

Your E-resume, Your Career, Your Assignment

Career Planning and Your E-Resume

Most of you have heard the Chief say, “You Need to Plan Your Career” but many of us don’t know how to do this or what that really means. Completing your e-resume should be a step to achieving your career and life goals. This document is intended to give you guidance and things to consider so you can effectively accomplish this. The way you plan your career has much more impact on your life than you may realize. I hope that you read this document carefully before you submit your e-resume!

Career planning starts with you and your decisions and should incorporate your life goals. What are your life goals? What do you want to do in your career? Do you plan to stay in the Coast Guard? Do you want to start a family? What do you want to accomplish? All of these questions should be part of your career planning and each assignment you have in the Coast Guard should be moving you in the direction of accomplishing your long term goals. Your e-resume should be a part of the process of accomplishing your career and life goals.

Your e-resume is the primary communication tool to engage with your assignment officer. Ideally, you have been proactively thinking about your next assignment and career from the start. I suggest that you do not base your life decisions on your next assignment. Even if you earn your dream assignment you will likely move after that tour whether you remain in the Coast Guard or not. The better and earlier you plan your career and align your long term goals the more likely you will be satisfied. With that said, here are a few things you should consider as well as some recommendations to help you with your e-resume and your long term planning:

What to Consider Before You Write Your E-resume:

There are many things you should think about before you start writing your e-resume including some that you may have not considered. If you want to make the Coast Guard a career then you need to begin with the end in mind. You definitely need to consider going to a ship if you plan to make the Coast Guard a career. If you plan to advance to Chief or promote to Chief Warrant Officer I strongly suggest you have sea duty experience as that will most likely help you achieve that goal. If you already have sea time or you’re coming off a ship you may want to ask for a job that gives you the experience you don’t already have.

Are you hoping to earn your dream assignment to attain a higher level of certifications? Maybe you are thinking of goals that you may want to have after you retire? Are you married to another member in the Coast Guard and hoping to be co-located? You need to plan how each of your goals will fit your long term plans when you write your e-resume. There are numerous ways to accomplish all of your goals especially if you plan ahead, be realistic about your options, and remain flexible.

I suggest you think of your e-resume as a “Resume” and not a “Dream Sheet.” You are competing for each assignment. Assignment officers use your e-resume to help determine where you will be stationed so the more effort you put into writing it the more likely it is that you will have a successful career. I strongly suggest using every part of the e-resume to help your own career and to help us. We have a saying that goes, “Help Us, Help You.” This article should help you accomplish that and hopefully show you how to manage a successful career with your e-resume.

Assignment Factors

There are numerous assignment factors that we use to determine your assignment as outlined in the Military Assignments Manual, COMDTINST M1000.8. The assignment factors listed do not include everything we consider before making an assignment; however, this section should explain the most important factors and you should be aware of how they affect your assignment before you submit your e-resume.

Assignment Priority:

Most of you are probably aware of the assignment priority system that PSC epm-2 uses to make assignments. If you are not aware the system is described in the Military Assignments Manual, COMDTINST M1000.8. I suggest you review this section of the PERSMAN before you write your e-resume.

If you are a priority five and trying to earn your dream assignment it may be a good idea to ask for an assignment that will earn you a higher assignment priority in order to earn a more competitive position later. As many of you know, OS assignments are based primarily on the priority system, sea duty, and your performance.

If you want to earn a job in a highly desirable location you may want to ask for an assignment overseas in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guam, Asia, or a cutter to have a better priority upon successful completion of that tour.

These types of more arduous assignments pay dividends in many ways. First, your assignment priority is better after completing a successful tour following arduous duty in a higher priority position. It is also in your record you served in more arduous duty which looks good in your career track. A higher priority assignment will normally give you far more experience than other less arduous assignments and almost certainly help you advance in your career.

