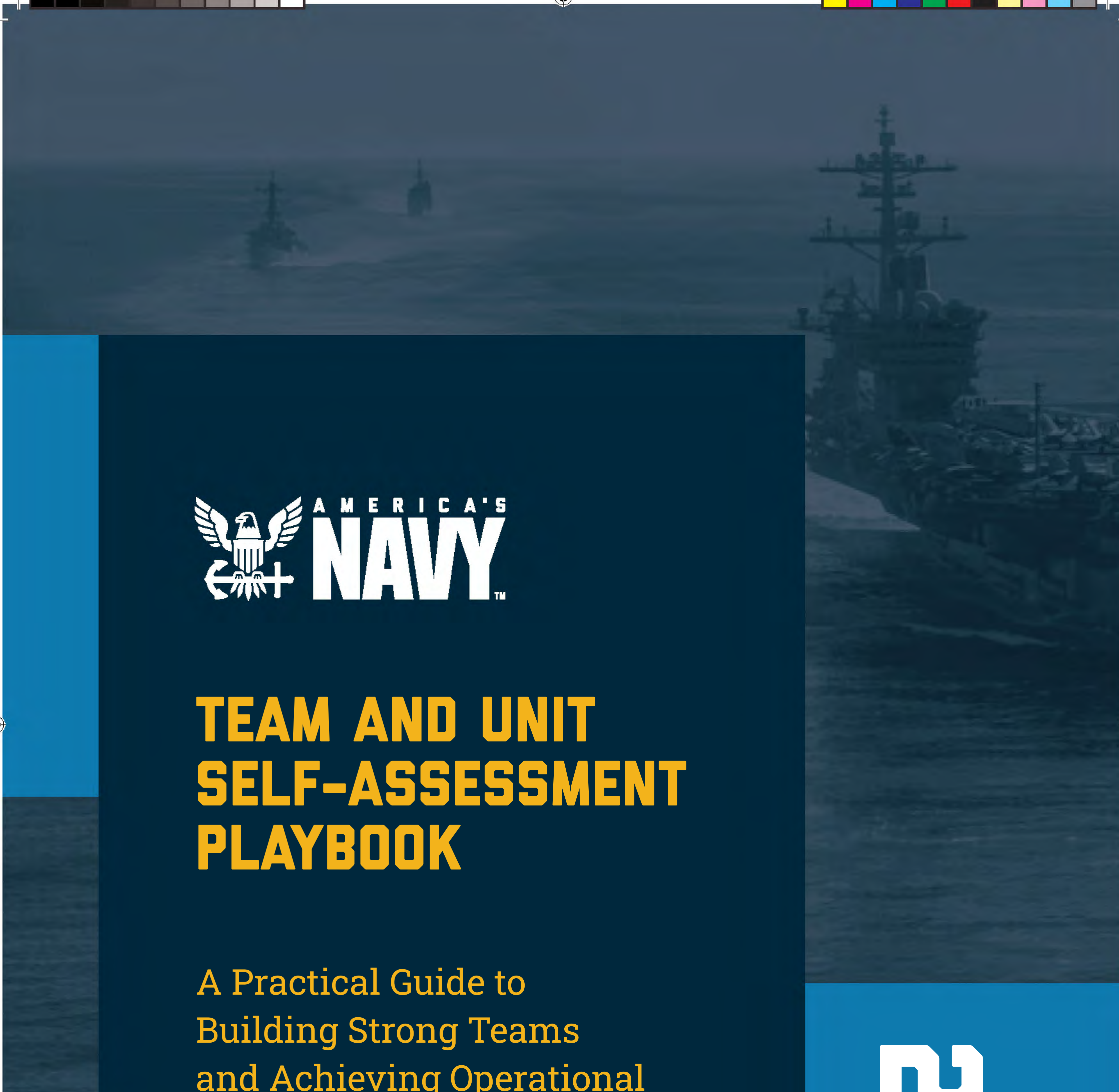

AMERICA'S NAVY

TEAM AND UNIT SELF-ASSESSMENT PLAYBOOK

A Practical Guide to Building Strong Teams and Achieving Operational Excellence

www.navy.mil/

2024

AMERICA'S NAVY

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QUICK START GUIDE

Welcome to the Quick Start Guide of the Team and Unit Self-Assessment Playbook. This playbook is intended to guide you through and be a resource for team-level self-assessments. Whether you're pressed for time or just need to dive in quickly, this section is designed to help you efficiently navigate the playbook to find the most relevant information for your immediate needs. This section provides three resources: how to use this playbook based on time constraints; a pocket guide that you can print, fold, and use on the go; and a meta-assessment designed to tailor which sections you read based on immediate needs.

Time-Based Guidance

Whether you're gearing up for a meeting or have a bit of downtime, this guide will help you navigate the playbook efficiently. We've structured our recommendations based on how much time you have available, ensuring you can still engage with these essential concepts regardless of your schedule. Regardless of how much time you have, every minute spent with this playbook will enhance your ability to conduct performance assessments effectively. Let's dive in!

If You Have 5 Minutes Before a Meeting

Take a moment to **review the 4A Compass figure** in *The 4A Compass: Navigating the Self-Assessment Process* chapter. This quick glance will provide you with a high-level overview of the self-assessment model. Following this, skim the subsequent sections for key insights that you can bring into your meeting discussions. A little preparation goes a long way!

If You Have a Lunch Break (30-60 Min)

Use this time to **deepen your understanding**. Start by reviewing the 4A Compass figure, then thoroughly read through the entire *The 4A Compass: Navigating the Self-Assessment Process* chapter. Alternatively, you can complete the meta-assessment in the next section to identify your strengths and potential blind spots, then follow up with the "If You Have 5 Minutes Before a Meeting" task. This dual approach will enrich your perspective and enhance your ability to engage with the material.

If You Have a Couple of Hours

Now you can really **dig in!** Begin with *What is Team-Level Self-Assessment?* and then *explore Using this Playbook* from the *Charting the Course: An Introduction to Team and Unit Self-Assessment* chapter. Take the time to read through *Preparing the Crew: Creating the Right Conditions and Mindset* chapter as well. Alternatively, complete the meta-assessment and use the results to guide your focus in reading the playbook. Either way, don't forget to review the 4A Compass described in *The 4A Compass: Navigating the Self-Assessment Process*. This **thorough review will equip you** with the knowledge and strategies necessary for conducting effective performance assessments.

If You Have Unlimited Time

Fantastic! Take the opportunity to **review the playbook in its entirety**, from front to back. Absorb the details and frameworks presented throughout. While exploring, keep in mind that *Chart Markers: Key Resources and References* is primarily for reference and "bonus" details, so you can focus your attention on the main content first. Don't forget to **take the meta-assessment** to help guide your focus as you read through the rest of the playbook. By engaging deeply with the entire playbook, you'll be well-prepared to lead team and unit self-assessments with confidence.

1. Front

POCKET GUIDE

TEAM and UNIT SELF-ASSESSMENT PLAYBOOK

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit. – Aristotle

2.

Fold on dotted lines

3.

Align
- Align on goals, standards, metrics
- Revisit routinely or as needed

Assess
- Collect data using efficient, approved methods
- Organize and verify data to prepare for analysis

Analyze
- Compare data to standard to find gaps
- Communicate findings and next steps

Address
- Align on goals, standards, metrics
- Revisit routinely or as needed

Problem- Solving
- Use for complex issues requiring more resources or additional support

Cycle Repeats
- Repeat the cycle to continuously improve
- Reflect to identify lessons and drive progress

4. Back

Think about this...

4A Compass	Have you aligned on the standards, goals, metrics with the appropriate people? Does the data you're collecting make sense given the standards or goals? people? Are you oriented on continuous improvement?
Preparing the Crew	Does your team provide feedback or raise issues to you? Do you and should you engage your team in the process? Does your team know their roles and responsibilities?
Mechanic's Toolbox	Have you prioritized your effort and resources appropriately? Are you good at checking boxes or are you good at your job?
Diving Deeper	Have you gotten commitment from your team? Have you established a cadence?

Fold on dotted lines

TEAM AND UNIT SELF-ASSESSMENT META-ASSESSMENT

In this section, you'll complete the Team and Unit Self-Assessment Meta-Assessment, a tool designed to help you identify your areas of strength and potential blind spots in the self-assessment process. The insights gained from this assessment can be used to tailor your engagement with the playbook, ensuring you focus on the most relevant concepts for your development. Additionally, the meta-assessment supports continuous improvement by allowing you to track your results over time, fostering a cycle of growth and enhanced effectiveness in conducting performance assessments.

AMERICA'S NAVY

Team and Unit Self-Assessment Meta-Assessment

Name:

Date:

Area of Assessment:

Instructions

Answer the following questions by selecting the corresponding rating that most matches your current situation. The rating scale ranges from 0 to 3, with each rating described to assist in your selection: 0) Little to no evidence of this practice, 1) Some evidence, but inconsistent or incomplete, 2) Good evidence, though room for improvement, 3) Strong evidence, well-established practice.

If you answer **0** or **1**, refer to the chapter and section of the Team and Unit Self-Assessment Playbook that is indicated above each corresponding item. If you answer **2**, consult the list of questions in the Conducting Team and Unit Self-Assessments section of the Chart Markers chapter for helpful questions to deepen your understanding of and improve your team self-assessments. If you answer **3**, consider reviewing the "Monitor and Sustain" section of the Team and Unit Self-Assessment Playbook to reflect on and maintain your successful practices.

1. Preparing The Crew - Engaging Your Team

Do team members have opportunities to participate in decision-making and share their perspectives, ideas, and challenges during discussions?

Answer:

0	1	2	3
Team members rarely have the opportunity to share their perspectives, engage in problem-solving discussions, or contribute ideas for improvement.	Opportunities for team member input exist at certain points, but they are infrequent, and input is not captured in a formalized manner where follow-up can be tracked.	Team members are frequently encouraged to share perspectives and ideas during discussions, and sometimes contribute to problem solving with input valued and enacted.	Open dialogue is an established and standard practice where team members actively share perspectives and ideas in discussions and improvement efforts in a collaborative environment.

Justify:

Refer to chapter *Preparing the Crew*, section titled *Engaging Your Team*, which emphasizes building a supportive, engaged, and committed team ready to actively participate in improvement efforts.

2. Preparing The Crew - Creating Roles and Responsibilities

Do you have assessment roles defined, and will you be expecting team members to take on these roles during the assessment process?

Answer:

0	1	2	3
Assessment roles are unclear or undefined, and there is no expectation for team members to take on specific roles during the assessment process.	Some roles are vaguely defined and there is a lack of clarity around specific responsibilities, time commitments, or expectations.	Most roles are well-defined, and expectations to take on these roles during the assessment process are communicated to most team members.	All assessment roles are clearly defined and responsive to assessment needs with detailed responsibilities, time commitments, and expectations, fully understood and documented by all team members.

Justify:

Refer to chapter *Preparing the Crew*, section titled *Creating Roles and Responsibilities*, which focuses on fostering mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors that drive team excellence.

3. The 4A Compass - Step 1: Align

Is there a plan in place that will support improvement and alignment with the standard over time?

Answer:

0	1	2	3
There is no plan in place to support improvement or align with standards over time.	An improvement plan is partially developed but lacks a clear strategy for long-term alignment with standards.	There is a structured improvement plan that supports alignment with standards, with regular reviews to ensure effectiveness.	A robust and adaptive plan is in place, ensuring ongoing alignment with standards and incorporating feedback for sustained improvement over time.

Justify:

Refer to chapter *The 4A Compass*, section titled *Step 1: Align*, which focuses on creating a strong foundation for the assessment by ensuring that objectives are clearly aligned with standards and evaluation criteria.

4. The 4A Compass - Step 2: Assess

Is your data collection method appropriate for collecting the type of information you need (whether quantitative data like a rating scale, or qualitative data like interviews or observations) in order to measure the metrics and performance indicators you set out to assess?

Answer:

0	1	2	3
The data collection method is inappropriate for the type of information needed. The tools or methods used do not align with the metrics and performance indicators, leading to inaccurate or unusable data.	The data collection method is partially appropriate. While it may capture some of the needed information, certain aspects of the data are not well-suited to the method used, resulting in gaps or inconsistencies.	The data collection method is mostly appropriate for gathering the needed information. Both quantitative and qualitative data are collected using methods that align with the metrics and performance indicators, though there may be room for refinement in certain areas.	The data collection method is highly appropriate and well aligned with the type of data needed. The chosen methods (e.g., rating scales for quantitative data, interviews for qualitative data) accurately capture the metrics and performance indicators, ensuring high-quality, reliable data.

Justify:

Refer to chapter *The 4A Compass*, section titled *Step 2: Assess*, which provides information about effective and appropriate data collection, data integrity, and data organization.

5. The 4A Compass - Step 3: Analyze

Do the people that need to know understand the findings of the assessment (e.g., stakeholders, other team members)?

Answer:

0	1	2	3
The relevant stakeholders and team members do not understand the findings due to a lack of communication or clarity in the reporting process. Key insights are lost, and there is no shared understanding of the assessment results.	Some stakeholders and team members have a limited understanding of the findings due to insufficient communication or explanation. While there may be some discussion, not everyone is aligned or fully aware of the implications of the results.	Most stakeholders and team members understand the findings of the assessment, with effective communication in place. Key insights are shared, although some individuals may still have questions or require additional clarification.	All relevant stakeholders and team members have a clear and thorough understanding of the assessment findings. The results are effectively communicated through presentations or reports, ensuring everyone is informed and aligned on the implications and next steps.

