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Often in our military lives, we lose sight of what is actually being evaluated. We get wrapped around the axle on issues not related to the task at hand, which in this case is getting promoted.

People get frustrated when they see so-called less deserving folks get promoted. The comments I hear take one form or another, but usually boil down to, "I'm better at the job than they are," or, "I'm the best in my career field."

They are both worthless arguments, and here's why:

As it stands now, it's a given you obtain a level of "excellence" in your career field. Technical excellence is a noble pursuit, and we should constantly apply whatever it takes to achieve this, but being self-described as "excellent" at your job doesn't enter into the Weighted Airman Promotion System scoring equation.

Being excellent and having Enlisted Performance Reports and medals say you're "excellent" are two different things.

How does one go about ensuring their "excellence" is properly documented and credited to them in a dynamic manner on EPR's and medals?

I was taught to take care of your boss. This isn't playing politics, it's taking care of the mission and your career at the same time. Sit down with your boss and find out what they want, what form they want it, and how to get it to them in a

Getting promoted means looking at the 'big' picture

way they know they're getting it. Establish boundaries for what a 5 EPR is and where you currently stand. Just remember that our EPR shouldn't reflect our opinions of the mission and ourselves. It's the opinions of our rater, and their rater.

We aren't here to carry out our opinion of the mission, we're here to carry out our bosses vision of the mission. Let your boss be the boss. Support them to the fullest extent with honest, insightful information, giving your opinions when asked for no matter how controversial, and then demonstrate respect for the responsibility they have to make the tough decisions.

During my career, I realize the most successful and confident time periods were when I recognized my position as "subordinate" to my boss, and as a supervisor for my junior personnel. When you have this relationship with a supervisor, you can remove the mystery as to what it takes to get a medal and where you currently stand EPR wise.

This brings up another related area in how we are observed, and subsequently rated and recognized by our bosses: the be all, end all . . . attitude.

Personally, I don't care how great you are at the job. It's a given you should be great. The big-ticket item for me is whether or not you have the right attitude and disposition. If you don't, I don't have any time for you and the Air Force shouldn't either.

It's easy to become technically proficient at a series of repetitive tasks. It's a different thing altogether to be good at the task, and at managing people, time, resources and behaviors toward mission accomplishment. This is what separates the successful professionals from the everyday proficient worker. There are things you must do in addition to merely being proficient. Attitude is the first step!

So how do you do it? What's it called? Some folks call this the whole person concept. I can tell you, it works.

Step one is to become involved. You should be volunteering for community service continually. Every EPR should have a bullet or two commensurate with your rank. As an airman, you should be volunteering for events. NCOs should be participating, and supervising events. Senior NCOs should be planning, organizing, and developing these projects.

Step two is education. At a minimum, each EPR should log your progress towards a Community College of the Air Force degree and all available technical certificate programs.

If you know where you stand with the boss, are involved, and are pursuing education and training, while also striving to act professionally with the right attitude, there is one final area for the whole person concept — competing in front of boards.

Some say this doesn't come into play until you are competing for senior and chief. I have a news flash for you — you don't start working for chief when you're a senior master sergeant, you start when you make senior airman and staff sergeant. It makes the difference between career 4's, and 5's, or the difference between a medal and no medal. Right, wrong, good, bad, or indifferent, our current system assigns a point value to EPR's and medals. If you value these points, you should be intent on earning all, and losing none. Let's face it, you aren't competing in WAPS with members who have consistent 3's on their EPR's. The majority of all EPR's are 5's, with a handful of 4's thrown in there.

How better to differentiate yourself from the crowd than to have a bullet stating you were the best in the unit, group, or wing. This needs to start as an airman, continue as an NCO and remain with you throughout your SNCO years.

Why should you do this? Number one, you'll be a polished performer and able to give realistic insight to a young troop desiring to shine. Secondly, you need to show sustained superior performance throughout the entire career, at every level. Nothing stands out more clear on a promotion board than someone who decided to get "hot" when they were in 18 plus years.

In a nutshell, you need to know how to play the game before you learn how to win the game. Influence those scorable areas of the WAPS test at every opportunity.

Being a professional expert in your career is the starting point towards promotion, not the end point.

