

Cadet evaluation reports

Awards, senior positions and summer training positions—how does a corps or squadron make selections and, more importantly, substantiate decisions with real data on cadets chosen?

This is a dilemma for many corps/squadron officers and staff faced with making these choices every year. In 1996, as commanding officer (CO) of 237 TRUXTON Sea Cadet Corps in Lawn, N. L., I saw that there had to be a better system for selecting cadets for awards and various positions.

At the time, our process for selecting award recipients consisted of corps officers having a short discussion on the particular award to be presented and then casting a vote to determine the recipient. Little information was available to account for the decision and invariably, questions as to why a particular cadet was selected for the award arose among fellow cadets and parents. In reality, any serious challenge to the decisions would not have been backed up by a transparent and accountable system.

In 1997, the groundwork was laid to implement a method to record data on each cadet's performance over the year. This would be used to evaluate the cadet when awards and cadet summer training centre positions were being allotted.

The evaluation system has evolved over the years to meet the corps' changing needs.

The cornerstone of our system is a written policy which has evolved and is adopted into Standing Orders. For example, all cadets must have a minimum 85 percent attendance



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Lt(N) Edwards can substantiate every award he presents.

record to be considered for awards. Further, any officers sitting on the selection board must themselves have a least 85 percent attendance.

The recorded data allows for a complete and informed decision-making process.

To try and make the system fair, we decided that a cadet can receive only one award. The only exception is for skill-related awards such as marksmanship. We also invite a representative of the corps' sponsor to view the selection board process, which enhances accountability.

When the selection board convenes, the CO presents each officer with a list of candidates for consideration. The CO's responsibility is to ensure that all candidates meet policy requirements and any criteria set forth for the awards. Selection board members score each candidate, using an evaluation sheet with

points. The candidate with the highest score receives the award.

The board considers information included in the cadet's annual evaluation report, which is also sent to parents. Officers grade the cadets each week, using an evaluation sheet that allots points for dress and deportment. This recorded information is valuable for making selections.

A cadet's involvement in activities is also important in the selection process. If a cadet tried out for, or participated in, various activities such as marksmanship, public speaking, and drill competitions, this is taken into account.

Preparing evaluation reports on our cadets has worked extremely well for our corps. The recorded data allows for a complete and informed decision-making process. More importantly, the system makes us accountable and stands up to any scrutiny which may arise.

All of this works well, but it has to be a transparent structure. A key aspect of our approach is our open-door policy. We notify parents and encourage them to become involved with the cadets' performance. We invite them to visit the corps at their leisure to discuss any issue of concern to them and their child.

There's no doubt that keeping such an extensive system of records adds to our officers' workload. However, having well-documented records on our cadets' performance is invaluable to accounting for our decisions. It's like having all your expense receipts ready when Revenue Canada does an audit on your income tax. Well, maybe not that extreme, but you get the idea. *