

Senior warrant officer specialized positions

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This is a primer on what Signal warrant officers can expect in assignments.

Frequently, junior Signal warrant officers express the idea that they are not in control of their career or can only work within the constraints of the assignments they have been given. However, that is not the reality. When a W2 or W3 actively seeks out opportunities beyond traditional assignments that he/she is legitimately qualified to fill, these challenges frequently result in further opportunities later in the career. Whether selected or not, volunteering for challenging, selective or special assignments and training almost always open doors to follow-on prospects.

It is no coincidence that the majority of Signal warrant officers' initial assignments and W1/W2 positions are at the brigade level. Additionally, a substantial percentage of W3 positions are focused in and around divisions. This immersion is the nexus where

many Signal warrant officers cultivate their technical aptitude and skills. However, at the W3 grade, Signal warrant officer assignments and opportunities begin to dramatically expand beyond the divisions. And while there are just a handful of assignments at W3 or below that necessitate unique attributes or experiences, often the experience and exposure of Signal warrant officers in these early assignments will cast their competency for many of the senior Signal warrant officer positions in their future.

Forming Nominal Career Paths

During the most recent Signal conference at Fort Gordon, it was acknowledged that the Regiment historically has not developed Signal warrant officer for key positions. With a few exceptions, there simply were not enough positions or warrant officers to justify the identification and coding required to manage these positions. Even the Regimental chief warrant officer position did not exist prior to 1999. The Regiment was habitually under strength and senior warrant of-

icers sustained only a handful of W5's in the population. But with the rapid growth and relevance of Signal warrant officers, key developmental positions are now a necessity. There are now senior Signal warrant officers in all facets of the DoD, DA staff, training centers, cyberspace, special mission units, and senior Signal organizations. Demand is expected to continue.

For the first time, the Signal Regiment W5 grade is healthy and W5 positions are currently expanding to support all major combatant commands. As Signal warrant officers become more relevant and demand increases, more key positions are bound to evolve.

So the question is, "Does the Signal Regiment need to identify key positions, document those positions, and associate them to a specific career map or training requirement?" If so, what are those positions and what is the professional development requirement? Also, which senior positions will rely on traditional Professional Military Education and the new WOSC follow-on course?

Specialized Positions

All positions are to some extent different, and as such there is no training that will prepare an officer for all they need to know for any specific job. However, the intent for determining key positions is not to create 900 key developmental positions.

The Signal Regiment is focusing on a handful of positions that are both critical and outside the mainstream of what traditional Signal warrant officers do. Some positions certainly will provide requisite experience on which more specialized jobs rely. In other words, there is not a traditional career course or PME providing adequate experiences and training required to draw from while performing duties



associated with the position. One such example would be the DA G8 or G3 in which Signal warrant officers function at the O5/O6 level on a very senior staff that is immersed in strategy, policy, acquisition, and programs at the macro level. While our other than warrant Signal officers have the benefit of extensive training in their intermediate level education, our warrant officers are left to figure it out for themselves. Maybe such warrant officers should be afforded the opportunity to attend ILE and be assigned in more junior staff positions before being thrust into a DoD or DA staff level position.

Other scenarios may include the special operations command preferring a senior warrant with special operations experience or the newly established Army cyber command and/or its parent joint cyber command requiring a Signal warrant officer who has developed his/her talent in the computer network defense domain.

Recently, the Signal Regiment conducted a W5 assignment board which consisted of several Signal two star general officers. While this procedure was intended to move W5s based upon matching the officers' competence to the position and the units' mission, it was not necessarily meant to imply all W5 positions a key or nominative position. Reality is that with a small number of W5s projected and the demand for senior Signal warrant officers increasing, the process currently is more priority based than nominative based. This was the first attempt at this type of process for senior Signal warrant officers. The projected growth of the senior warrant officer grades further validates the requirement to tag and map out key developmental positions.

Training with Industry and Advanced Civil Schooling

Currently, PME is the primary developmental process for Signal warrant officer positions. As it is further developed, it should meet the educational requirement for most of our positions. Additionally, the new WOSC follow-on course is designed to fill the training gap and provide training and development for the majority of our senior positions.

For key positions outside the mainstream, the Signal Regiment has relied on training with industry as a prerequisite to an assignment, essentially linking the assign-

ment to a TWI requirement. While this has worked well for some of the School of Information Technology and Capabilities Development Integration Directorate positions (both located at Fort Gordon, Ga.), with only five opportunities annually, TWI alone will not meet all key position requirements.

Another method is to leverage advanced civil schooling to positions. For example, the Signal Regiment may determine that the SIT technical director obtain a graduate degree in education prior to fulfilling that assignment. This is actually similar to what branch and functional area officers do now. This is the most viable option to expand the linking of key positions and training requirements.

Conclusion

The process must be accomplished sensibly, if the Signal Regiment is going to employ key positions and key developmental positions as a tool to both determine training requirements and formally link the position to the prerequisite training and experience.

Positions must be vetted through some predetermined process at the Signal Center and socialized with our senior Signal leaders before attempting to change any requirements or authorization documents. One possible solution is a site selection board consisting of all the Signal W5s.

Regardless of how these positions are identified, the number of positions must remain small enough to ensure resources can be obtained and it can be managed effectively. Validity in the program must be maintained.

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ACRONYM QuickScan

ARCYBER – Army Cyber Command
CND – Computer Network Defense
COCOM – Combatant Command
CYBERCOM – Cyber Command
DA – Department of the Army

DoD – Department of Defense
RCWO – Regimental Chief Warrant Officer
PME – Professional Military Education

SOCOM – Special Operations Command
TWI – Training With Industry
WOSC – Warrant Officer Staff Course