

THE COMMANDANT OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
WASHINGTON

4 May, 1937

PERSONNEL POLICY

1. The following Personnel Policy shall be followed until experience, further study, or other conditions, make a change desirable.

2. Basic Principles:

(a) Personnel must be so assigned as to keep the efficiency of the Service (the production of results) at the maximum.

(b) Morale is a primary factor of efficiency.

3. General Provisions:

(a) "Personnel" and "Materiel" are the tools of the operating and administrative officers of the Coast Guard who have the responsibility of carrying out efficiently the duties of the Service. Therefore, assignments should be made, as far as practicable, in accordance with their wishes.

(b) Officers, warrant officers, and enlisted men shall be assigned to duty commensurate with their rank, specialty and ability.

(c) The Government shall not be put to undue expense by frequent or unnecessary changes.

(d) Care must be exercised that no injustice or unfairness shall be done to personnel, thereby lowering the morale and efficiency of the Service.

(e) Other conditions permitting, personnel shall be assigned duty pleasing to them.

4. Assignments:

(a) The Commandant shall be consulted regarding assignments of Captains, Commanders, and District Commanders.

(b) In the assignment of personnel to any Section or Division at Headquarters, the Head of that Section or Division shall be consulted, and his wishes carried out, if practicable.

(c) When opportunity offers, Division Commanders and District Commanders shall be consulted regarding personnel matters.

(d) In the assignment of personnel to the Academy, the desires of the Superintendent of the Academy shall be complied with, as far as practicable.

(e) As far as it is practicable to do so, and without conflict with other provisions of this policy, assignments of the following personnel shall have the approval of the officers indicated:

Line	Chief of Operations
Aviation personnel	Chief Aviation Officer
Gunnery personnel	Chief Ordnance Officer
Engineers (including Machinists), Constructors, Civil Engineering, and Depot personnel	Engineer in Chief (who shall in turn consult with Section Heads under him).
Pay Clerks	Chief Finance Officer
Communications officers (including Radio Electricians and Electricians)	Chief Communications Officer
Coast Guard Institute personnel.	Commanding Officer, Fort Trumbull Training Station.

(f) The assignments of commanding officers (including officers in charge) shall be especially referred to the Chief of Operations.

(g) In making changes in assignments of officers, an officer's fitness report shall be considered for his preference for duty.

5. Tours of Duty:

(a) Captains and District Commanders shall not be moved solely by reason of length of tour of duty under five years.

(b) On stations that are particularly undesirable, due to climatic and other conditions, the tours of duty for officers and men shall be two years, unless it is agreeable to such officers or men to remain for a longer period. These stations shall be designated as occasion demands.

(c) All newly commissioned officers, upon graduation from the Academy, except as otherwise provided herein, shall be assigned to sea duty, and shall, as far as practicable, remain on sea duty for six years. At least two years of this time shall be spent on engineering duty. During this six-year period, the tour of duty on one vessel shall not be for longer than two years (for the first two years, not longer than one year).

(d) Except as otherwise provided herein, commissioned officers shall not be moved solely by reason of length of tour of duty on a station under four years.

(e) Following the first six years of sea duty, commissioned officers will alternate between shore and sea duty until reaching the rank of Captain, except as otherwise herein provided.

(f) Officers selected for aviation duty shall be assigned to that duty, as far as practicable, upon completion of three years' service.

(g) Chief warrant and warrant officers who are eligible for sea duty shall not be moved solely by reason of length of duty on a station under four years.

(h) Other chief warrant and warrant officers shall not be moved solely by reason of length of duty on a station.

(i) Enlisted men shall not be moved by reason of length of duty on a detail. As a rule, shore assignments and harbor assignments shall be made from men who have had long service with the Coast Guard, provided competent men in that category are available.

6. Notice of Change of Assignment:

(a) As far as practicable, a slate of changes in assignment shall be made up sufficiently in advance so as to give the officers affected at least three months' notice of the change in assignment. In special cases, such as assignment to the Coast Guard Academy, as much additional notice shall be given as practicable.

7. Specialization, Post Graduate Work, etc:

(a) The matter of specialization, post graduate work, etc., is being given further study, and no general policy regarding these matters will be laid down at this time.

R. R. WAESCHE,
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Commandant.

NOTES ON PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

PROMOTIONS

1. The aim of all promotion systems should be to get the best man for the job. A secondary consideration is that the system be recognized generally as not overlooking any eligible man. Leadership qualities are necessary but leadership may be exercised in the wrong direction, so this item alone is not the prime one.

2. Moral fiber and leadership are the qualities most necessary.

3. As a first step towards setting up lists of men approved for promotion, all available sources of information about ^{the men} him should be exhausted.

4. In this discussion three lists are mentioned:

(a) Eligible lists. This means lists of men who meet the requirements as to age, length of service, etc. It will include all men who have met these requirements and is purely a matter of statistics.

(b) Approved lists. This means lists of men who have survived the survey of records and investigation of elements indicating moral fibre, leadership, physical and mental health etc. In other words, their records indicate that they are suitable to be promoted.

(c) Promotion lists. To establish this list, the Board is directed to select from the approved lists, those men who would make the best men for the Service if promoted, *and require them to pass a written examination.*

5. The survey for elements of character moral fibre, leadership and those qualities that go to make up sterling, worthy manhood should be as rigid as possible.

6. The written examination should be as reasonable as practicable.

7. Having determined the group which have the qualities in (5) and have passed (6), promotions should be by seniority. The theory here is that the mere passing of a written examination with a high mark should not outweigh years of experience. Suppose a group has passed the examination and are placed on a promotion list and that there is every prospect that all will eventually be promoted. If the senior is to be promoted at all, he should be promoted before the junior.

