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EVALUATION SYSTEM

The History of the Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation System

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## INTRODUCTION

"The order and good conduct of the company depended upon the noncommissioned officers and they should be selected from among the most orderly and best qualified men." (Fisher, 2001, p. 56) Those are the words of William Duane in the early 1800s and his ideology for noncommissioned officer selection stand true today; other than adding 'and women' at the end of his statement. The Army needs noncommissioned officers who are capable of executing tactical operations, making intent-driven decisions, and who can operate in joint, interagency, and multinational scenarios (Army Leadership: Competent, Confident, & and Agile, 2006, p. 3-3). They are mature and well-discipline trainers, mentors, communicators, and advisors of subordinates, peers, and superiors. The Army identifies these outstanding warrior-leaders of strong character through the Noncommissioned Officers Evaluation System. The NCO evaluation system has aided in the selection of some prestige leaders that changed the course of the NCO Corps and the Army.

## HISTORY

The first systematic method of noncommissioned officer selection for leadership positions was established in 1821 and officially regulated by 1825. Noncommissioned Officers were

chosen by company commanders with the approval of the regimental commander. Most noncommissioned officers spent their entire careers in the same company or at least in the same regiment because the noncommissioned officer's rank was treated as company property. If a noncommissioned officer wanted to transfer, he left his rank behind and reported to his new command as a private. This old custom finally ended in World War II due to the rapid build up of regiments. The Army had to be able to routinely transfer specially trained and experienced noncommissioned officers.

The first formal written evaluation, Enlisted Evaluation Report, of noncommissioned officers using a numerical score system begun in 1948. The Enlisted Evaluation Report assisted the rater in a general evaluation of the enlisted (grades E-1 through E-9) Soldier's leadership skills. A noncommissioned officer was considered effective if he had a large size body and a booming voice. The techniques of leadership often came down to browbeating Soldiers into doing things without explanation. By the late 1950s the enlisted evaluation report was primarily used to award enlisted proficiency pay.

On 1 October 1975, the Army modified the enlisted evaluation report to include recommendation on schooling and assignments. Individual counseling of noncommissioned officers

was encouraged but not required. They also separated the evaluation reports for grades E-1 through E-5 and grades E-6 through E-9 which provided a more accurate instrument for evaluating duty performance. They took into account the differences in performances traits and leadership requirements between junior and senior enlisted personnel.

By the 1980s, the numerical scores of the Enlisted Evaluation Report had become highly inflated and proved of limited value to promotion boards. The report because it really doesn't reflect the real actions of a Noncommissioned Officer.

On 1 March 1988, the Army implemented the Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Report (NCO-ER) that consisted of an evaluation report that employed box checks and concise written comments, which evaluated a Soldier's performance and potential for advancement with three rating levels: excellence, success, and needs improvement. The significant change effected by the NCO-ER required individual counseling by the rater for corporals through command sergeants major.

#### CONCLUSION

Reflecting the changes in the noncommissioned officers selection process, Noncommissioned officers of today rise to positions of greater responsibility by a truly fair, equitable, and professional system. Personal favoritism plays no part in

the process. The noncommissioned officer evaluation report best allow promotion selection boards and personnel managers to see a clear picture of an NCO's accomplishments, contributions, and potential. Noncommissioned Officer Evaluation Report (NCO-ER) is a part of the history of the NCO that has enhanced the NCO Corps and the Army tremendously.

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