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Stupid APPLY Tricks

It's springtime, when an officer's fancy turns to filling out Apply Board applications. Each year, hundreds of officers screw up their applications and wind up not being considered for the jobs they want. This year, don't be one of them.

The following stories are true. The names (and some details) have been changed to protect the guilty.

LT Alfa had one of the best records seen by the board, and had first pick of any billet he wanted. Unfortunately, the only billet he listed was the one he was already in. **Result:** No billet assigned. **Lesson learned:** You can only apply for your current billet if you are an interim fill; if so, state this in your remarks.

LCDR Bravo also had a tremendous record. So tremendous, in fact, that she decided to apply only for CDR billets. She probably would have done well in them, too. Unfortunately, the LCDR board couldn't slate CDR billets. **Result:** No billet assigned. **Lesson learned:** Stay in your lane. (FY05 Apply software now enforces this automatically.)

CDRs Charlie, Delta, and Echo all put "dream" billets as their first choice, and even had done ATs at those supported commands. Unfortunately, the billet RFAS codes specified other designators. **Result:** First choices forfeited. **Lesson learned:** Know exactly what RFAS (reserve functional area & sex) codes mean. Codes that cause the most trouble: AA = designator and NOBC exact match. AB = designator exact match. AD = NOBC exact match.

CAPT Foxtrot listed only one billet. Someone else got it first. **Good news:** He said he'd take other billets. **Bad news:** He got what was left over; he could have ended up in the VTU. **Lesson learned:** Most people with valid billet requests in a

certain confidence grouping will get a selection over someone just looking for a job. Use all 35 choices; if you can't make a decision, someone else will decide for you.

CDR Golf filled in 16 choices. He listed a billet in Puerto Rico as his 16th choice, even though he lived on the west coast. When the board got to his record, the first 15 were already slated. **Result:** A really LONG monthly commute. **Lesson learned:** Don't list any billet as "ballast" at the end unless you really intend to take it.

CAPT Hotel was perfectly qualified for his first choice. He even included letters from the CO, the Admiral, and the President of the United States saying so. Unfortunately, the board rarely views letters during slating. **Result:** He got another billet. **Lesson learned:** If you really want to make a pitch for a special billet, do so in the Apply remarks section. But be careful – if that billet is already gone, you're pitching a lost cause.

CDR India didn't get any of her choices, but did indicate she'd take other billets within 100 miles. There were many billets still available in Washington and Norfolk, but those locations were about 150 miles from her home. **Result:** No billet assigned; sent to VTU. **Lesson learned:** Remember that only 1/3 of Apply applicants get pay billets. Be willing to travel if you expect a paycheck.

CAPT Juliett didn't want to travel, so he listed all of the local billets and said "no" to others. All his billet choices filled up, but several local billets opened up when those incumbents got picked for command. But, since his application stated he wouldn't accept other billets, he didn't get them. **Result:** No billet assigned; sent to the VTU. **Lesson learned:** It's usually best to be flexible and say "yes" to other billets and select appropriate mileage restrictions.

ENS Kilo was a new LDO who could excel in command. She applied for all of the ENS CO billets she could find, but none of them would RFAS to her designator. Several LTjg and LT billets did have the correct RFAS code, but she didn't apply for them. **Result:** No billet assigned.

Lesson learned: Most billets from CWO2 to LCDR can be held by any rank from CWO2 to LCDR (based on first character of RFAS code). Don't restrict your choices unnecessarily to your current paygrade if you are LCDR or below. Talk to senior officers and seek their counsel rather than trying to interpret this yourself.

CDRs Lima and Mike both listed the same billet as first choice; both were equally qualified. CDR Lima filled out his billet history sheet, showing experience in that area; CDR Mike left his blank. **Result:** CDR Lima got the billet. **Lesson learned:** Complete every field in the Apply program so the board can better evaluate your application.

CAPT Oscar was a successful business executive who graduated #1 in his Harvard MBA class. Although a line officer, he was ideally qualified for a 3100 (supply) billet advising a flag officer who had requested him by name. **Result:** RFAS code prohibited 1XXX assignment to the billet. **Lesson learned:** If a supported command really wants a particular individual, ask them to change the billet RFAS code, or at least make comments in the billet description.

Last year, over 1,100 applications were removed from consideration due to applicants listing no billet selections (!), having multiple failed of selection (FOS), member reaching age 60 or mandatory retirement, or by personal request!

John Wayne said, "Life is tough. It's tougher if you're stupid." Don't make the Apply process any tougher than it has to be. Review my August 2003 article, <<http://www.navy-reserve.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1485>>, "How the Apply Board REALLY Works." Subscribe to CAPT Larry Weill's <CaptWeill@aol.com> Apply update e-mails. Ask a more experienced officer to review your application. And please, don't try these Stupid Apply Tricks yourself.

Editor's Note: CAPT Weill's Apply Updates, along with articles by CAPT Caesar and CDR Lim, can be found on our Web site at <<http://www.navy-reserve.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1714>>.