Justify:

Refer to chapter *The 4A Compass*, section titled *Step 3: Analyze*, which focuses on making sense of the data, understanding your findings, and presenting those findings to various stakeholders.

6. The 4A Compass - Step 3: Analyze

Do your goals align with both command goals and unit/team standards?

Answer:

0	1	2	3
The goals set do not align with command goals or unit/team standards, leading to potential conflicts or misalignment in priorities.	Some goals align with command goals and unit/team standards, but there are notable gaps or inconsistencies that could hinder overall effectiveness and focus.	Most goals align well with command goals and unit/team standards, providing a coherent direction for the team. There may be a few minor misalignments that should be addressed.	All goals are fully aligned with command goals and unit/team standards, ensuring strategic coherence and support for overall mission objectives.

Justify:

Refer to chapter *The 4A Compass*, section titled *Step 3: Analyze*, which focuses on ensuring that goals are consistent with command objectives, the importance of having an action plan driven by your findings, and having a well-defined timeline to achieve improvement efforts.

7. The 4A Compass - Step 4: Address

Are you aware of what you have the authority and capability to execute from the action plan?

Answer:

0	1	2	3
There is little to no awareness of personal authority and capabilities regarding the execution of the action plan. This lack of clarity leads to confusion in decision-making and ineffective leadership.	There is a limited understanding of the authority and capabilities concerning the action plan. Some responsibilities may be clear, but significant areas remain ambiguous, which can lead to hesitation or missteps in execution.	There is a reasonable awareness of authority and capabilities related to executing the action plan. Most responsibilities are understood, but a few areas may require further clarification to enhance effectiveness.	There is complete awareness of authority and capabilities regarding the execution of the action plan. This clear understanding enables decisive and effective leadership, facilitating smooth execution of tasks.

Justify:

Refer to chapter *The 4A Compass*, section titled *Step 4: Address*, which provides information about execution and implementation of the next steps.

8. The 4A Compass - Step 4: Address

Do you document lessons learned, efficiencies gained, and/or your successes and failures?

Answer:

0	1	2	3
Lessons learned, successes, failures, or efficiencies are not documented. There is no formal process for reflection or discussion, and opportunities for learning are missed.	Documentation of lessons learned, successes, and failures is sporadic and lacks depth. Some efficiencies may be noted, but there is no consistent reflection on the process.	Lessons, successes, failures, and efficiencies are documented fairly regularly, though there may be room for improvement in depth and consistency. The process of reflection is generally sound, with most key insights captured.	Lessons learned, successes, failures, and efficiencies are thoroughly documented and reviewed. This documentation consistently informs future actions and decision-making, contributing to continuous improvement.

Justify:

Refer to chapter *The 4A Compass*, section titled *Step 4: Address*, which provides information about documenting actions, monitoring effects, and elevating issues up the chain of command.

CHARTING THE COURSE: AN INTRODUCTION TO TEAM AND UNIT SELF-ASSESSMENT

CHARTING THE COURSE: AN INTRODUCTION TO TEAM AND UNIT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Welcome to the Team and Unit Self-Assessment Playbook, a comprehensive guide designed to help teams achieve continuous improvement through effective team-level evaluation. This playbook provides a structured approach to team-level self-assessment, giving you the tools to ensure you are fostering an environment conducive to honest and constructive feedback. The resources contained within outline the process and team roles and responsibilities in executing an internal review. By following the guidelines and best practices outlined here, your team will be better equipped to identify strengths, address weaknesses, and consistently strive for operational excellence. Keep in mind that this playbook is for all hands; you will need to adapt to the echelon, to your work, and to your own roles and responsibilities.

The playbook begins with background information on why it was created, highlighting key events and lessons learned that underscored the need for effective self-assessment within the Navy. Following this context, you'll find an introduction to self-assessment, emphasizing its significance and benefits for enhancing team performance and growth. You will also find detailed instructions on how to use the playbook effectively, ensuring that each step is clear and actionable. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, helping to ensure that every team member understands their part in the self-assessment process. Additionally, the playbook emphasizes the importance of creating a supportive environment that encourages openness, collaboration, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

You will learn how to conduct a self-assessment using the 4A Compass, including developing a regular cadence and using visual management tools. Step-by-step instructions guide you through the entire process, from initial alignment on standards to the implementation of simple fixes. The playbook also provides a wealth of resources and references to support your self-assessment efforts, offering tools, templates, and additional reading materials to enhance your understanding and effectiveness. By following the tips and guidance in this playbook, your team will be well-prepared to conduct thorough self-assessments, drive meaningful improvements, and achieve sustained success.

I am involved in this critical self-assessment world, extracting best practices, diving into root cause analysis, highlighting issues when they are small so that they don't become larger issues that, in our world, result in unsafe practices, lost equipment, and God forbid, lives.

– CAPT Matt Wellman, USFFC Fleet Improvement Office

Background and Context

The need for this playbook arises from lessons learned identified in a Navy comprehensive review of surface fleet incidents (2017). These tragic incidents highlighted serious challenges within the Navy, underscoring the importance of transparency and systematic reviews to identify and address broader systemic issues. In response, Navy leadership introduced strategic initiatives aimed at fostering a culture of continuous improvement and operational readiness. This background sets the stage for understanding the role of team-level self-assessment in building strong, effective operational units that can proactively identify and mitigate potential challenges.

The collision between the USS FITZGERALD and the Motor Vessel ACX CRYSTAL near Tokyo Wan in 2017, as well as the collision between USS JOHN S MCCAIN and Motor Vessel ALNIC MC in the Straits of Singapore in the same year, resulted in numerous casualties and significant damage. Following thorough investigations into both incidents, the Navy identified the root causes and highlighted the importance of transparency and lessons learned. These collisions underscored the necessity for the Navy comprehensive review.

Several factors were identified as contributing to the USS FITZGERALD collision, including failure to adhere to standard watchkeeping and navigation procedures, as well as a failure to apply proper risk management and address fatigue. Officers were found at fault for inadequate use of navigation instruments and the assessment identified a deficiency in communication among the bridge and information center teams. Supervisors lacked an understanding of the situation's complexity, resulting in the acceptance of difficulties rather than proactive problem-solving. Leadership did not prioritize identifying the underlying cause or implementing corrective measures. Finally, command leadership failed to cultivate a culture of rigorous self-assessment.

The investigation into the USS MCCAIN collision revealed similar factors, such as a general lack of situational awareness coupled with inadequate proficiency, understanding of onboard systems, and fatigue. There was a clear failure to adhere to the International Nautical Rules of the Road. Further, leadership exhibited a lack of awareness and disregard for recommendations, showing minimal oversight even to the extent of skipping a navigational brief. Overall, there was an absence of communication among officers and leadership.

Admiral Michael Gilday, the 32nd Chief of Naval Operations, laid the foundation for establishing a new way of working across the Navy that would help prevent these types of costly and unsafe mishaps. The idea was to begin cultivating an environment with exceptional performance by empowering individuals at every level of the Navy, from deckplate to senior leaders, to identify and tackle challenges at their source. One way to drive this way of thinking is to equip the Fleet with proven leadership and problem-solving strategies for driving continuous improvement and ever higher levels of operational readiness.

Under the leadership of CNO Admiral Lisa Franchetti and VCNO Admiral James Kilby, the Navy is mobilizing across several strategic initiatives to adopt this mindset for improved awareness, assessment, and action. Get Real Get Better, or GRGB, is a call to action for every Navy leader. GRGB challenges each of us to apply a set of Navy-proven leadership and problem-solving best practices to know and understand what excellence looks like, to put systems in place to measure and monitor performance against those standards, and to find and fix problems with urgency and efficiency. This is all in support of exploiting our warfighting advantage.

The goal of this playbook is to help equip leaders with information and tools that support building strong and healthy operational units and dismantling ineffective practices that lead to problems, such as the ones that contributed to the USS FITZGERALD and the USS MCCAIN collisions. One of the best opportunities for success lies within the unit level itself. Our teams serve as the caretakers of our people and resources. They operate as the first line of defense in identifying potential issues early, preventing mishaps, and driving operational excellence. Read on to learn more about team and unit self-assessment and how you can put these tried-and-true best practices in place within your command.

What is Team-Level Self-Assessment?

Team-level self-assessment is the continual systematic monitoring and evaluation of performance, readiness, and effectiveness against an agreed upon standard or goal. A standard goes beyond minimum requirements—it's the role-model way of doing business that senior leadership expects. In the Navy, meeting a standard ensures the minimum requirement isn't violated, even on the worst day, providing a necessary margin for safety.

Self-Assessment cannot be decoupled from self-improvement, as both are needed to raise our baseline level of readiness to respond in competition, crisis, and conflict. Teams that take ownership of their performance and continuously look for and implement ways to improve foster a culture of accountability and make their teams, units, and the entire Fleet stronger as a result. By regularly engaging in team-level self-assessment, Navy units can maintain high standards of operational readiness, adapt to changing circumstances, and enhance their overall effectiveness in fulfilling their missions.

According to the Naval Safety Command (NAVSAFECOM) Semi-Annual Report (1 July 2023 – 31 December 2023), assessment can broadly be thought of as:

- *The evaluation or estimation of the nature, quality, or ability of someone or something.*
- *A continuous process-based observation that measures the overall qualitative effectiveness.*
- *Improving operational readiness through identification of unsafe conditions, practices, procedures, and to increase the hazard awareness of personnel through proper application of risk management.*

Within the Navy Safety Management System (SMS), Naval Safety Command divides assessment into three parties: Command and Unit Self-Assessment (1st Party), Senior to Junior Assessment (2nd Party), and External Assessment from outside the Chain of Command (3rd Party). Each of these parties provides defense-in-depth assurance so that if one party fails to identify an issue, the next party should catch the problem (Naval Safety Command, 2022). The premise of this approach is that for each party, there is a clearly defined role and set of accountabilities in identifying risks, managing issues, and driving continuous improvements. When each party performs its assigned role proficiently, the likelihood that a serious risk will remain unrecognized and unmitigated, and therefore, cause damage to the Navy, is greatly minimized (Luburic et al., 2015).

The "safety net" inherent in this system is not meant to encourage leaders to "pass the buck" or rely on the next party to identify or stop issues happening within a team. This model reinforces quite the opposite. There are now more than 50 years of research (Crosby, 1979; Deming, 1986) supporting the notion that when people accountable for the performance of an area or operation are empowered to continually monitor and assess what is happening and make the appropriate adjustments to correct or avoid issues, the organization operates at a higher level of performance with less inherent risk across the board. That's because those issues are caught the first time, or prevented from ever occurring, by the people closest to the work. This is what we are aiming for in the Navy – accountability at each level and empowerment of our Sailors and Leaders across the Fleet to make every team, unit, and operation as safe and high performing as possible. Team and unit self-assessment starts with you.

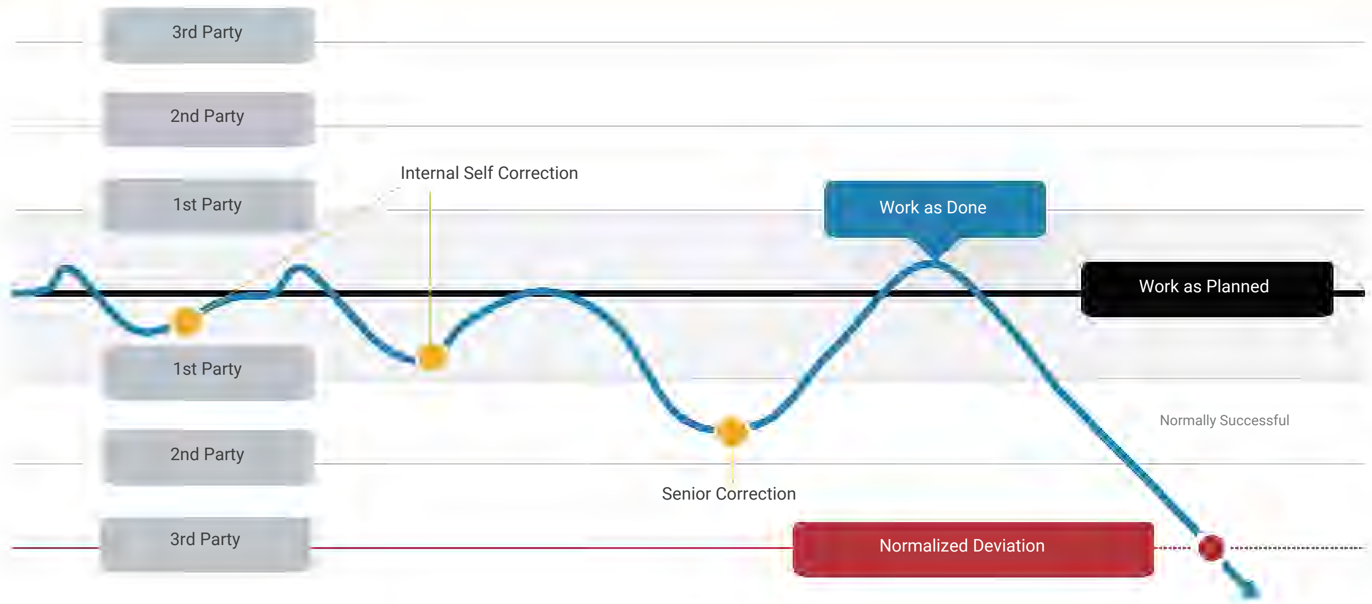
When each party performs its assigned role, the likelihood that a serious risk will remain unmitigated and cause damage is greatly minimized.