8. Promotion lists should not be established for estimated needs over a long period. It is better to carry a few vacancies than to publish a promotion list good (for example) for two years and then have a large part of it lapse due to no vacancies occurring. It is true that holding examinations every six months makes more work at Headquarters, but the advantage to morale is of far greater concern.

9. The study of records and determination of approved lists at Headquarters should be a continuing process. The names on the approved list should not be published. Inquiries regarding men not promoted, not on the approved list, should be answered by the statement that the man has not been selected by the Board for promotion.

10. The Boards should not be required to answer "Why was John Smith not promoted when Will Brown was." The only answer is "Because the Board believes Will Brown will be a better chief petty officer than John Smith."

11. The ideal situation would be reached if all men were found qualified and suitable for promotion, all could pass whatever tests utilized. Then the simple method of seniority would be the answer. Many heated discussions have taken place on promotion methods. They are all subject to attack and always will be. No method is perfect. All methods are but the product of human intelligence. If we can evolve a method that the majority of the men in the Service will recognize as getting the best men available, we will have succeeded beyond the usual experience.

12. The Coast Guard has, in matters of promotion, attempted to avoid unfairness to the individual more often than it has attempted to avoid unfairness to the taxpayer.

13. There is one element that deserves consideration in any discussion of selection systems and promotion methods. That is "What of the large group of men who are passed over?" It is impossible to convince an individual that the Service would be harmed by his promotion. At such time as he realizes that he has reached his ceiling in the Service, it is certain that he no longer gives the best that is in him. His punch is reduced. He will do his work for his pay, but the edge is gone from his eagerness. Unless the promotion system is recognized by him as picking the best (and he would be an unusual man indeed if he admitted it, if he were not promoted) he probably becomes a time server. The answer is, "He should be eliminated as soon as that result becomes noticeable." The twenty year bill will be the solution for some.

14. With a large group or with groups in the situation just outlined, we have incipient feasters in the Service and general efficiency falls. There are a few men who will recognize their own deficiencies and the effect indicated will not apply to them. They are the exception not the rule. And it is probable that a pretty satisfactory group of Chief Petty Officers could be obtained from this "second line".

15. We have seen a marked change in the enlisted force ~~at~~ in the last twenty years. The number of men who elect to make the Service a life career has steadily increased. This is probably due to two factors. First to conditions in the commercial fields and second to improved conditions in the Service. We no longer see the large percentage of men leave the Service after the first enlistment. This means undoubtedly that life in the Service compares very favorably with other activities. It means also the prospect of gray haired men in numbers in the lower ratings. A boy coming into the Service today cannot be assured, if he keeps his record clear and does his work well that in time he will be

a warrant officer. The ceiling now is apparently petty officer second class. He can feel pretty sure of reaching that rating. There were on 23 May, 1939, 74 (53 of them in the "L" branch) petty officers second class and junior in the Service, who have had over 20 years' service. The prospect is that the percentage will increase. Perhaps the pay and other emoluments of Service life are sufficient to overcome the discouragement of no promotion.

16. In surveying the field for promotion lists, a class of cases will be encountered that deserve very serious consideration. In our senior ratings we want strong upstanding men. Men of character is the prime requisite. We do not, however, want to fill those ratings with "mollycoddles", or with men who cannot smile. What of the ^{boy}~~bag~~ full of life and spirit who enters the Service, and in his early years is inclined to kick over the traces a bit? Maybe he is haled before a court. Perhaps he "monkeys with the buzzy saw" more than once. This period may last until he has served two enlistments. Then he has added a few years of age and is no longer given to capers. He has the same amount of punch probably but has learned to direct it in channels which the Service recognizes as proper. Some of these types make excellent chief petty officers. Claims will be made that they produce the best because they know what to expect of others. These cases deserve most careful appraisal to differentiate between the offense that indicates a "warp" in character and the one that emanates from exuberance.

17. Physical fitness should be given ^{great}~~just~~ weight, for mental well being follows in a very large measure. The thought that these men are being selected to direct the energies of and to be responsible for the very lives and well being of others must be kept in focus. From a study of retirements on account of mental disease, it is shown that a large number have a back ground of syphilis. This leads to the belief that no man with a history of syphilis should be placed in a position of responsibility over the activities of others such as is probable to be the case of a chief petty officer.

18. In civil life, especially in the small community, men are very much better known to each other than is possible in the Service. The parents of a boy are known and his home back ground can be appraised. His character is pretty well established. In the Service, the commissioned officer cannot from the very nature of the establishment, know the enlisted man intimately, but his associates are much more liable to know him. This leads to the thought that chief petty officers already directing juniors might be a source of more correct appraisal of candidates.

19. If it was possible to place all candidates on the same unit for awhile to be observed and tested thereby putting all through the same mill a comparison of value might result. The difficulty a board has in appraising the appraisals of widely different appraisers is very real.

20. The above has been written with promotions of first class petty officers to chief petty officers in mind principally. The same general principles apply when selecting warrant officers.

21. The statement in (2) needs some clarification. The written examination should not be a farce. The expression "as reasonable as practicable" does not mean that it should be such that all candidates for coxswain (for example) could be expected to pass. True, some of them might pass it. The general idea is that it should be a real hurdle ~~not~~ to be leaped by the candidates, but should not be a trick examination. It should be such that a reasonable amount of preparation would be needed. A chief petty officer will be called upon to prepare and check reports. He should be able to spell, write an assistance report using good English, solve problems in arithmetic, have a grasp of theory of tackles (C.B.M.) etc. In other words, an examination of which it can be said, "Any man who is to be appointed a chief petty officer, should be able to get a passing mark."