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WO Program Transformation 1

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ARMY RESERVE WARRANT OFFICER ACCESSION PROGRAM TRANSFORMATION

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Army Reserve Warrant Officer Program Transformation

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## Abstract

The Army Reserve Warrant Officer Program Transformation started in 1998. The program was transferred from the United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) to the United States Army Reserve Command (USARC) located at Fort McPherson, Georgia which is responsible for all Army Reserve units within the Army. The USARC plan was to save money by performing the warrant officer accessioning mission themselves rather than funding the program through USAREC. USAREC had developed a very successful program through years of experience and had been accomplishing the mission with great success. USARC failed to produce the required number of candidates to maintain and ultimately fill the required vacancies within their ranks.

## Context

In 1996 I was assigned to the United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) performing the duties as a Technical Warrant Officer Recruiter (TWOR) for the Oklahoma City Recruiting Battalion. The Battalion area of concentration was the states of Oklahoma and Arkansas. My job was to fill the warrant officer positions for the Army Reserve units within that area. I was trained by the Special Missions Team located at Headquarters USAREC at Fort Knox, Kentucky. During my time in USAREC we made or exceeded our mission, annually, and were on target to meet the needs of the Army Reserve without any foreseeable tribulations. In 1998 United States Army Reserve Command (USARC) decided they could save money by performing this mission themselves. They transferred the mission from USAREC, along with the Army Guard Reserve (AGR) recruiting positions. Those that were transferred were reclassified from 79R (Recruiter) to 79S (Career Counselor). Our duties changed from filling warrant officer positions to include performing duties as retention NCOs.

We filled and maintained the warrant officer vacancies successfully prior to the transfer of responsibility. With the

program transfer, oversight in attrition management resulted in a drastic increase of warrant officer vacancies. This went on until mid 2003 when LTG Helmly, Commander USARC, saw the strength of the warrant officer corps had dwindled to less than fifty-percent causing a drastic effect on unit readiness. He declared that failing this mission will no longer be acceptable.

#### Fixing the problem

LTG Helmly assigned the Retention and Transition Division (RTD) with this mission. RTD reports directly to the Chief, Army Reserve (CAR) which is also the Commander of USARC. HQ RTD is located in Morrow, GA and has 13 offices. Each Regional Readiness Command (RRC) has an RTD office. The RTD staff assigned to the RRC reports to the Commanding General of each RRC. Each RRC has a Special Mission NCO who is responsible for the Warrant Officer Accession Program.

Headquarters RTD identified that the current staff working the program lacked the required experience, program knowledge, and mission priority to correct this situation. The Branch Chief of Accessions Section was replaced by CW5 Brenda Matthews. CW5 Matthews was quick to identify that she needed

someone with experience and a solid background of the program to assist in overcoming this situation. She reviewed the personnel within RTD and decided that I would be her choice due to my previous experience and success while assigned to USAREC as a TWOR. I was currently assigned to the 89<sup>th</sup> Regional Readiness Command. My job was the Accession NCO in charge of all special missions that included the Warrant Officer, Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) transition mission, and AGR Recruiter mission.

I reported to Headquarters RTD on 3 October 2003. I analyzed the current situation and found several problems that had to be corrected immediately before we could start implementing new procedures. First, I identified a lack of urgency by the staff to get applications processed through the different proponents and waiver process. A standard quality control (QC) procedure did not exist. This caused great confusion within the field, and provided subjective processing of applications depending on which staff member conducted the quality control of the application (packet). The Retention and Transition NCOs in the field deemed this program secondary to their primary mission of IRR transfers, which is understandable, since their leadership conveyed the same feeling. RTD had an IRR transfer mission to fill vacancies of the enlisted ranks to support the war fight. The warrant officer program would not

become a priority unless the IRR mission had been accomplished. As with any organization, multiple missions are an issue and all missions must be prioritized. The warrant officer mission was not high on anyone's agenda at that time. Chief Matthews and I drafted a plan after researching current problems within the program, historical data, and successes. We identified courses of actions to fill the vacancies within the units of the Army Reserve. The plan was presented to the Chief, RTD, which in turn, was presented to the Chief of Staff, USARC, and then to LTG Helmly. The plan was approved and the transformation of the warrant officer accession program began.