Be your own worst critic. Do not wait for others to tell you.

– Troy Mueller, Director, Nuclear Technology Division, Naval Reactors

The Navy SMS is in place to help units manage safety risks and ensure the effectiveness of safety risk controls. The first two parties of the safety assurance process in the Navy SMS provide the framework for commands and their subordinates to implement and execute continuous monitoring of their risk control processes. The 3rd Party, External Assessment, is divided into three tiers. The first tier is Echelon 2/3 assessments, the second tier focuses on inspection and certification, and the third are local area assessments that narrow in on day-to-day unit level standards.

Conklin's Black Line/Blue Line Model



This playbook is focused only on the 1st Party: Command and Unit Self-Assessment (called team and unit self-assessment in this playbook). Self-assessment for the 1st Party is the first level of protection. Identifying non-compliance, hazards, and performance gaps, and managing those risks at the team-level is a proactive approach preventing problems from becoming critical, thus allowing for timely interventions and corrections. By continuously evaluating and improving their performance, Navy units can ensure they remain agile, capable, and ready to face the challenges of modern naval warfare.

Conklin's Black Line/Blue Line Model (Conklin, 2017) is a method for tracking and evaluating work performance. The black line represents work as planned. The blue line is work as done. When problems are encountered as work is completed, internal and external self-correction is actioned. When there is a lack of complete self-correction, performance at the blue line becomes the norm, deviating from the original goals.

Using this Playbook

This Team and Unit Self-Assessment Playbook is intended to serve as a resource and a tool for leaders and teams to develop and improve their team self-assessment skills. Imagine the possibilities if everyone embraces and adopts this approach: the inconsistencies and disparities between our most and our least successful commands becomes minimal, and the bar is raised across the Fleet. We encourage our leaders to recognize this gap as unacceptable and use this playbook to narrow the gap by promoting self-assessment and excellence across the board. The Team and Unit Self-Assessment Playbook is directed to team leaders within the Navy but is beneficial for all ranks and ratings.

The remainder of this section will cover what you can expect in this playbook, including the structure and how to proceed if you already conduct team self-assessments.

Playbook Organization

The Team and Unit Self-Assessment Playbook is divided into major sections each covering different topics. The current section, Charting the Course: An Introduction to Team and Unit Self-Assessment, is simply the introduction providing background information and guidance for use. The remaining sections are organized as follows:

The 4A Compass: Navigating the Self-Assessment Process

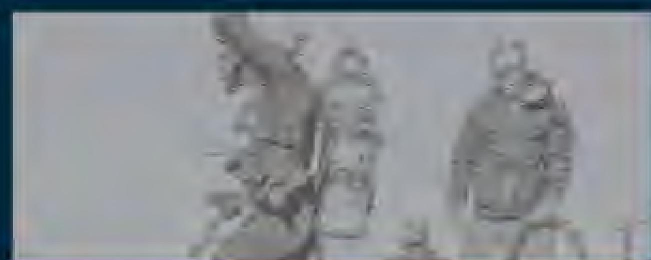
This chapter presents the 4A Compass—the model used for self-assessment—including what is involved in each step and guidance on how to implement the steps for a successful team self-assessment.

Preparing the Crew: Creating the Right Conditions and Mindset

This chapter describes the environment most conducive to successful self-assessment, the behaviors that are observable in teams that self-assess, and the roles and responsibilities for leaders and team members.

Mechanic's Toolbox: Essentials for Smooth Operations

This chapter guides users through strategies for establishing a continuous self-assessment discipline in their team, including common missteps and ways to avoid them.



Diving Deeper: Techniques for Honing Your Approach

This chapter offers tips, tricks, stories, and lessons from seasoned leaders who have extensive experience conducting team-level self-assessments in the Navy.

Chart Markers: Key Resources and References

This chapter provides a glossary, a list of and links to other resources, and references cited in text.

What To Do When You are Already a Seasoned Pro

So, you already conduct self-assessments for your team's performance? Congratulations! You are already ahead of the pack. This playbook can still help you.

If conducting regular self-assessments is already second nature to you and part of your leadership practice, use this playbook as a way to reflect on where you can help others learn the art of continuous improvement. Look at the topics and tips presented and think about where you see less experienced leaders make mistakes. Think about what you do that comes second nature to you, and what others may miss or forget in leading their teams. Encourage others to start self-assessing their team and offer to be a guide or coach to them as they do so.

Further, you can take the meta-assessment in the previous section to identify next steps based on your score and results. The Meta-Assessment is designed to identify areas of strength and potential blind spots, and then recommend playbook sections for your review. It can be used on a continuous basis at a regular cadence to track your progress over time. Regardless of your level of experience, it is recommended that everyone review the *4A Compass: Navigating the Self-Assessment Process* to work towards a common framework and language for self-assessment in the Navy.

We first focus on being self-aware. If you are not self-aware, you cannot self-assess. Then self-assessment, followed by self-improvement. All of this work is done to generate self-reliance within individuals and overall, the whole team. Building self-reliance is the critically important "why" for working on self-assessment—the very nature of naval operations is underpinned by self-reliant individuals, teams, and commands. The other focal point for self-reliance is finding and correcting problems while they are small and in their infancy before they grow into much larger problems that must be pointed out by external organizations.

– Troy Mueller, Director, Nuclear Technology Division, Naval Reactors

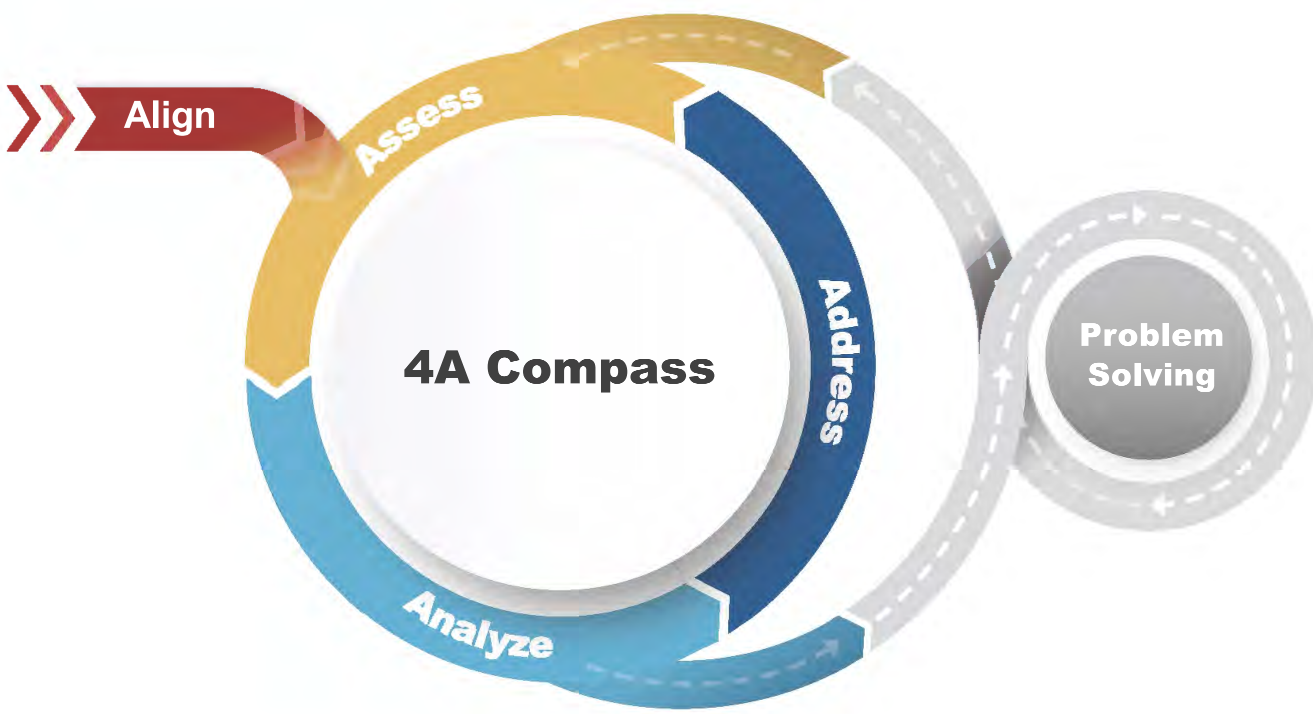
THE 4A COMPASS: NAVIGATING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS

THE 4A COMPASS: NAVIGATING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Learn how to conduct a team and unit self-assessment using a straightforward process that can apply to most situations. The 4A Compass, a framework inspired by the 3A approach for assessing the maturity of an operation (Choudhury, 2011), contains tried and true techniques for leaders at every level to put into practice.

Conducting a team and unit self-assessment follows a cyclical process that incorporates four steps: 1) Align, 2) Assess, 3) Analyze, 4) Address. Leaders from across the Navy who are skilled at conducting these with their teams leverage the principles and methods described in the 4A Compass. They incorporate the 4A Compass into existing battle rhythm events like daily quarters, department head meetings, mess meetings, all hands calls, and planning boards for training. Each step is detailed below, outlining what to pay attention to along the way.

The 4A Compass steps can be adapted to fit your specific situation. It can augment existing processes such as how transitions occur when entering or existing the maintenance phase in the Optimized Fleet Response Plan (OFRP). Or one can think of it more generally, as a toolset for continuous improvement in support of mindsets and skillsets that are also needed. While the following guidelines are easy to understand, not everyone will have the time or resources to implement each step as written. We've included stories, examples, and tips from Navy leaders to illustrate each step and show how they can be applied in various contexts.



This figure presents the 4A Compass. It kicks off with Align, setting the stage for the whole process. While Align isn't part of the core cycle, it's something you should revisit regularly. And remember, problem-solving is a separate but related process—only dive into it when needed.

Step 1: Align

Objective: Establish a clear foundation for the assessment.

Start by getting everyone on the same page. This first step, Align, is about setting clear expectations and ensuring that the entire team understands the goal and scope of the assessment, as well as their role and responsibilities in executing the process. This step isn't part of the core process but should be re-visited when significant changes occur, such as shifts in team composition, leadership, or the processes and standards being assessed to ensure everyone stays aligned.

The Align step forms the foundation for everything that follows, so it's important to get it right. However, if you have decided this assessment is better conducted by just you, as the leader, then you won't need to engage your team as much in this preparatory action. Nevertheless, you should still make sure you have confirmed with your leadership and with yourself on what standards, goals, metrics, and processes you'll be using as the focus for the assessment process.

- **Align on Objectives, Standards, and Goals:** Clarify the objective of the assessment—why it's being conducted and what it seeks to improve or illustrate. Specify the standards that will serve as the yardstick for performance evaluation. Articulate the goals that need to be achieved, both in the assessment process and in everyday operations. These goals should be both challenging and achievable, providing clear direction for the assessment efforts.
- **Set Specific Metrics and Processes:** Here, you'll identify and describe the specifics for what will be measured and how. It's about pinpointing exactly what success looks like for your team and how you'll measure it. These metrics will guide your assessment and help keep everyone focused on what matters most.
- **Engage the Team:** This part is all about involvement. Bring your team into the conversation about the goals and standards when appropriate. When everyone contributes to the discussion and agrees on the direction, it builds commitment and clarity. This step is crucial for ensuring that the entire team is motivated and aligned with the assessment's objectives.
- **Establish a Common Understanding:** Make sure everyone understands not just what the goals are, but also why they're important. This understanding is key to a cohesive effort and ensures that the assessment moves forward smoothly.

Sailors are often urged to measure up to 'the standard', yet rarely do we specify what the standard is. We must be more precise in defining the benchmarks we use for assessment.

– Kirsten Webb, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (N7)

Measures are concrete, quantifiable values that represent raw data or single points of information. **Metrics** put measures in context, are more abstract, and are often used to track and assess performance. An example of a measure is fuel consumption, the amount of fuel used by a ship or aircraft over a specific period. Examples of metrics are changes in fuel consumption over time and fuel efficiency, the fuel consumption of ships or aircraft relative to their operational output such as fuel used per nautical mile or the total distance traveled. Identify your metrics and measures early in the process.

TIP: Avoid the Telephone Game! Clear communication is crucial to prevent misunderstandings. Have direct conversations to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities in executing assessment tasks accurately.

Step 2: Assess

Objective: Gather the necessary data.

Next, move on to the Assess phase, where the focus shifts to collecting the data that you need to evaluate your team's performance against the set standards. This is where you gather the evidence to see how well your team is doing.

- **Determine Data Collection Strategy:** Identify the most effective methods and tools for gathering the necessary information. These methods may include surveys, interviews, performance reviews, and data extraction from existing reports and systems. Using focus groups and interviews can help uncover trends, areas of concern, and key factors affecting unit performance. Additionally, observing unit members during their day-to-day tasks can provide valuable insights.

