



The Enlisted Perspective

By CMSAF Rodney J. McKinley

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Senior Rater Endorsement and Stratification

Promotion to our top two enlisted ranks brings both honor and responsibility. Having the right people to lead our force is more important than ever as we continue to fight the Global War on Terror. One on-going and important concern for our Senior NCOs today is senior rater endorsement criteria and stratification on Enlisted Performance Reports.

We recently convened an Enlisted Evaluation System Integrated Process Team to evaluate these issues and recommend changes. The results of the IPT were briefed and coordinated, and recently, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Personnel announced policy changes establishing criteria for both senior rater endorsement and stratification.

The new policy requires completion of a Community College of the Air Force degree and Senior NCO Academy (either by correspondence or in-residence) for senior rater endorsement consideration. This new criteria formalizes across the Air Force what was already an on-going requirement at most locations and ensures differentiation of Senior NCOs who have completed the expected development and education to perform at the SMSgt and CMSgt levels. For SMSgts, this change will be effective with EPRs closing out after 1 Aug 07 and for MSgts it will be 1 Oct 07. These dates provide ample time for Senior NCOs to complete the requirements to be eligible for a senior rater endorsement.

Stratification comments are another area of concern in our EPRs. While these comments are not new, in recent years they have taken on a life of their own. Well-meaning supervisors, command chief master sergeants and commanders have devised literally hundreds of ways to stratify as many Senior NCOs as possible. Unfortunately, they have become overused, vague and subjective. Additionally, time-consuming stratification tracking systems are being used at many locations. Stratification is now perceived to be a prerequisite for promotion for Senior NCOs. Stratification statements can be a valuable tool for commanders to highlight truly exceptional performers. However, these statements must be the exception and not the rule. We can better serve our Airmen by including well-written performance-based comments.

To ensure continued effective use of stratification statements in EPRs, stratification statements will only be allowed on EPRs for those who are time-in-grade eligible for senior rater endorsement. The policy further states, if used, they will be written in quantitative terms, such as "number 1 of 178 master sergeants in the wing." Subjective, percentage or functionally-based comments will no longer be allowed. The bottom line is less stratification is better. However, this doesn't restrict the rater from crafting strong impact and result bullets that send a clear message of the person's talents.

The last change in this new policy is the prohibition of stratification statements in CMSgt reports. In its place, raters and evaluators are encouraged to include job recommendations. This

modification will improve CMSgt reports and provide hiring authorities with important information on future assignment consideration.

I am confident these changes will improve the quality of performance reports for all enlisted Airmen. Our ultimate goal is to ensure the right Airmen are selected at the right time to assume our top enlisted leadership positions.



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