Qualifications:

OS assignments are primarily based on the assignment priority system; however, I suggest that you ask for assignments that will help you with the rate required competencies to become a more qualified OS. If you haven't been afloat it's probably a good idea to ask to compete for an afloat assignment. You should strive to have a diversified career path including assignments at large command/communication centers, cutters, and instructor positions. These are the assignments that will likely move you towards accomplishing your career and life goals and help you earn more qualifications as an OS. ***The more training and qualifications you have the more likely you will have a successful Coast Guard career.***

I recommend that you don't base your e-resume on location because you're almost certainly going to move again even if you get out of the Coast Guard. ***Keep adding qualifications and education to your record and eventually someone will see that you're a commodity to the Coast Guard.*** This could really help you if you're planning to compete for Chief, or higher someday! Remember qualifications, competencies, and advancements work together and advancing in the Coast Guard will help you earn a better income for your family.

Leadership:

Good leadership at the deck plate level is a force multiplier and personally affects everyone around you. The OS rate needs leaders just like every rate.

I have said numerous times that leadership is important at every pay grade including the most junior pay grades. I believe this more and more the longer I'm in the Coast Guard. Positive leadership is more important than ever and it starts at the deck plate ***so hopefully your career is an example to follow.***

One of the best ways to show the Coast Guard you can be a leader is to earn sailor of the quarter or a sailor of the year. Join the Human Relations Council, Morale Committee, Diversity Staff, or Enlisted Association. Do something more than just your job. Become a mentor and seek a mentor and get out of your cube. ***Hopefully you have something in your record that shows you have done more than just your job and your leadership has positively affected others around you.*** You can volunteer to be more involved if you want show leadership. Good leadership doesn't have to be formal and isn't normally applied with a computer.

Your job is to help everyone in your unit be successful and if you look for ways to do that it will usually show up. Your leadership performance will affect your marks which will affect your next assignment and your career. ***Get up from your desk and find ways to be a leader and remember that you're on duty 24 hours a day.***

How to Write Your E-resume

Do not write your e-resume like a “Dream Sheet” because it’s a “Resume.” You need to carefully consider what you put in your e-resume! Once you finally sit down to write your e-resume there are three primary sections that you should strongly consider using wisely.

E-resume Job Selections:

There are a lot of myths about how many jobs you should list in your e-resume. It is strongly suggested that you list a lot of choices because we do not start at the bottom of your list. **The bottom-line is the more choices you list the better because simply put, “You are rank ordering the jobs and we are working from your list starting at the top of your e-resume.” “The more choices the better”** The more jobs you list the better chance you have of going somewhere you want to go! Detailers start at the top of your e-resume and work down through each one of your choices to see if you earn that assignment. We slate you for a job as soon as we get to a job that you earn. Assignment decisions are based on numerous assignment factors as outlined in the Military Assignments Manual, COMDTINST M1000.8, section 1.B.1.g.

If you only list eight job choices on your e-resume and I get to the end of your list then I will come back to your name later. We will likely have to assign you to a position after everyone else’s assignments are made. If you are a sea duty candidate we believe the best option is for you to list most of the cutters, if not all of them, so you have a better chance at earning an afloat assignment. You should even list jobs that you may not really desire. **It’s better for you to rank order your jobs than it is for the assignment officer to rank order your jobs.** I suggest you list every job that you would go to rather than separating from the Coast Guard.

E-resume Text:

The second most important section is the text block of your e-resume. I suggest that you use the text portion of your e-resume to tell us what you are trying to accomplish in your career and your life. ***There is a saying in writing that goes, “Write So That Anyone Can Understand It.” We suggest you “Don’t do that!” Write so that “No One Can Mis-Understand You.”*** If you write in your e-resume that you want any assignment on the west coast and I offer you a cutter in Alaska and your response is that you would rather go to any job on the east coast over Alaska then your writing is not clear enough. You should have written, “I would like a job anywhere on the west coast except in D17 and that you would prefer the east coast over D17.” You should also list some east coast jobs on your e-resume just so I know where you would want to go if we can’t keep you on the west coast. **Your comments should align with the jobs you listed on your e-resume.** Write your text clearly and professionally!

Co-Location:

If you marry another member please plan accordingly and understand this does not mean we are going to co-locate you right away. We will do our best but we are not likely going to move you to be with your spouse if they are assigned somewhere else when you get married. You need to consider that you will not likely move to another unit right away just because you married another member and they are somewhere else far away. I suggest that you try to have your rotation dates aligned so that we may work to co-locate you on your next assignment.