  It's important to remember that just because some data is readily available and easy to collect does not mean it is the right data or will be helpful. Conversely, data that is challenging to obtain should be worth the effort, meaning it should be actionable and point to obvious next steps. Ensure that the chosen methods are efficient, appropriate for the information required, and aligned with the established metrics. Always obtain the necessary approvals to approach data owners and to handle, store, or manipulate the data appropriately.

The Navy Performance Improvement Educational Resource (**NPIER**) provides leaders with a toolbox of problem-solving methods. It is a content rich collection of data collection approaches and techniques that can help any leader on their journey towards operational excellence. Materials provided in the NPIER playbook include guidance on:

- **Surveys:** A method of gathering information from a sample of people representing the whole. Surveys are cost effective and can reach people quickly, but sometimes have a low response rate.
- **Interviews:** Individual meetings with stakeholders where a set of questions are asked and answered. These are great for exploring complex issues but requires trained interviewers and can be time-consuming.
- **Focus Groups:** These are group discussions on specific topics, facilitated by a representative of the assessment team. They are useful in uncovering diverse perspectives, but the dialogue can be influenced by dominant participants.
- **Suggestion Processes:** Feedback is solicited for ways to improve a product or process. These are easy to collect, but they might focus on isolated issues rather than the overall process.
- **Observations:** Individuals directly observe work in action and provide feedback in real-time. This is great for addressing practical issues but can be subjective in nature.

The Command Resilience Team (CRT) Guide offers guides and templates for these data collection methods, specifically for focus groups, interviews, and observations (**Command Resilience Team Guide, 2018**).

- **Organize the Data:** Once you have all the data, organizing it effectively is crucial. This makes it easier to analyze and ensures that you're working with accurate and complete information. Proper organization saves time and headaches later in the process.
- **Prepare for Next Steps:** After organizing your data, make sure it's set up for the next phase—analysis. This might mean doing a preliminary check to ensure that the data collected aligns with what you intended to gather and is ready for a deeper dive.

Step 3: Analyze

Objective: Make sense of the data.

In the Analyze phase, you'll dig into the data you've collected to see how it stacks up against the standards you've set. This is about turning raw data into valuable insights.

- **Comparative Analysis:** Evaluate how actual performance aligns with the established goals and standards. Analyze the collected data to identify any gaps between current performance and desired outcomes. Consider critical questions: Are there areas where the team excels, and what factors contribute to these successes? Recognizing these strengths is essential, as it highlights effective practices that can be applied elsewhere. This analysis not only uncovers weaknesses needing attention but also showcases team achievements, providing a balanced view of overall performance.
- **Visualization and Documentation:** Use visual tools like charts, graphs, and dashboards when appropriate to make your data easier to understand and share with others. Good visualization can bring key trends to light and make complex information more accessible, helping you and your team quickly grasp important insights. By choosing the right visualization methods, you can effectively communicate your findings and their implications, ensuring that everyone involved has a clear picture of the data. This approach not only enhances documentation but also makes it simpler to share your analysis and support informed decision-making.
- **Problem Solving:** Sometimes, the analysis may reveal complex problems that aren't susceptible to quick fixes. In such cases, you'll need go deeper into problem-solving using specific tools and methods to uncover the real issues and root causes. This might involve more detailed analysis or pulling in additional resources or expertise. For guidance on robust problem-solving techniques and strategies, refer to the chapter, Chart Markers: Key Resources and References, at the end of this playbook. Additional Naval resources are available for tackling complex challenges th require thoughtful, systematic approaches to develop effective solutions.
- **Determining Next Steps:** Based on your analysis, you'll decide on the appropriate actions. Some issues might need quick fixes, while others could require a more thorough strategy.

Using formal problem-solving methods to uncover the root causes of issues from your analysis may be necessary. Don't be satisfied with a surface-level understanding. Strive to gather the right data to understand the full picture. Know when to engage in a problem-solving cycle to catch and remediate both straightforward and complex issues.

I utilize data to help me better understand where we are from a performance to plan perspective.

– VADM Carl Chebi, Commander, Naval Air Systems Command

When students at the Navy Senior Enlisted Academy had repeated difficulty connecting to the internet, leadership came together to align on the current condition and the desired end-state. Their first action was to distribute a survey to determine which students couldn't connect to Wi-Fi. From there, they analyzed the results to identify the commonality among the students having difficulty. Data indicated that some students were routinely skipping a step in attempting to log on. The quick fix was to inform students and instructors of the issue and help them connect to the internet. The longer-term fix that emerged after finding the root cause of the issue involved addressing the source of the confusion. Leadership initiated a re-write of the Wi-Fi connection SOP to drive better clarity in the process since the previous process description had clearly resulted in misinterpretation and user error.

Step 4: Address

Objective: Implement practical solutions based on analysis.

The final step, Address, is where you take immediate, actionable steps to correct any deviations from the desired standards identified in the "Analyze" phase. This phase is about quickly implementing solutions that are straightforward and do not require extensive new planning or resources.

- **Implementing Immediate Actions:** Once you've analyzed the data and identified areas that can be improved with simple fixes, this is where you act. Promptly implement these changes within your team's authority and capability. These actions may include minor procedural adjustments, quick training sessions to address skill gaps, or small-scale changes in workflows or team structures. Maintain clear communication and coordination among team members to execute these solutions efficiently and effectively. The key here is that these solutions are directly actionable and can be quickly implemented and easily monitored to see the effects, and hopefully to improve performance.

From the USFFC Fleet Improvement Office, CAPT Matt Wellman calls upon his experience to execute quick fixes, such as

- Implementing visual management methods to keep everyone aligned
- Practicing extracting lessons and giving feedback
- Leading daily debriefs
- Identifying barriers that need to be elevated.

- **Documenting Actions and Rationale:** It's important to keep a record of what changes have been made and why. Documenting these actions helps maintain clarity and accountability. It also ensures that everyone involved understands the adjustments and the reasons behind them. This transparency helps in maintaining team support for the changes implemented.
- **Monitoring Short-term Effects:** After implementing these immediate actions, monitor their impact in the short term to ensure that they are effectively addressing the identified issues. This step involves observing how the changes influence team performance and whether they successfully improve the metrics identified during the "Assess" phase.
- **Elevate Barriers and Help Needed Up the Chain of Command.** While analyzing the data or implementing the action plan, you may encounter barriers or challenges that hinder progress. For issues or problems where additional support or resources are required, escalate these concerns and the requested support up the chain of command. Clearly communicate the nature of the barriers, the impact on the action plan, and the specific assistance needed. Engaging higher levels of leadership ensures that critical issues are addressed and that the team has the support necessary to overcome challenges and achieve the desired outcomes.

By focusing on quick and actionable solutions in the "Address" phase, you can ensure that efforts to drive improvements are made efficiently, allowing the team to see immediate benefits from the self-assessment process. This direct approach helps maintain momentum and encourages a proactive attitude towards continuous improvement within the team.

Cycle Repeats

After implementing immediate course corrections or completing the full problem-solving process, it's essential to reassess how those changes are working. This isn't a one-time task. Regularly revisiting each phase helps your team stay on track, adapt to new challenges, and ensure continuous improvement and alignment with your goals.

Although Step 1: Align is not part of the cycle itself, you and your team should revisit standards, goals, metrics, and process at a regular cadence or when an assessment event is initiated. Those events might be a new team or team member, standards have changed, you have new equipment, or something else. This step likely does not occur as frequently as the core cycle but should be integrated regularly.

Sustainment is continuous incremental self-improvement.

– Chris Tarsa, Executive Director, Naval Safety Command

Continuing self-assessment is so critical. It is the key. The secret sauce.

–ADM James Kilby, Vice Chief of Naval Operations (VCNO)

To effectively sustain the progress made through your assessments, it's essential to focus on maintaining gains while also pushing for even stronger results. Consider the following guidance that will help your team in identifying ways to uphold performance improvements and reflect on contributions to enhance overall effectiveness.

- **Maintain and Exceed Standards:** Once the team meets the established standards or goals, it's crucial to implement strategies that sustain this performance level. This may involve formalizing process changes, establishing standard operating procedures, and providing ongoing training for team members. Additionally, explore best practices and innovative approaches to exceed standards, ensuring sustainability even during personnel transitions. Remember, meeting the standard is not the end of the journey. Regularly reassess and set new, challenging goals to push the team further.
- **Reflect on Actions and Contributions:** Reflection is vital for continuous improvement. Conduct a hotwash or AAR to evaluate the self-assessment process and results, encouraging team members to identify what went well and what didn't. This practice recognizes individual and team efforts, enhances understanding of the processes used, and allows for the incorporation of lessons learned into future assessments. Remember to start the next assessment with a baseline of what was learned and implemented from the last round.

TIP: Encourage team members to reflect on their actions and contributions and identify three things that went well ("ups") and three areas that need improvement ("downs").

– SOCS Sean Grumbles, Navy Senior Enlisted Academy

PREPARING THE CREW: CREATING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS AND MINDSET

PREPARING THE CREW: CREATING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS AND MINDSET

Driving improvements in what we do and how we work requires honesty and the willingness to be open and vulnerable, both as leaders and within our teams. Therefore, a successful team and unit self-assessment can only occur if, as leaders, we deliberately focus on creating the right conditions for success. That includes being thoughtful about how to involve our teams in the process, ensuring everyone understands their role, and taking care to create the right climate and environment for the team to do its best work.

Engaging Your Team: Driving Compliance or Commitment?

Have you ever had someone drop a change on you, without any warning? Or perhaps a decision was made about how you do your job, and you felt strongly that the change was going to make things worse, not better? Sometimes issuing a change unilaterally is necessary for safety, privacy, or security reasons. However, when it isn't a matter of urgency or you aren't responding to an immediate threat, *how* you make change happen can be just as important as *what* the change is that you introduce.

There are times that you, as a leader, may decide to perform a team assessment independently. For instance, if you're preparing to mentor a new Sailor under your command or if you're auditing how your team conducted a safety inspection as part of a formal review process, it might be appropriate for you to conduct the assessment on your own. However, one of the best ways to achieve higher levels of operational readiness is to get the team itself involved in the assessment process.

When it comes to building a high performing team and running a tight operation, this is the bottom line: people support what they help create.

People support what they help create.

Think about it. When you have a hand in shaping the solution that will be implemented, aren't you already a little more receptive to it than you would have been otherwise? When people get a chance to weigh in and share their perspectives, they feel seen and heard. They feel respected and that their experience is welcome and helpful. Even if the final course of action differs from what they advocated for, their commitment to helping the team be successful with the change is higher and the process of implementing that new direction is often much easier. Compare that to individuals who are just complying with a mandate or an order. In those situations, they will do what is expected, but they often don't have the energy or motivation to offer up additional ideas or exert extra effort. People who are committed to a change will go above and beyond to make it work.

Compliance and creativity must both be nurtured in a top-performing team.

– Navy Leader Development Framework

As a leader, one of the most powerful things you can do to drive a continuous improvement mindset is to engage and involve everyone in the process, regardless of rank or rating. Accurate assessments and good ideas for improvement can literally come from anywhere and everyone. When you ask people to speak up and contribute, especially those closest to the work or to the topic, it shows respect for them and for the perspective that they provide. It also demonstrates that you, as a leader, are putting the Navy, and the welfare of all Sailors, above any personal agenda or ego. When those under your charge see and understand your intent to get better for everyone's safety and well-being, they become motivated to support and participate in these actions.

The table below provides guidance on when to involve others versus conduct your own team and unit self-assessment.

Regardless of the method you use for your assessment, be sure to explain not just your findings but also the rationale for the process you used to arrive at your conclusions.

If you do decide to perform a team assessment independently, be ready for a range of reactions. You may get questions about the intent and process, some curiosity, or a desire to help. When you share your findings, be prepared for hesitation, skepticism, or questions about your conclusions. These are all natural reactions. To counter these responses, and to model good leadership in all types of assessment processes, consider the following tips.

Conducting the Assessment with a Team or on Your Own

	Involving Others	Conducting on Your Own
When to Use	• Team members are available and have time to participate • Opportunity to model, teach or shadow those doing an assessment for learning or career growth • The focus area of the team assessment is complex and requires many viewpoints to get an accurate gauge on a situation and potential solutions	• Nature of assessment requires participation to be limited due to safety, privacy, or security concerns • Team assessment is done to provide feedback (performance or promotion review, coaching, counseling, or as requested by the leader) • Team members are not available to participate • Leader conducting the assessment is doing it to shape their own skills or to take stock of how a current operation is performing
Advantage	• Enthusiasm and ownership in the team • Increased morale and feeling of being valued • Increased confidence in the process and the solutions generated • More innovative and realistic solutions • Results are likely to be sustained • Smoother implementation with fewer gaps in understanding	• Quick start, full control • Streamlined decision-making • Clear accountability • Consistency in approach • Effective for urgent needs • Immediate action is possible

Tips for Driving Commitment to the Assessment Process

- ✓ Communicate openly about the reasons for the assessment and the intended outcomes
- ✓ Seek feedback and input at key stages to build buy-in and address concerns
- ✓ Explain how you believe the changes will benefit the team
- ✓ Provide opportunities for team members to lend their expertise and support the implementation process
- ✓ Recognize team member contributions (in the assessment process, in providing data and insights, generating action plans, briefing the results) to foster a sense of ownership and accomplishment

Creating Roles and Responsibilities

As a leader, it's crucial to model the mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors you wish to see in your team, demonstrating transparency, respect, and a commitment to continuous improvement. By thoughtfully shaping the roles each team member will play and the setting in which the assessment will occur, you set the stage for a meaningful and productive process and outcome.