### Three phase approach

The plan that was put into action had three phases. First phase was to identify, from within the ranks of the RTD field force, forty two Retention and Transition NCOs to perform the duties as a Warrant Officer Accession NCO (WOANCO). Their duty would be to identify and qualify NCOs to become warrant officer candidates. This would be their only job. I trained the WOANCOs, and, Special Mission NCOs on the entire Warrant Officer Program in February 2004. The WOANCOs are supervised by the Special Mission NCO at each RRC. The WOANCOs report directly to

their perspective Special Mission NCO and the Special Mission NCO worked directly with me in all facets of the program.

The Warrant Officer Program is managed by the Officer Accessions Branch at HQ RTD. As the NCOIC of that section, my main focus was to see that the program was transformed into a successful program to achieve the desired results. Once the staff was on board and trained we were ready for phase two, which was to establish program standards. This was a challenge since other than regulatory requirements, there were no real standards. Quality control was subjective. I had two NCOs that worked in my section whose job was to process packets from their assigned RRCs. Each did it differently so I developed a Quality Control Checklist which was initiated with each packet at the WOANCO level. This was the same checklist that the staff would use to QC the packet. This process put everyone from the field to the HQ staff on the same standard resulting in decreased errors and increased production. I did the same for processing waivers which also increased production and decreased errors. The third phase was to increase packet production through proponents, waiver agencies, and DA board. Packets from the field were taking two to three weeks, via normal unit mail, to get to my office. The same was true for packets that were sent to proponent. This was unacceptable since warrant officer

boards convened on the third week of every odd month. This slowed production and resulted in unacceptable timeliness of packet processing. The fix for this problem was to have the WOANCOS send all packets from the field via Federal Express. This resulted in reducing the mail time from two to three weeks to two days, in addition, providing a way to track and eliminate lost packets and allowing us more time for quality control and waiver processing. As for getting the packets to proponent and processing any required waivers I worked with the Signal Proponent to establish a procedure through Army Knowledge Online (AKO) which enabled us to scan the packets to a PDF file and place them in a designated folder on AKO and send links to the intended receiver. This cut processing time to one or two days and also cut the amount of paper usage by ninety five percent. For packets that have been approved for the Warrant Officer Board, I worked with Special Missions Branch at HQ USAREC to establish the same scan procedure for boards. I also worked with them to establish an electronic board system for boarding warrant officer applications for both the Army and the Army Reserve. We scanned the approved packet to a folder on AKO and USAREC pulls the packet into a board file. Prior to the electronic board, I hand delivered the original packet to HQ USAREC to be boarded. I was taking from sixty to ninety-five

packets on the airplane creating another expense for additional baggage costs. The electronic board eliminated the additional baggage as well as expediting the board process. I also developed a database to track all packets from start to DA Board. This enabled us to maintain complete control of each application and collect useful data to be use for program analyzes.

### Lessons Learned

The transformation of the Army Reserve Warrant Officer Program, as with any other program, has to have the proper emphasis in order for any transformation to occur. Clearly, the program was successful when USAREC performed the mission, however, when the program was transferred it is clear USARC did not understand the complete process, and failed to prioritize its importance. The transfer of the program should have established a close similarity to what had been successful and either mirrored or developed a plan that would accomplish the desired end result. As with any new program or procedure, milestones or bench marks must be included to ensure mission success. Failure to do so usually results in complete mission breakdown. The lack of program emphasis in this case resulted

in needed warrant officer vacancies, which are critical to the readiness of the Army Reserve were not being filled. It will take five years before we can start getting ahead of normal attrition. Leaders must continuously keep watch over all their missions and constantly review the progress to ensure that they are being managed in a way that will not impede accomplishment of the mission.

