

*How many of you remember General Bedke and his weekly "What I'm Thinking" email? Here is a priceless flash from the past, Sept 5, 2005.*

AFFTC Commander's WIT #30: Lazy Supervisor damages Superstar's Promotion Odds...Never Even Knows It

Men and Women of the Air Force Flight Test Center--

I was reviewing a batch of career performance records the other day in preparation for an upcoming promotion board--and got caught short in mid-breath.

There it was...a superb record, gained over a period of decades by a hard-working superstar with a really fine set of performance reports.....until the last one.

Don't get me wrong...the last one read just fine. Great, really. Most of us would take it in a heartbeat. It had all the glowing words you could ask for.

That is...unless virtually the exact same words had been used on the performance report the year before.

Let's see...you're a member of a promotion board...you have just a few minutes per individual set of records to review a person's entire career...and as you whip through the reports, the top one says:

Bottom Line of first block: "Benchmark self-starter and leader; exceptional officer ready now for command--a must for school"

Bottom Line of second block: "Categorically the best, tremendous asset to AF, experienced in AEF and ready for command--send to school"

Pretty darned good, huh? Then you flip to the previous report from the year prior, and read:

Bottom Line of first block: "Benchmark self-starter and leader; stand out officer ready now for command--a must for school"

Bottom Line of second block: "Categorically the best, tremendous asset to AF, experienced in AEF ready for own command--send to school"

If you're like me, the first thing you do is check the dates to see if you accidentally just read the same report twice. Nope--they're different dates, different reports. Then, if you're like me, you check to see if it's the same report writer, which you certainly suspect it is. Yep. Same blankety-blank wrote the same thing twice.

Unbelievable.

Did the lazy slob (and I have to tell you, I have waaaaaaaay toned down what words I really used) think he was "mixing it up and fooling us into thinking they weren't the same" by changing "exceptional" to "stand out" in the first block, and changing "and ready for" to "ready for own" in the second block?

Do you realize what the promotion board members will say when they read this package? Every single member will note the gross similarity. Every single member will go back like I did to see if there was a mistake. And every one of them will mutter--either under their breath or out loud--that "some @\$%&\* should be shot, and don't wait until dawn to do it."

With any luck, and with integrity on the part of the board members, they will try to see through it and not let it reflect on the person who earned the record over so many years. The good news is that I've seen board members work through that and not let it reflect on the person up for promotion. The bad news is, it can't help but reduce the credibility of the writer of those top two reports.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking: "Hey, it's probably not the supervisor's fault. He probably just took the stuff written for him and signed it. Heck, it might have even been written by the ratee himself, so it's his own fault after all!"

Shame on you if you think that.

It's the Rater's primary job to ensure he's taking care of his people, to know what the last one was like, and to tell the story in each performance report he crafts. Someone busts their butt for you and for the Air Force for an entire year, staying longer than the standard 8 hours, coming in on weekends or whenever you call, and pouring more sweat and emotion than most people do in most jobs on this planet...and all they want is that once a year, their boss will sit down and spend a few minutes (okay, a few hours) letting them know that all that effort was appreciated.

I'm gonna try to get this ratee promoted. But I have to say I wish I could go back and change that last performance report so it didn't read so close to the same as the one before it.

Meanwhile...the point here is obvious. If you're a supervisor, do your job with the same conscientiousness you hope your own supervisor gives you.

After all...if you don't, your supervisor may just take you up on it!

--CMBedke

CURTIS M. BEDKE  
Major General, USAF  
AFFTC Commander

*Now I wouldn't refer to my supervisor as a @\$%&\* and I don't recommend you do either, but you get the General's point.*

*The Union office has been the temporary repository of AF Form 971 Supervisor's Work Folders with extremely outdated entries. We have also seen some very fouled up AF Form 860 supervisory appraisals.*

*This isn't just shoddy work. It's a violation of the contract.*

*Jim Dietzel  
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