If you decide to include your team in the assessment, the following table outlines common roles that team members might take on when conducting a team and unit self-assessment. It's important to understand that this doesn't mean you'll need a separate person for each role. These are the responsibilities or functions that need to be addressed, either by individuals or by a small group working together. In some cases, one person may manage multiple roles, using the list as a checklist to ensure all tasks are completed. For smaller teams, it might be 3-4 people collaborating to ensure that every responsibility is covered. Success hinges on discussing who will take on each responsibility and ensuring everyone is aligned with the process and their role in it.

Note that every assessment needs to have an Assessment Lead. If you, as the leader of your unit, assume that role, be sure to let the rest of the team members know what to expect from you when you are wearing that hat. If you delegate the Assessment Lead role to someone, be sure to let that individual, plus the rest of the team, know that you will be coaching that person and will expect a full report on both the process and the results from the assessment.

Roles and Responsibilities for Team and Unit Self Assessment

Role	Responsibilities
Assessment Lead	Oversees the entire assessment process, ensures deadlines are met, coordinates team efforts, and communicates with other teams or units. Prioritizes actions and creates implementation plans.
Data Collector	Collects data ensuring data reliability, accuracy, and completeness. As appropriate, conducts interviews, distributes surveys, and obtains pre-existing metrics.
Data Analyst	Analyzes data, identifies trends, and draws meaningful insights. Summarizes findings and develops actionable recommendations.
Communicator	Ensures effective communication of the assessment process and findings to all stakeholders. Creates presentations and reports.
Coordinator	Manages logistics, schedules meetings, and ensures smooth coordination among team members and other departments involved in the process or the implementation of solutions.
Independent SME	Provides expertise and insights specific to certain areas of operations. Conducts independent assessment and/or helps interpret data and validates findings.

On the value of using an independent SME:

I was able to bring in an outside source and he was super honest with me. He was an acquaintance, and I didn't know him outside of work. And that was helpful. When you bring in someone you respect, and who respects you, but you don't necessarily hang out after work, they can give you a better look. Don't pick your friends to help you assess.

– LSCM (SW/AW) Oscar Garcia, Navy Senior Enlisted Academy

The process of establishing roles and responsibilities when preparing to conduct the assessment drives accountability in the following ways:

- **Clarity in Responsibilities:** Clearly defined roles ensure that each team member knows their specific duties, reducing overlap and confusion. This clarity enhances accountability, as everyone understands what is expected of them.
- **Ownership of Tasks:** When team members are accountable, they take ownership of their tasks. This sense of responsibility leads to higher quality work and ensures that deadlines are met.
- **Tracking Progress:** Regular check-ins and progress tracking help maintain accountability. The Assessment Lead plays a key role in monitoring progress and ensuring that each role is performing as expected.
- **Addressing Issues:** When accountability is emphasized, issues can be quickly identified and addressed. This proactive approach helps in maintaining the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the assessment process.

At the same time, the team collectively has a role to play to provide encouragement and ensure the team gets the results it is setting out to achieve. Each team member can help in the following waysby:

- **Boosting Morale:** Encouragement and positive reinforcement help team members feel valued and motivated to perform their best.
- **Building Confidence:** Regular encouragement helps build confidence among team members. When individuals feel supported, they are more likely to take initiative and contribute innovative ideas.
- **Fostering a Positive Environment:** Encouragement creates a positive work environment where team members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feedback. This openness is crucial for effective collaboration and problem-solving.
- **Sustaining Engagement:** Continuous encouragement keeps team members engaged throughout the assessment process, ensuring sustained effort and commitment.

You set the standard by what you accept.

– VADM Carl Chebi
Commander, Naval Air Systems Command

Creating a Healthy Team Environment

Conducting a successful team and unit self-assessment starts by deliberately focusing on creating the right conditions and environment. A healthy team environment is a function of the physical space in which the team works and interacts, the psychological "space" or degree of safety and trust that exists within the team, and the climate or the "atmosphere" of what it is like to work in the team. Your goal is to foster trust and collaboration, not only in the assessment process, but in everything you do as a leader. By thoughtfully shaping the team environment, you set the stage for meaningful and productive problem-solving and solutioning.

Trust is critical . . . whether it's trust with leadership above the chain of command or trust inside a unit. We're not going to be successful if we can't foster that trust.

– Don Lesh, Director, Strategy Business Office, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command

Below is a simple checklist for things to put in place that will help encourage and foster a healthy mindset and collaborative workplace. Look through this list and think: which of these things am I usually pretty good about planning for and doing? Which ones should I focus on more? Which ones are possible given my operational environment? Do your own self-assessment.

You can also use this checklist to determine how one of your direct reports is doing in leading their team through assessments. Ask them to complete this checklist and compare their results to yours. Explore where you both are aligned and where you see things differently.

On how leaders can model accountability:

Embrace the red. It doesn't mean be OK with the red. It means be honest about it.

–LSCM (SW/AW) Oscar Garcia,
Navy Senior Enlisted Academy

Taking Stock: How Well Do I Set the Conditions for Team Self-Assessment?

Physical and Virtual Space	The actual location where the team assessment takes place, which should be comfortable and free from distractions to encourage focus and candid discussion.	The physical and virtual space you create to support assessment activity should be: ☐ Accessible to everyone who is invited to participate (appropriate security access given online and in person when needed) ☐ Reasonably comfortable with ability for team members to sit or stand without being crowded ☐ Conducive to hearing others talk ☐ Equipped to enable team to draw, write, post, or display information ☐ Equipped to enable team to record or store information (physically or online) during and after assessment process ☐ Be free from distraction	My rating: __/6
Psychological Space – "Psychological Safety"	The mental and emotional atmosphere should promote a sense of safety, trust, and openness.	As a leader, you should: ☐ Actively solicit input and feedback from team members ☐ Show appreciation for diverse perspectives and ideas ☐ Share your own mistakes and what you learned from them ☐ Frame errors as chances for growth, not failures ☐ Manage your emotions and reactions when presented with bad news ☐ Praise in public, discipline in private Team members should feel comfortable: ☐ Expressing their thoughts and opinions ☐ Disagreeing with or challenging others in an open and respectful dialogue ☐ Taking calculated risks or trying out new ideas ☐ Bringing bad news forward, or being honest about the current state, even if it is below the bar ☐ Knowing that others or their leadership won't humiliate, embarrass or ridicule them for sharing ideas or perspectives	My rating: __/11
Team Climate	How it feels to be a member and work in the team, including the sense and feeling of the atmosphere surrounding the work.	To ensure a positive clmiate, you should: ☐ Hold regular team meetings to share updates and provide a platform for problem solving ☐ Be transparent about decisions and changes affecting the team ☐ Be approachable, maintaining an open-door policy or virtual equivalent, encouraging team members to come to you with concerns or ideas ☐ Provide regular, constructive feedback and encourage peer-to-peer feedback. ☐ Model active listening behaviors and train team members in active listening techniques ☐ Ask questions and demonstrate curiosity ☐ Do what you say you will do to build credibility and trust	My rating: __/7

Having a checklist of what to do can help, but what does it look like in practice? Here's a story about how one senior enlisted leader experienced different levels of psychological safety working for different captains on three separate tours.

What does creating a psychologically safe work environment look like?

On this deployment, I was working for a captain that was more closed off. He wasn't really interested in addressing what was being done poorly as long as the minimum maintenance score was met. We didn't use team or unit self-assessments, at least not at their full capacity. They were just considered another task to complete. ***The leader didn't set a bar or standard and appeared closed off to any feedback that would be considered "bad news."***

On my next deployment, my new captain created an environment that was more open. He encouraged honesty and routinely offered help. It felt like he trusted my assessment of my operations and often asked me, and others, about options for improvement. He was open to these ideas, but there wasn't a standing practice or expectation across the board for everyone to do self-assessments. And I am not sure everyone knew how. ***This leader laid the conditions for continuous improvement to occur, but without directing it in a structured or disciplined way. Also, without teaching it to those needing help, the likelihood of reaching higher (and maintainable) levels of performance decreases.***

On my third deployment, I served under a captain that actively encouraged openness and teamwork across the entire crew. There was direct communication between command and the rest of the unit. This captain routinely asked for opinions on how to improve, directly engaging with everyone. He encouraged honest discussion; that didn't mean he accepted the results as good enough. But he wanted to know the truth and he pushed ownership for fixing things within the unit.

When you put in the work to create a positive team climate and operating culture, the immediate results are evident in the increased collaboration, trust, and overall satisfaction within your team. But the real payoff comes in the future. Through your actions, you teach your team valuable lessons on how to lead. Whether you realize it or not, they take note of everything you do. They make mental notes about what they want to emulate and what they want to forget when they lead their own teams. When done well, your positive impact can be huge.

Here's a story about how a senior enlisted leader unexpectedly made a positive impact on another Sailor's management style and technical proficiency, showing the influence you can have on others' leadership styles and even their career trajectory.

This one particular Chief Petty Officer (CPO) seemed satisfied with completing only what was required of him and was too comfortable following the status quo of his predecessor. He did not have the drive to improve or self-assess. After a series of unacceptable evaluations of his performance, his Senior Chief Petty Officer (SCPO) initiated a conversation with the CPO to address his behavior. For the next five months, the SCPO's goal was to shift the mindset of CPO and make him into a better leader. He wanted to raise the CPO's awareness of expectations and standards, and how what he was doing was falling well below the baseline expectation of performance. Although there were many times the CPO wanted to quit, his leader would not allow him to fail but coached him relentlessly and would not allow the standards to be compromised. The SCPO did not believe the CPO would re-enlist, given the tough leadership the CPO experienced under him.

Eighteen months later, the SCPO, now a Master Chief Petty Officer (MCPO), ran into the CPO on his new assignment. The CPO had also been promoted to SCPO and was thriving in his Naval career. The mentee told his former leader, "I wouldn't be where I am now without the constant coaching from you." He then went on to recall specific examples that helped him grow as a leader, and how the MCPO opened his eyes to what it meant to manage and lead against the standards.

This example speaks to the importance of leaders initiating conversations, even if they might be uncomfortable or difficult to have. Had the SCPO not taken the initiative to approach the CPO with the concern to improve, standards and performance would have suffered. Risks would have been introduced into the safety and readiness of the Fleet. As a result of the senior leader exerting strong direction, the CPO matured from someone who settled for the minimum, to someone who actively leads and trains others to strive for continuous improvement.

This ripple effect ensures that the principles of positive leadership, psychological safety, and a healthy team climate are passed on, shaping the ability of others to create thriving environments in their future endeavors. Your efforts not only improve the present but also build a legacy of strong, effective leadership.

MECHANIC'S TOOLBOX: ESSENTIALS FOR SMOOTH OPERATIONS

MECHANIC'S TOOLBOX: ESSENTIALS FOR SMOOTH OPERATIONS

This chapter will guide you through strategies for establishing a continuous self-assessment cycle in your team. If you're new to this, know that it's normal to stumble as you learn. The guidance here covers missteps beginners often face, and more importantly, what to do instead. You'll also learn about techniques for Visual and Daily Management, which are game-changers for avoiding many of these early blunders. People who master these skills not only sidestep common pitfalls, but also help keep their teams focused on the right goals and executing the plan more effectively. As you embark on this journey, set your expectations realistically—perfection won't happen overnight. Learning to assess and improve continuously are skills you'll build and refine over time. Embrace the red and give yourself room to grow!

Starting Strong: Avoiding Common Missteps

Before you dive into continuous self-assessment, it's helpful to be aware of some common missteps that many leaders encounter along the way. Drawing from the lessons shared by seasoned Navy leaders, we've compiled a list of the most frequent challenges. These include underestimating the importance of having the right resources in place, staying focused without getting bogged down in analysis paralysis, and following the process without becoming overly rigid. Further, constantly changing your approach or assessment criteria can lead to confusion and instability. Keep these insights in mind as you begin to develop your own disciplined practice.

> *We're not saying do more with less, we're saying maximize opportunities.*
>
> *– VADM Carl Chebi, Commander, Naval Air Systems Command*

Misstep 1: Underestimating the Resources Needed

A continuous self-assessment process can be resource intensive. Without proper planning, teams can end up feeling burnt out due to insufficient time, personnel, or tools to manage the process effectively. One of the biggest indicators of waste in self-assessment processes is when teams fail to take actions to follow-up and course correct on previous findings. For as much effort as gathering and analyzing data on a consistent basis requires, just as much effort needs to be put towards implementing changes and learning from those trials before a new self-assessment process begins. The efficient use of team time to plan, execute, and follow up on assessments is a key skill for leaders to learn.

How to avoid this trap?

- ✓ Conduct smaller scoped self-assessments as teams develop their skills and confidence.
- ✓ Plan for the necessary resources upfront, including tools, training, time for analysis, and participating team members.
- ✓ Assign the right timeframe to each set of goals or standards to be assessed. Not everything needs the same amount of attention and effort at the same time.
- ✓ Work within the resources you have available. Team and unit self-assessments can be tailored to meet the needs and parameters of your team and situation.

Consider looking at your options and prioritizing what areas to assess and when based on criticality to warfighter preparedness, safety of the crew, or other key factors. See below for an example framework for sorting and organizing the self-assessment schedule. This framework does not include every combination of criticality and risk but provides a starting point and a template.