If you are married to another Coast Guard member and you want to be co-located with your spouse who is also an active duty member then write that in your e-resume comments. We strongly suggest that you ask for many different larger units on both coasts that allow us to co-locate you. **If you only list locations in smaller cities where there aren't many jobs available for your spouse you may be disappointed as to where you end up.** The key is to list a lot of jobs in larger metropolitan areas on both coasts where you and your spouse could be assigned. Also, both of your e-resumes should absolutely match each others on each and every job listed. If they don't match each other we may assign you to different locations.

Command Endorsement:

The endorsement section of the e-resume is the primary way for your command to tell me about you and what type of job you are suited for. **Certain jobs such as Overseas Positions and Instructor Positions require a command endorsement.** Some jobs require a command endorsement and others do not. **This means you shouldn't forward your e-resume up your chain of command for an endorsement two days prior to the e-resume deadline.** Submit your e-resume to allow your chain of command plenty of time to write the appropriate endorsement on your e-resume.

If you are asking to go overseas then your command endorsement should state that you should screen to go overseas IAW the Military Assignments Manual, Chapter 1H.

These comments should align with the text portion of your e-resume. You should be specific in this section especially if you are trying to go overseas. If you are missing that endorsement it can affect your assignment. If you need an endorsement please make sure you get the endorsement prior to the e-resume deadline. A positive endorsement will never hurt you and no endorsement can hurt you especially if it's required.

Remember this is your career and your e-resume is your primary communication tool with your assignment officer. Take your time writing your e-resume. Update your contact phone numbers so we don't have to struggle to communicate with you because if we can't find you we may have to move on without you. Have someone else proof read your e-resume for you. Ask your Chief for career counseling and seek input from your chain of command. Ask your Chief to help you with your e-resume. The more research you do and the more work you put into your e-resume the better off you will be in the future.

Finally, Your Next Assignment

After you have submitted your e-resume it's time to wait. I realize that waiting is difficult and stressful. If you are thinking you may advance to a higher pay grade you do not need to call us. I will contact you if it is necessary. I will let you know what job you earned as soon as possible but no matter where you go you need to be positive about it. It's really important to be positive about the job you are assigned because that will help you be successful there instead of unhappy. Remember, you joined the U.S. Coast Guard for a reason and no one wears a uniform that says the Florida, Virginia, or California Coast Guard or any other state for that matter. It's best to be positive about your next job no matter where you go.

Begin With the End in Mind

Your career will be successful if you plan in long terms and not just the short term. I can assure you the phrase, "Nothing in the World is Free" is a true statement. You may not earn your dream billet right away and you may be assigned to a cutter or go overseas but this will likely be the job that helps you *advance in your career* and be the job that gives you a better retirement when you leave the Coast Guard.

All assignments come to an end including the tough ones. I assure you the retirement pay at E9 or CWO4 is much better than the retirement pay at E6 or E7. What you do each day of your career and which jobs you choose will make a difference when it's time to leave the Coast Guard and I can assure you that everyone will leave the Coast Guard.

Take a look at the retirement tables attached here:

<http://militarypay.defense.gov/retirement/calc/index.html>

If you stay in the Coast Guard for a career you should definitely try to advance so that it's worthwhile when you're done. It's easier to do this if you stay flexible, mobile, and accept jobs that will help you advance. This means you might not want to buy your retirement home at age 25 or even age 35. This is a personal choice but if you advance the Coast Guard will most likely ask you to transfer. Even if you get out of the Coast Guard you will likely move again so I suggest you try to be flexible and mobile especially in a slow economy. Advancement will happen if you remain focused and view each assignment as an adventure that will get you to a better place. **Remember why you joined the Coast Guard in the first place.** Don't lose sight of why you came in the Coast Guard and **plan your career around your long term goals.**

I assure you that all of the assignment officers want you to have a good career so "Help Us, Help You, and use your e-resume wisely to communicate." Have a great Coast Guard day and I wish all of you the best of luck in your career and in your life.

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