



# Broadsheet

## Leadership Today

**Capt C M Richards - DDNLM**

At a time when we are promoting people earlier than before and are reliant on an ever-smaller pool of key Leading Hands and Senior Ratings, the importance of good leadership has never been greater. If the essence of leadership is the ability to influence others to follow willingly, it is imperative that we manage the aspirations, development and careers of each individual sailor and marine in order to retain our key manpower for the delivery of Operational Capability (OC).

### **What's Wrong?**

This we deliver through our command, leadership and divisional management system. Yet some 2 years ago my predecessor was greeted with comments that "The Divisional System is 'broken', 'outdated', and 'not relevant anymore' as he travelled around ships and establishments. During visits to Joint Units, sailors would complain of feeling 'isolated' and 'not part' of the RN anymore.

As the Divisional System is the critical factor in delivering the 'People' component of our Operational Capability, such comments were taken to heart by my predecessor. He directed that a One Star Divisional Review was to be conducted, using the staffs of the Directorate of Naval Life Management (DNLM), FLEET N1 Personnel Policy section and the Maritime Warfare School (MWS) Command Training Group.

Following initial discussions, it was apparent that although the system remained inherently sound, it had become over-bureaucratic. Divisional Officers were spending too much time locked to their computers finalising appraisal (RORRS)\* reports when they should have been 'walking their patch' ,learning about and leading their men and women.

The focus of the divisional structure had also been eroded over time. In many cases, DOs were no longer the line managers for their divisions. Increasing use on RN personnel in agencies, dockyards and squads at sea meant that individuals saw less of their own DO and vice versa.

At the same time as this concern over the divisional system surfaced, unease was being expressed over the role and status of the Leading Rate. The 'Black Hole'\* has meant that Leading Hands have been, and will remain, in short supply. To bring the best able rates from all branches forward earlier requires careful preparation, timely promotion and subsequent development. I am in no doubt that the Leading Hand really is the first Superior Officer - a fact which many appear to have overlooked in recent years.

We need to re-instate, formalise and enhance this role, recognising the "contract" between the CO and his LH, Commanding Officers should maximise their employment within the divisional chain and management structures, ensuring key development targets are set and accountable employment offered. In return, Leading Hands must be seen to set the standards, earn the respect of their peer group and superiors, and deliver the leadership expected of an embryonic senior rating.

Alongside this requirement to develop our leaders is the need to respect the rights of all our people as individuals. Great strides have been made towards achieving this in the past few years - the most important change being the shift to measure operational tempo (and thus separation) based upon the man not the hull. The Navy Board's commitment that all but a very few groups within the Service will spend no more than 660 days separated from their family in a rolling 3 year period is a huge step forward. Other initiatives will continue this emphasis on the individual needs of our people, in particular the huge investment in accommodation ashore, implementation of Pay as You Dine from 2005, and the rolling out of high quality education and E learning facilities which offer new means to gain professional and academic qualifications. The Royal Navy leads the way in this field and I intend to maintain that lead.

I will continue to strive to deliver improvements to the Operational Welfare Package, which has been a huge success to personnel both afloat and deployed ashore, with improved access to information for families and partners at home.

I close with this quote from Field Marshal Viscount Slim, which I have used as a means of focusing our thoughts during the Divisional Review.

While the kick up the pants may these days be metaphoric, the message is clear. Good leadership underpins the whole Command Structure. Ultimately we win or lose on the strength of it

\*RORRS - Ratings and Other Ranks Reporting System - replaced Form 264

\*Black Hole - Refers to the resulting lack of Leading Hands now caused by the curtailment of recruiting after the 1995 redundancy round.

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