Prioritizing Assessment Activities Based on Risks to Operational Readiness

Criticality and Risk Level	
Priority 1	**High Criticality & High Risk:** Tasks that are both critical to mission success and present high risk if performed poorly (e.g., safety protocols, mission-critical operations) require frequent and detailed assessments—at least weekly, sometimes daily, especially during high-intensity operations.
Priority 2	**High Criticality & Moderate Risk:** While still vital to mission success, these tasks carry a moderate risk if not performed well (e.g., equipment maintenance). They should be reviewed monthly or bi-weekly to ensure they are up to standard and do not pose future risks.
Priority 3	**Low Criticality & High Risk:** These tasks are less critical to the mission but could have a high impact if performed poorly (e.g., supply chain issues affecting readiness). Moderately timed assessments are sufficient here—about bi-weekly or monthly.
Priority 4	**Low Criticality & Low Risk:** For tasks that have minimal mission impact and low risk if they fail, such as routine administrative tasks, bi-annual, annual, or as-needed assessments are adequate unless specific issues are identified that require more frequent attention.

Criticality is a measure of how important the task is and how severe the results would be if one were to fail the task, while **risk** is the likelihood of a failure event occurring along with the severity of the failure.

Misstep 2: Getting Lost in the Data

Collecting good data takes a lot of effort. Going through the process, only to wind up with data that won't be used wastes precious time and can affect team morale if they feel their efforts were in vain. In addition, gathering too much data or the wrong type of data without focusing on what really matters can stymie progress. Teams or leaders can get overwhelmed with too much data to review and process. They may not know where to start or how to make sense of the findings. Priorities become murky as the team or leader loses sight of big picture on what they were assessing in the first place and why. Sometimes, they will find comfort in reviewing only quantitative data and will ignore qualitative insights (e.g. subjective accounts or evidence, team feedback). That can lead to an incomplete understanding of the situation, and potential insights can get lost in the noise.

How to avoid this trap?

- ✓ Identify the key metrics up front. Focus on quality not quantity. Narrow down the data you need to collect and analyze to the most critical and relevant.
- ✓ If you are just starting out, take the first few cycles to collect enough data to establish a baseline. Look at the results critically and really think about what this information is telling you.
- ✓ Ensure the data you collect has a clear action plan associated with any potential results. Ask yourself before you collect the data, if I found out that X is Y, what am I going to do? If you can't imagine the potential outcomes from the data, or what actions you will take in response, the data you are seeking may not be the most helpful. Consult others to double check your thinking.
- ✓ Combine quantitative metrics with qualitative insights (e.g. surveys, interviews, observations) to get a holistic view.
- ✓ Create a causal diagram, a visual representation of the relationship between different factors, to show the relationships between the data and why the system works as it does.

Misstep 3: Changing Assessment Criteria Too Frequently

Changing the metrics or the type of data you are collecting too often can make it challenging to measure progress over time. It can also result in confusion with your team or create the feeling of wasted effort. Some of the tips shared with other missteps also help address this trap.

How to avoid this trap?

- ✓ Take time to gather your baseline set of data. Really think through whether that data is helping you answer questions and provide insights about how you are performing against the standard.
- ✓ Make sure each metric has a clear action plan associated with it.
- ✓ Meet with your commander to review the results. Walk them through what you are assessing, why, and what you are learning from it. The act of verbalizing your thinking or explaining results allows you to clarify your ideas, often revealing gaps, sharpening your understanding, and helping you articulate your story or needs more effectively.

Misstep 4: Letting the Assessment Process Become Rigid

One common trap in self-assessment is when the process itself becomes the goal, rather than the means to an outcome. The assessment process is simply a tool designed to drive better operational performance. However, when we implement new processes, there's a risk of becoming overly focused on the mechanics and falling into a false sense of security. We might think that because we have the process in place—like an early warning and detection system—following it ensures success. But just adhering to the steps without critical thinking can lead to complacency. It's like assuming that following a recipe step by step guarantees a perfect result; in reality, external factors and nuances always need to be considered. Processes should guide us, not allow us to operate on autopilot.

Ask yourself: Are you good at checking boxes or are you good at your job?

How to avoid this trap?

- ✓ Stay outcome-focused and continuously remind yourself and the team that the process is a tool, not the end goal. Keep the focus on the results and outcomes you're trying to achieve, not just on following steps.
- ✓ Encourage critical thinking by regularly asking the team whether the process is still working for them. Ask, "Is this still getting us the best result?" Be prepared to hear honest responses and adjust accordingly.
- ✓ Schedule periodic reviews of the process itself. This "hotwash" ensures the method is still fit for purpose, adjusting it as necessary to keep it aligned with evolving needs.
- ✓ Use a friendly outsider, either a SME, peer or leader from another department observe your process. Invite him or her to participate in any hotwash or debrief activity. Have that friendly share their observations and challenges to the group.
- ✓ Keep processes simple and user-friendly. Overly complicated steps can encourage blind adherence rather than thoughtful execution, leading to people following rules without truly understanding their purpose.

Strategies for Smooth Sailing

The behaviors you exhibit will spread contagiously to your subordinates.

– RADM (ret.) Peg Klein,
Professor in the College of Leadership and Ethics, US Naval War College

Many common beginner challenges in continuous self-assessment can be overcome through practice, experience, and guidance. Daily Visual Management (DVM) is an action-oriented process used to run critical operations, with leaders relying on visual data to engage and align their teams with measurable performance goals. Another key concept in DVM is measuring the impact and outcomes of actions taken. By consistently tracking results, teams can ensure their efforts are making a real difference. Any area off track or out of tolerance is addressed urgently using problem-solving tools. Most Navy communities already implement some form of DVM, which serves as a consistent opportunity to "Get Real" and foster a culture of problem-solving and collaboration.

Visual management, the "visual" aspect of DVM, is a key tool for helping teams stay focused on the right outcomes, using visual cues to quickly assess current performance and guide adjustments. Coupled with the practice of regularly measuring results (daily management), this process helps teams avoid the trap of focusing on activity over outcomes. For visual management to be effective, visuals must be clear, regularly updated, and easy to understand. While DVM is widely practiced throughout the Navy, there are always opportunities to optimize its application. The next section will dive deeper into DVM, explaining how it, along with tracking outcomes, keeps teams focused on measurable results and prevents them from getting sidetracked by unproductive actions.

Staying Focused Using Daily Visual Management

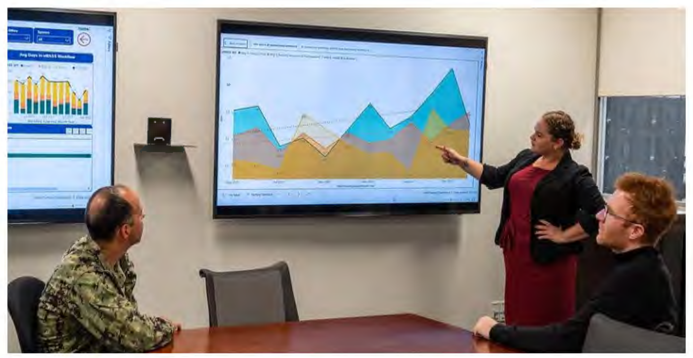
DVM, particularly the visual management aspect, involves using visual cues and aids to quickly communicate key information, enhance decision-making, and promote safer operations. It keeps teams aligned with both their goals and the standards they're expected to meet. This is accomplished through tools like whiteboards, posters, bulletin boards, signs, and other visual aids displayed in shared spaces where team members work and interact. The goal is to provide real-time visibility into critical metrics, results, processes, and standards.

> *As the incoming platoon chief, I take some time before changing anything and give the opportunity to step back and observe how the team operates. Before our workup begins, we come together for a roundtable discussion to define our expectations of one another. Through open conversation, we craft a clear set of platoon expectations to rally behind. We post it as a reminder and hold each other accountable to those standards, from the most junior to the most senior operator, ensuring we stay aligned with our goals as a team..*
>
> – SOCS Sean Grumbles, Faculty Advisor
> Navy Senior Enlisted Academy

For DVM to be effective, visuals must be frequently updated to reflect the current state of performance. This ensures that teams have a clear, immediate understanding of their status, making it easier to address any issues or inefficiencies. Done well, DVM streamlines communication, fosters transparency between leadership and the team, and raises accountability, helping everyone work toward shared goals. While many Navy units already use DVM, there are often opportunities to enhance these practices for even greater efficiency.

Using Dashboards

Using a dashboard or scorecard serves as an effective method to capture and communicate critical operational and administrative metrics. These tools can be as simple as handwritten entries on a whiteboard or as sophisticated as a set of printed charts posted in a communal area. This flexibility allows any operation to be effectively monitored and managed.



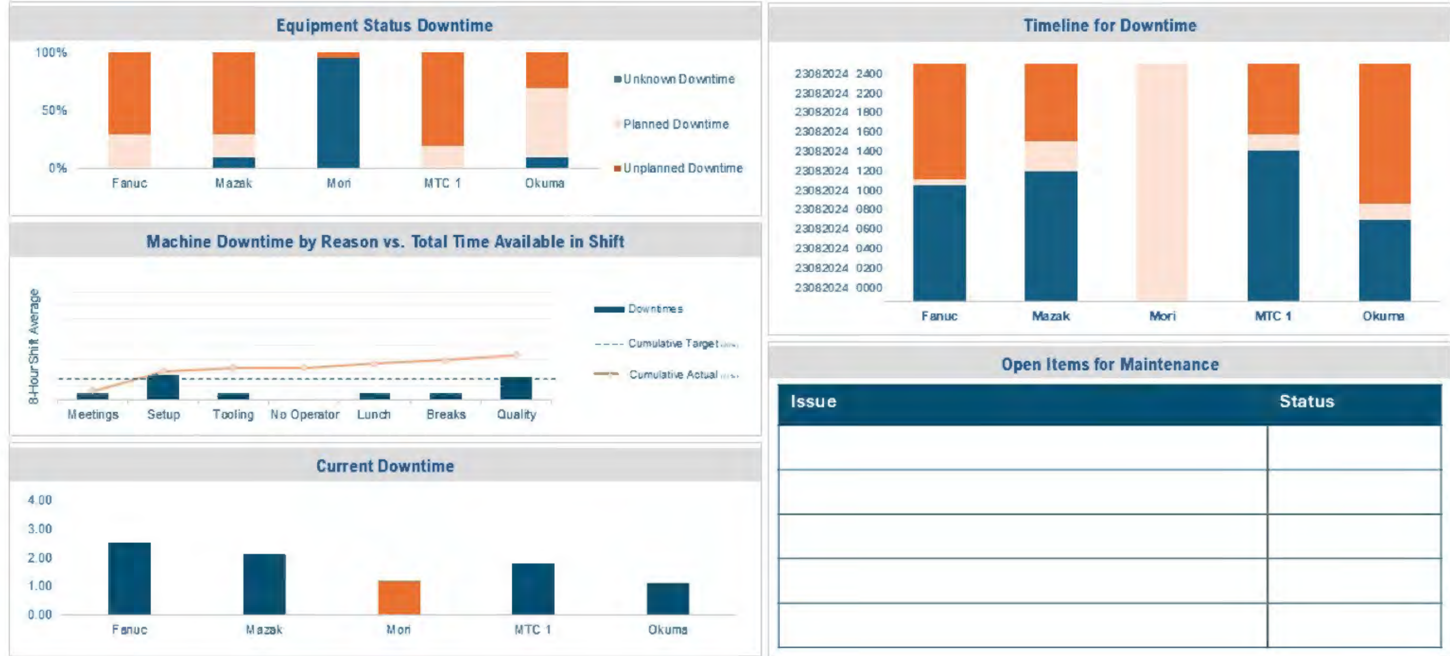
For administrative tasks, such as maintaining supply inventories, processing leave requests, handling official correspondence, managing payroll, and coordinating training schedules, a dashboard provides a clear snapshot of performance and progress. Similarly, operational tracking of elements like fuel efficiency, mean time to repair, ship maintenance cycles, and safety incidents, can also be effectively visualized.

Let's look at a few examples of what VM can look like on a whiteboard or bulletin board in a shared space.

Example: Equipment Downtime Scorecard

The equipment downtime dashboard below is an example of a vital communication tool for monitoring the performance of CNC (Computer Numerical Control) machinery and robotics systems used in ship repair operations. This dashboard provides a comprehensive overview of downtime metrics, categorizing events into planned, unplanned, or unknown downtime types. It highlights the specific reasons or root causes for each downtime incident, provides an indicator of the cumulative effect of downtime against a target downtime percentage, and allows operators to visually see what is causing downtime to surge beyond the target. Additionally, the dashboard tracks when downtime occurs for each machine over a 24-hour period, offering valuable insights into patterns and trends. This shared visibility in this example can empower maintenance teams to make informed decisions, optimize repair processes, and enhance overall operational efficiency.

