

A Technique to Get Organized and Manage Your Career

by Captain Christopher H. Engen

You have most likely heard or been advised that you are your best career manager. Yet, how many times have you found yourself shuffling through papers looking for that award which did not get added to your Officer Record Brief (ORB), or perhaps your last Officer Evaluation Report (OER), or maybe even a copy of your Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders? If you have never found yourself in such a predicament, then you must be well organized, but some of us can relate to this situation. The simple technique which follows will help you manage the paperwork, which often proves critical to the management of your career.

A three-ring binder with document protectors is a simple, inexpensive way to easily manage your important career documents. While other techniques, such as file folders, will certainly do, a binder comes in handy when you need to just grab your files and go, such as when you must visit your servicing Personnel Service Battalion (PSB) to update your ORB. Once you have your binder, collect

all of your important documents and organize them.

Place your ORB in the front of your binder. You will use this document the most and be required to update it annually. In addition to posting the current copy, consider saving the past two copies so that you have a history of what items were posted or what changes were made. In the next section, post copies of all of your permanent orders, organizing them in chronological order. Ensure you include copies of any amendments. You now have the documents that outline your assignment history.

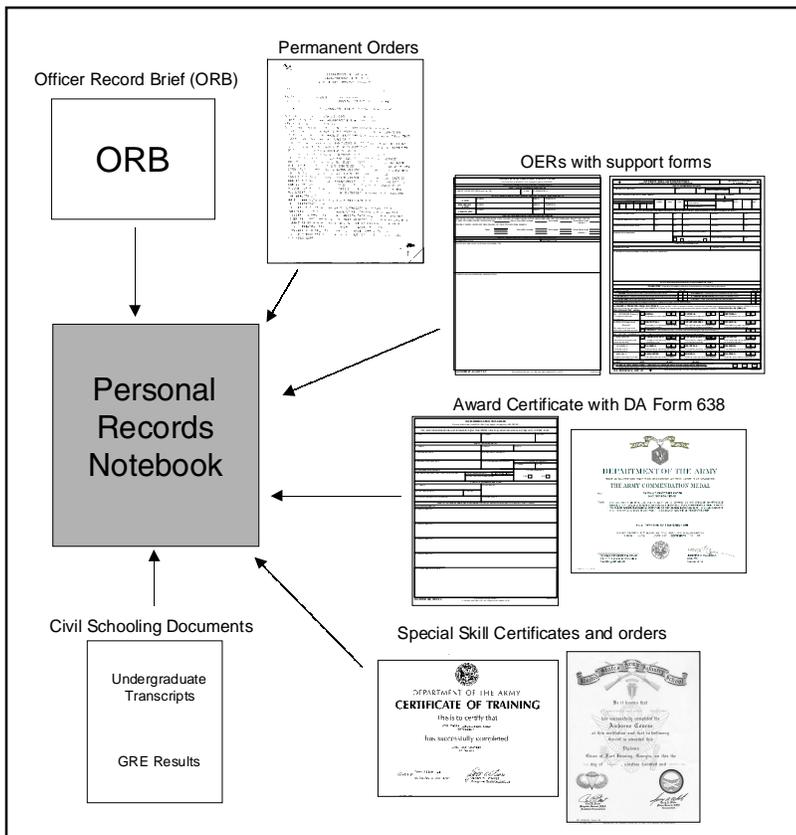
The next, and one of the most important sections, of the binder includes your past evaluation reports. Hopefully you have retained copies of both academic evaluation reports as well as officer evaluation reports. Ensure that you have official copies with all signatures and PSB blocks complete. Incomplete copies will not be accepted when attempting to add them to your fiche. If you did not receive an official copy of a recent report, request a copy through your S1 or PSB. Place cop-

ies of past OER support forms with the corresponding OER. These come in handy when queried about past accomplishments, or when your replacement asks for a copy of your job description.

After organizing your evaluation reports, gather your past awards or special skill qualification certificates. These are the most common items omitted from your ORB or fiche, so keeping copies proves important. Although the award certificate itself serves as proof of an award, keep the DA Form 638 if you have it. Likewise, hang on to both your certificate or any authorization orders generated from a special skill school such as airborne or air assault.

Once you have organized the documents discussed above, you may wish to add some additional sections to your career book. Records pertaining to civilian schooling, such as undergraduate transcripts or GRE results, will prove useful if you plan to apply for advanced civilian schooling. Once you have chosen and been designated within a functional area/career field, you may wish to create a section to organize those important documents. Finally, you may want to retain copies of military correspondence to include letters of recommendation. These will become important when applying for advanced schooling or seeking a special assignment.

After you have built your career book, keep it in a safe place. As you progress through your career, you will find it more and more useful as you update your ORB, prepare for selection boards, and manage your career. Do not procrastinate getting organized, for those who do often find themselves spending more time searching for lost documents or requesting copies.



CPT Christopher Engen was commissioned in Armor from the U.S. Military Academy in 1991. He served as a tank platoon leader and battalion adjutant for 2-37 Armor, in Vilseck, Germany; BMO in 3d Bde, 1st AD, at Ft. Riley; and Commander, C Co., 2-70 Armor, then HHC, 2-70 Armor. Following graduate school, his next assignment will be as a company tactical officer at the U.S. Military Academy. He has completed AOB, Scout Commander Certification Course, and AOAC.