personnel with critical areas of expertise is crucial to training program success. Top wardrooms make their presence felt by continually monitoring programs to keep their commands combat ready.

Finally, superior commands are committed to the professional development and career planning of their people. Junior officers make sure their people are continuing to advance and qualify. Department heads take the lead in making sure division officers become qualified. The impact of an outstanding wardroom is also reflected in high retention and reenlistment as junior officers command respect in encouraging sharp enlisted personnel to pursue Navy careers. An aviation officer talks about his CO's devotion to realistic, practical training:

"The skipper's philosophy on training goes along with my ideas too. He's a fighter pilot. He wants to make sure we get maximum training. But he's not going to go out there and jump through hoops to make us look good on paper and not really be top airmen. He wants us to train to be combat ready. We're going to do what it takes to do it right. We're not going to do it halfway."

"We have a problem with not enough money being budgeted for us to have realistic training. It's like I can take off, go fly around 'max-conserve,' come back, practice three or four landings and that's it. That doesn't train you for air combat. Your training manual says to accomplish so many sorties, how can I do that at this cost per flight hour?"

"This quarter, when I got the message about our budget, I said, 'Hey, Skipper, this is ridiculous.' He said, 'Well, just keep flying realistic flying missions and if we run out of money, we run out of money.' We're going to try to get some more." (LCDR, DH, Aviation)

Another aviation officer stresses the need to develop subordinates:

"So I know certain things that need to be done, what it should look like, what a good one should be. There's always the feeling that instead of trying to get this other guy to do it the way it's supposed to be done, it's almost easier to just do it myself. But as department head I can't do that because I've got to train this guy. I've got to get him moving; get him motivated and on-line with the program in order to see things happen." (LCDR, DH, Safety, Aviation)



Individual Excellence in Leadership and Management

In this magazine we've talked about the wardroom's role in creating command excellence. You can use this material as a guide to possible approaches your department or division might take.

Command excellence doesn't happen by itself. Command excellence is dependent upon effective individual leaders working on their own, and together. For years, the Navy has been studying the differences between more effective and less effective leaders. The results of these studies are summarized in competency models for most of the fleet billets and communities. A competency is any knowledge, skill, behavior, or thought pattern that can be reliably shown to distinguish between more effective and less effective job performance. The Leadership Division (NMPC-62) provides training in these competencies through the Leadership and Management Education and Training (LMET) program.

Besides training in competencies for success as junior officers, LMET offers instructor facilitated courses from the senior officer level to the leading petty officer level.



Conclusion

In this document we've dug into what distinguishes "excellent" from average commands and the roles the wardroom plays in making the difference. We could have written much more. Take this material and compare it to your experiences. Use it to make your divisions, departments and commands the best they can be. There's no one "right way" to put this material into practice. The best way is what works for you in your situation.

In you division or department, what you do affects the command as a whole. No department or division is totally separate from any other in a fleet command. If your area improves, all areas will benefit.

Remember this – mission first; Sailors always.