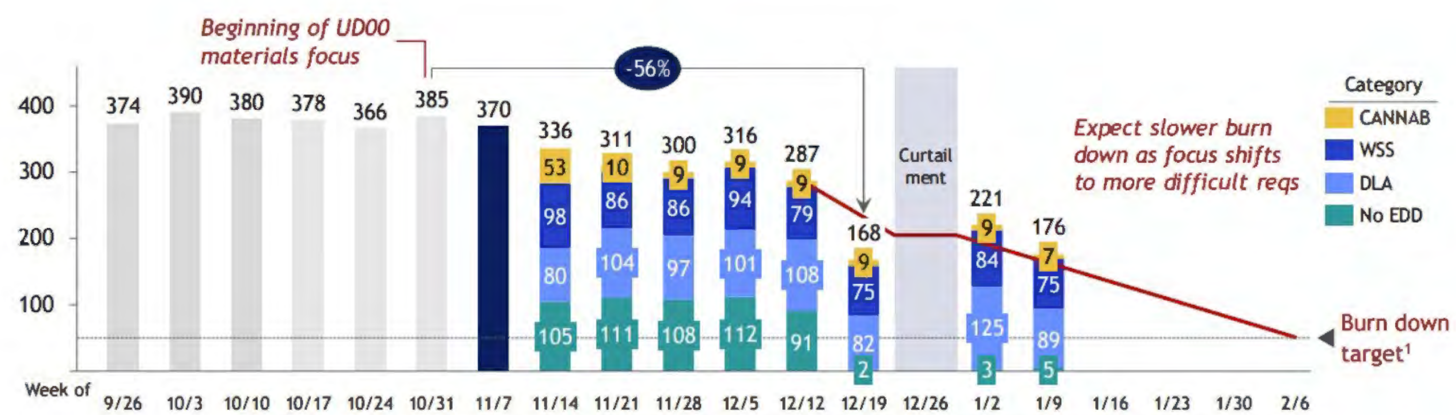
Equipment Downtime Scorecard



Example: Outstanding Parts Dashboard

The Outstanding Parts Dashboard is an interactive tracking resource developed for the USS Hawaii (SSN-776). It is an example of a production control board, a visual tool that provides frequent updates on the status of an operation. Such a tool can help communicate how well an area is performing and encourage team members to find and report problems. The example below uses additional visual management techniques, such as color coding, simple to read charts labeled with values, and specific, summarized information.

Outstanding Parts Tied to HAWAII UDOO



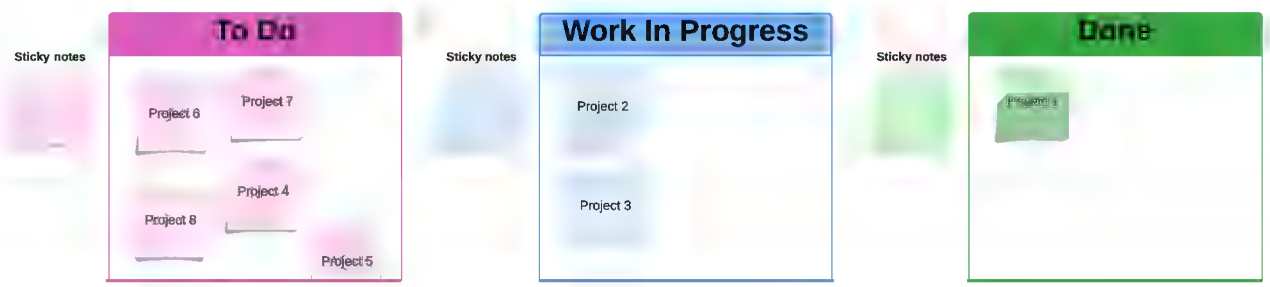
	11/7	11/14	11/21	11/28	12/5	12/12	12/19	12/26	1/2	1/9	1/16	1/23	1/30	2/6
Inflow	+50	+18	+46	+22	+36	+31	+26	--	+76	+33	--	--	--	--
Resolved	-65	-52	-71	-32	-20	-60	-145	--	-23	-78	--	--	--	--
Net change	-15	-34	-25	-11	+16	-30	-119	--	+53	-45	--	--	--	--
Total	370	336	311	300	316	287	168	--	221	176	--	--	--	--
Delta to target (50 reqs)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	+118	--	+171	+126	--	--	--	--

Example: Simple Status Boards to Keep Teams on Track

A giant whiteboard can serve as a central hub where people gather, add tasks, and track progress. Dashboards don't have to be limited to metrics; they can also track processes, monitor current work, and plan future tasks. One simple way to create this kind of "heads-up display" is through a kanban board.

"Kanban" translates to "signboard" in Japanese, and the concept comes from the Toyota Production System (TPS)—a groundbreaking approach that transformed global industries in the 20th century (Ohno, 1988). TPS focuses on eliminating waste, maximizing efficiency, improving quality, optimizing processes, and empowering team members to continuously find ways to improve operations.

Kanban boards can be physical or digital. A whiteboard or blackboard covered with sticky notes can inspire spontaneous discussions and encourage collaborative planning. For example, a procurement department might use a status board to track requests, categorizing them as "New Requests," "In Review," "In Progress," and "Resolved" in a common work area where everyone can see the status. Similarly, countermeasures from the 4A Compass process could be tracked under "To Do," "Work in Progress," and "Done." Some units within the Navy are familiar with the Deming Cycle, the Plan-Do-Check-Act model that also originated from lean manufacturing (Deming, 1982). Organizing team projects and countermeasures under these headers and displaying them in a public place might be a tactic that helps your team stay on track.



Dos and Don'ts of Good Visual Aids

Dos: Keys to Success

- Collaborate with team members to determine the right metrics to track and the best visualization methods
- Show actual conditions, such as "before" and "after" results or trends
- Make sure charts and graphs are easily accessible to all team members, promoting transparency
- Use the visual aids in huddles and debriefs, physically meeting near where they are displayed if possible
- Assign someone to update the metrics on a periodic basis
- Use color-coding or symbols to quickly convey the status of metrics (e.g. red for issues, yellow for caution, green for on track)
- Keep an eye on the goal, including scrapping any visuals that are no longer useful for tracking towards the standard

Don'ts: Practices to Avoid

- Display "stale" information with outdated or irrelevant data
- Create overly complicated visuals that confuse rather than clarify
- Present all the available data over just the most salient or important pieces
- Selectively report of only certain results not all metrics
- Depict everything as "green" (not embracing the red!)
- Build visuals, dashboards or whiteboards and never reviewing or referencing them with the team
- Usie visuals as a compliance tool, treating them as a requirement rather than a method for tracking improvement
- Put whiteboards or trackers in areas that are out of the path of the team

For more information, see the N-PIER Playbook

Physically Marking the Workspace

DVM relies heavily on creating visual order, helping teams easily track performance, spot issues, and promote continuous improvement. A natural extension of this concept is organizing the physical workspace itself to reinforce efficiency and clarity. This is where the 5S methodology comes into play, providing a systematic approach to not only optimize space but also enhance how visual cues are used to sustain improvements over time. These techniques have origins in Japanese manufacturing, and there are example pictures on the next page. By physically marking the workspace and maintaining a clean, well-organized environment, teams can better support the principles of daily visual management, eliminate waste, and improve productivity. The five steps in 5S stand for

1. Sort (remove unnecessary items keeping only what is essential)
2. Set in order (arrange materials in designated places)
3. Shine (clean regularly)
4. Standardize (establish procedures for maintaining organization and cleanliness), and
5. Sustain (maintain and continuously improve the 5S process).

Some effective 5S techniques that work particularly well in naval operations include foot printing, striping, and shadowing. You can find example pictures for each of the 5S techniques on the following page.

Foot printing involves using paint or tape to clearly mark the designated locations for personnel, tools, and equipment, ensuring everything is in its proper place. This technique helps maintain order and reduces confusion in busy or high-traffic areas.

Striping takes this further by using visual markers, such as lines or borders, to establish safety perimeters around hazardous equipment or restricted zones. These stripes provide a clear visual cue for safety, helping to prevent accidents by alerting personnel to stay within or avoid certain areas.

Shadow boards or **shadowing** are another valuable tool, where tools and components are organized in a way that visually indicates where each item belongs. By creating an outline or "shadow" of each tool, these boards make it immediately obvious when something is missing or out of place, ensuring fast retrieval and reducing downtime.

The term **strike zone** in VM is borrowed from baseball, where it defines the optimal area where a pitcher aims to throw a strike. Similarly, in the workplace, a strike zone refers to a clearly marked area—on the floor, walls, or other surfaces—indicating where materials, tools, or equipment should be placed for efficient workflow. Keeping things within a person's line of sight or reach ensures that essential materials, tools, or equipment are positioned in a worker's optimal field of vision, making it visually obvious where things belong. By keeping key items easily accessible, strike zones minimize wasted time searching and unnecessary movement. They are especially useful in environments like repair shops, inventory stores, warehouses, or offices, where organization and quick access are crucial. Just as in baseball, where the strike zone keeps the game flowing smoothly, in the workplace it helps maintain order, efficiency, and productivity.

Combining these physical marking techniques with **color schemes** or color-coded systems—such as red for warnings, yellow for caution, and green for safe or desired movements—brings a high level of order and discipline to the workspace. This structured approach helps teams maintain operational standards, improve safety, and ensure that equipment and personnel are where they need to be at all times. For information related to 5S, see *Chart Markers: Key Resources and References.*

Effective 5S Techniques

Foot Printing:

Visual markers identifying correct location(s) for personnel or assets.

Striping:

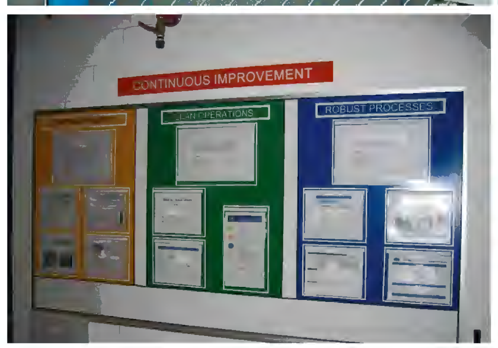
Establishing perimeters around dangerous equipment or restricted zones with paint or tape.

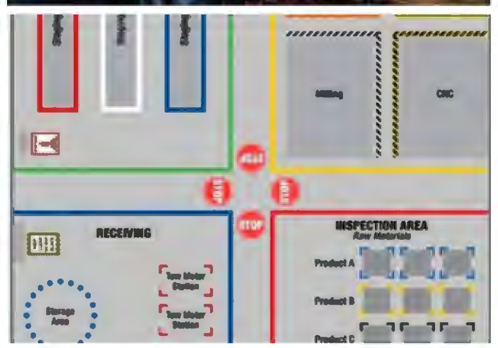
Shadowing:

Cut outs indicating where parts or equipment are to be stored.

Strike Zones:

Objects like gauges or signs are placed within line of sight of operators to communicate key information or provide warnings.





Color Schemes:

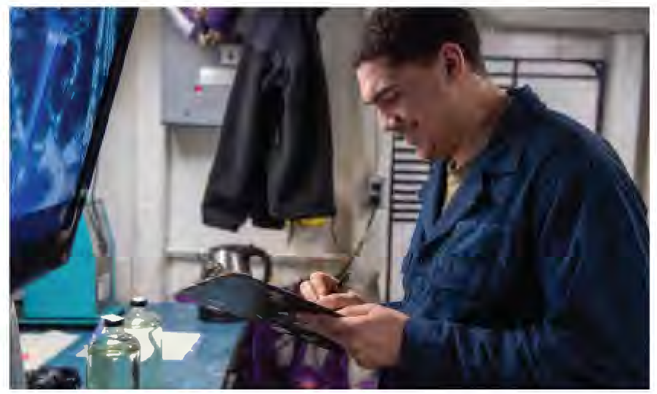
Designs and colors that differentiate the purpose or goal of a task.

Establishing Momentum by Measuring Impact

Jumping straight from one change to another without measuring the results is surprisingly common. It's easy to fall into because the excitement of making improvements feels productive. But without checking the impact of each change, it can become a cycle of endless tweaks with little real progress.

Why is it important to measure results?

- **Understanding What Works (or Not):** Without measuring outcomes, you have no way of knowing if a change actually made things better—or worse. Measuring outcomes allows you to pinpoint what's effective, what's neutral, and what might be a setback. This helps avoid wasting resources on things that don't move the needle.
- **Learning and Refinement:** Measuring allows for reflection and learning, both individually and as a team. When you can identify what worked, you create a feedback loop for ongoing improvement. It's how the team can learn to make smarter, better decisions over time instead of constantly guessing.
- **Focusing on the Right Things:** When results aren't tracked, you're essentially flying blind. You might think you're solving problems, but in reality, you could be masking symptoms while missing the root cause. Measurement allows you to focus your time and energy on the changes that will have the biggest impact.



What is the impact on team morale?

- **Positive Reinforcement:** When teams can see that their efforts are producing measurable results, it boosts morale. They get concrete evidence that their work matters and is making a difference.
- **Clarity and Focus:** A team that knows where it's headed and can see the impact of their actions will be more focused and aligned. This reduces frustration that comes from constantly changing direction or following strategies that don't seem to lead anywhere.
- **Avoiding Burnout:** Constantly changing things without understanding their effect can lead to fatigue and confusion. People start feeling like they're spinning their wheels, which hurts morale and engagement. Measured progress keeps things grounded and prevents wasted effort.

What is the benefit to you as a leader, given limited time and resources?

- **Efficiency:** Measuring results helps you avoid running in circles by allowing you to direct resources to actions that are proven to work. You don't waste time solving the wrong problems or fixing things that aren't broken.
- **Strategic Adjustments:** Sometimes, things take time to show results, and without measuring, you might prematurely abandon a strategy that would have worked with a little patience. Measurement keeps you on track and allows for strategic course corrections based on data, not just feelings.

