

the rest of the file adds or subtracts from the overall file assessment. The greater the number of above center of mass (ACOM) reports in an officer's file while serving in other positions, the stronger the file assessment by a board member and therefore, greater the chances for his selection. Analysis of all boards clearly shows that an officer does not need all above center of mass reports to be competitive.

Again, since an officer will always compete against others in their year group (and be compared against each other) and not against a set standard, there will be small variations every year on just how strong a file must be for selection.

RATERS and SENIOR RATERS

What raters and senior raters need to remember and take away from this analysis, is that although a center of mass report is not a discriminator for most boards, not all center of mass reports are viewed equally. It is very important that you include the following in the narrative: enumeration, promotion potential, schooling recommendations and next command/position recommended. A rater or senior rater may elect to leave one or more of these four components out of a narrative, but they should understand they risk sending an unintended (and not positive) message to a board. Rated officers should watch for these items in their OERs and question their rater/senior rater if they notice an omission during their counseling. The omission may be intentional and certainly within the purview of the rater/senior rater to make this call. Or the rater/senior rater may have unintentionally left these comments out and can add them as a result of this dialogue. Additionally, senior raters need to amplify their potential box checks by using the narrative to clearly send the appropriate message to selection boards. Board members relate that the first and last lines in the senior rater's comments are the most important factors in their assessment--so spend time on these portions. Some senior raters would fill their box and hide potential comments. Not good (don't make it time consuming or difficult for the board members). A center of mass OER with the right comments about potential and future assignments was more valuable than a above center of mass that didn't enumerate performance or contain key bullets about ability to command or school selection. The following classification of types of narratives may serve as a guide and assist in sending a clear message. In order of merit:

ACOM--Exclusive Narrative

Clearly describe superior performance above that of the vast majority, associated with early promotion and are restrictive in nature. Should only be used for the best ACOM reports within a mature profile and at times for the very best officers with COM reports in small population/immature profile (<4) situations. A senior rater should provide comments like:

- Enumeration ("the BEST officer I currently senior rate" / "one of the top two officers (or Captains or Majors or LTCs) I have worked with in 18 years..." "one of the two best officers of the 20 I currently senior rate.")
- Promotion ("promote NOW," "must promote below the zone")
- Schooling ("send to CSC 1st Look")
- Command ("will be a distinguished battalion commander")

ACOM--Strong Narrative

. Describe significant performance accomplishments and enthusiastically recommend promotion, assignment to key duty positions linked to upward mobility and appropriate military schooling (e.g. among the best, definite below the zone potential, one of my best officers). Should be used for ACOM reports and for the very best officers receiving COM reports.

- Enumeration ("top 1%, 5%," "easily tin the top third of all officers I senior rate"-less clear enumeration than the exclusive narrative)
- Promotion ("promote below the zone")
- School ("send to CSC")