The key to building a strong team and unit self-assessment process is striking the right balance between action and reflection. While action is essential, especially given the time and resource constraints we often face, it's just as important to pause and evaluate what's working. The goal is to maximize output and results while avoiding the common pitfalls of continuous improvement efforts. As this chapter has shown, VM and establishing the discipline of measuring outcomes—by regularly updating charts and graphs—can make you more efficient. It helps ensure that every step you take is informed, prevents wasted effort, and drives real progress. This way, you avoid the trap of constant, unfocused change and keep the team moving in the right direction.

DIVING DEEPER: TECHNIQUES FOR HONING YOUR APPROACH

DIVING DEEPER: TECHNIQUES FOR HONING YOUR APPROACH

Team and unit self-assessments can take many forms, depending on the purpose, the familiarity and comfort level of those conducting them, and the time and context in which they are carried out. In this chapter, we offer tips, stories, and lessons from seasoned leaders who have been conducting assessments in the Navy for decades. By leveraging their insights, you'll be well-prepared to steer your team toward success and enjoy smooth sailing ahead.

How Much Time Should the Assessment Take?

What do you do when you are pressed for time? What do you do when you are trying to coach and teach others how to follow a more thorough process? You can adopt different approaches depending on the situation and context, time constraints, and the degree of formality of the assessment process. Balancing the time available and what is required for the assessment will result in a successful team and unit self-assessment.

On one end of the spectrum, there can be short, tactical check-ins that happen daily. Each check-in is an instance of an assessment with the leader stating the goal or purpose (Align), inviting the unit to share insights on how an event or operation unfolded or is proceeding (Assess), coming to consensus on the impact and results (Analyze), and determining corrective actions needed (Address). An easy exercise to do is a 10-minute "Plus/Delta" discussion following an event where team members quickly discuss what went well, what could be improved, and action items as a result. You can use a whiteboard, piece of paper, or just a notebook to capture the insights. These quick debriefs allow teams to make minor adjustments in real-time, helping to continuously optimize performance for the next day's work. The accumulation of these "Plus/Delta" exercises can serve as the foundation for larger after-action reviews (AARs) or "hotwashes," where teams conduct deeper reflection on longer-term goals and challenges. Following up with the team via email to highlight tasks or discussion points further formalizes the process and serves as a reminder for each team member.

On the other end of the spectrum, sometimes a more lengthy and comprehensive assessment is needed because of the scope, complexity, or duration of the operation that is the focus of the inquiry. Here, the team takes an honest, detailed look at how they operate, examining processes, outcomes, and collaboration. This type of team and unit self-assessment often results in specific recommendations that are brought forward to leadership, influencing the direction of the unit for months to come. The emphasis here is on planning, where team feedback is central to deciding priorities for the longer term, incorporating staff input to ensure that future changes are grounded in the reality of daily operations.

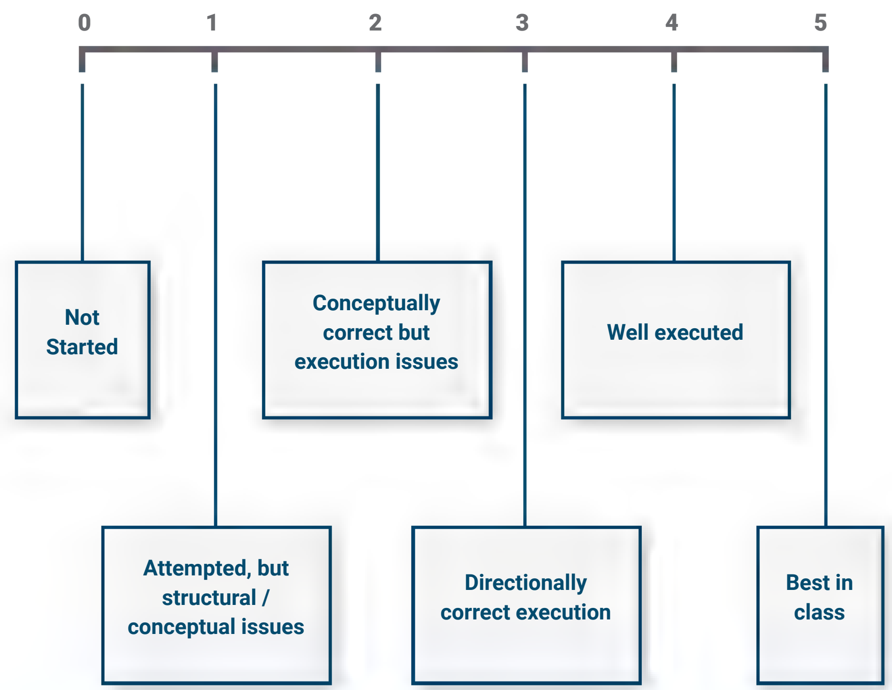
In 2023, Carrier Strike Group (CSG)-4 completed a unit self-assessment to evaluate their exercise design and execution of Composite Training Unit Exercises, used to certify units for deployment. They ranked themselves based on four design elements: syllabus objectives, training glidescope, event execution, and data and reporting. These design elements comprised of 21 individual item **metrics** that were ranked on a scale from 0-5 (0 not started the task, 5 "best in class"). The goal was to self-assess current performance and then identify targeted areas for improvement with specific actions assigned. Data was analyzed throughout the improvement efforts as CSG-4 implemented continuous improvements efforts to **address the gap** to reach the target state.

The primary goal of these **continuous improvement efforts** was to make processes repeatable for future exercises, prevent any single point of failure, and standardized measures across warfare areas. Weekly meetings were held to discuss current conditions and assign ownership to improvement areas. A scorecard to grade themselves against the standards was included in meetings as a method of DVM.

Best practice design elements

- **Syllabus objectives design elements**
- **Training glideslope design elements**
- **Event execution design elements**
- **Data and reporting design elements**

Intial assessment scale definitions



Ultimately, the time and effort required for each team and unit self-assessment is tailorable to the context and situation. There are a number of strategies one can deploy based on time available and formality required.

How Formal Should the Assessment Be?

The choice between a formal and informal approach depends on the context and goals of the evaluation. Formal assessments, using frameworks like the 4A Compass, are best applied in situations where a structured analysis is needed. In these scenarios, leaders can take the time to observe specific procedures and events or gather data from various sources, and then carefully evaluate whether the performance aligns with established standards and procedures. Methodically and systematically identifying deviations and documenting outcomes provide structure and rigor, which can be invaluable for establishing a baseline for future assessments and audits. Formal assessments often carry weight when used for other purposes, such as performance and promotion reviews or documenting training requirements.

On the other hand, informal assessments shine in more spontaneous situations. When you walk by a team and take a moment to observe their workflow, you can capture quick insights and provide real-time feedback. You will form immediate insights into how day-to-day operations are running. You will catch simple fixes, and even more importantly, actively demonstrate to others what you expect, and they will identify and stop issues before they take hold. Sometimes this is referred to simply as "leadership by walking around."

Leadership by walking around can involve noticing straightforward fixes to prevent serious hazards. For example, a commonly used ladder being wet may seem minor but poses a real safety risk, or seeing team members manipulating electrical systems with bare hands highlights a significant shock hazard. While the actions leaders should take are straightforward, failing to exercise these behaviors can lead to overlooking such risks, resulting in serious consequences.

While everyday observations and feedback cycles may not provide the comprehensive analysis that formal assessments offer, they are essential for helping you as a leader stay connected with the team's dynamics. These informal interactions provide real-time insights into the mood, concerns, and challenges faced by your team, allowing you to address issues swiftly. The communication patterns and expectation setting that are continuously reinforced are exactly what prevent little issues from blossoming into big, expensive, or unsafe problems down the line. Formal assessments, on the other hand, give you a structured, data-driven view of performance trends and organizational health. Both approaches have their place and, ideally, should be used in tandem to create a balanced assessment strategy that promotes continuous reflection, proactive problem-solving, and ongoing improvement in the unit.

Assessment Strategies based on Time Available and Degree of Formality Needed

Time Available	Informal Approach	Formal Approach
Less Time	**Quick Observations:** Walk by operators, spend a few minutes observing how work is being done. Use a pocket notebook to jot down observations. Capture key takeaways for immediate action. Share comments or questions in real time.	**Tactical Check-ins:** Conduct a 10-minute Plus/Delta exercise with a team once an event or operation has concluded. Discuss what went well, what didn't, and make minor adjustments for the next day or cycle. Take notes and make them available to the team.
More Time	**Deeper Informal Reflection:** Spend time observing multiple areas, on multiple days or across weeks. Talk to staff and note patterns. Look for trends to inform broader discussions. Use a pocket notebook to jot down observations, but track dates, times, operators and departments that were observed.	**Comprehensive Review:** Conduct a detailed AAR or hotwash, or present findings following a thorough evaluation of performance against an established goal and standard. Provide insights on the processes that were examined. Engage others to bring forward recommendations for leadership and/or plans for longer-term changes.

How Can I Get My Team Committed to this Process?

Securing buy-in for both the assessment process and for the changes that inevitably come out of the process is one of the hardest parts of continuous improvement. That is because you, as a leader, are trying to shape and change human behavior. The next few sections provide guidance on how to get that buy-in.

Know What Drives Behavior Change at Work

It is not enough for team members to see the need to become more disciplined in self-assessment. It is not enough for them to like the approach and tools you are introducing (although that does help!). **They must also believe that any extra effort they exert now will pay off in the long run.** In other words, they have to be convinced that the change is the right thing to do and is worth the effort, and they must have confidence in the unit's ability to implement that change and sustain it over time. No one likes to feel as if they have jumped through unnecessary hoops or wasted their time or energy.

Sometimes there are a few folks who don't buy-in when everyone else does. Often these individuals can be persuaded through seeing the effects of the change, whether that be implementing the team and unit self-assessment process or implementing a change resulting from the assessment. As the saying goes, "**the proof is in the pudding**."

Conditions that must be true for a team member to change their behavior:

- ✓ I get it (the change).
- ✓ I like it (the change).
- ✓ I believe it is going to work.
- ✓ I believe the outcome is worth the effort.

Meeting all these conditions with each team member at all points in time during a change is not easy. When significant questions remain across any of the conditions above, it may be difficult to motivate, enlist, and engage others in your improvement efforts. In their research and practice, Loup and Koller (2005) suggest that, at best, you will get compliance. But you won't get the passion, excitement, and extra effort from people truly committed.

Removing autonomy removes motivation.

– MCPO George Chesney,
Navy Senior Enlisted Academy

Recognize Autonomy as a Powerful Motivator

Autonomy in the workplace is a powerful motivator that enhances Sailor engagement, job satisfaction, and performance. When individuals are granted the freedom to make decisions regarding their work, they feel a greater sense of control and ownership, which fosters pride and initiative. This empowerment taps into intrinsic motivation, encouraging creativity and problem-solving, as employees take responsibility for their outcomes. As a result, they become more committed to organizational goals and report higher levels of fulfillment, reducing feelings of burnout.

One of the things I see is the need to do some ghostbusting now and again. There are the ghosts of decisions from 20 years ago that are no longer helpful and can still haunt the hallways.

– CAPT Ken Kleinschnittger

Delegating authority or decision-making power is one way to instill autonomy in a direct report. Giving them space to experiment or execute a task in a way that works best for them, without micromanaging or criticizing their approach, also instills a sense of initiative in those you lead. This can lead team members to feel responsible for the task and result in greater commitment.

I have fairly senior people that report to me. I don't make the plans. I meet with them and show them where I want to go. I'll say, "I want to be all the way over there. How do you want to do it?" They make the plans. This is extremely effective. They take ownership and they have a hand in figuring out how we are going to do it. I am there as a partner and supporter, providing feedback and checking in, "Hey are you guys on target or not?" But the plan is theirs.

– Chris Tarsa, Executive Director, Naval Safety Command

Encourage Experimentation

One of the ways you as a leader can create the conditions for continuous assessment and improvement is in encouraging experimentation. Experimentation is a catalyst for innovation, allowing individuals and teams to explore uncharted territories and test new concepts without the fear of failure. Within reason and with a safety mindset in place, encourage risk taking and trial and error. Allowing team members to be creative and use their ingenuity will add to their sense of autonomy and make them feel more responsible for the task and the team's success.

Ask your team to think creatively and push boundaries, challenging the way things have always been done in favor of new approaches. After each experiment, whether successful or not, talk publicly about what was done, what the impact and results were, and what was learned. Have the team members who led the experiment be seen as leaders, tasking them to show the results and explain their work to their peers. Making this a routine practice, talking through successes and failures, will also spark fresh ideas and solutions. Avoid assigning blame for misses or discouraging individuals from suggesting new ideas, as this will shut down innovation and creativity faster than any other tactic.

The following story perfectly illustrates how one leader was thinking creatively about how to satisfy training requirements while demonstrating risk-taking and innovation to his squadron:

Helicopter squadrons must maintain search and rescue (SAR) readiness requirements, which requires crews and rescue swimmers to maintain currency in SAR jumps and hoist evolutions. Most squadrons conduct a handful of major SAR recurrency events every six months to maintain minimum currency. In preparation for an upcoming deployment, our squadron wanted to move beyond currency requirements and achieve increased proficiency. Every time a section of helicopters returned from an event, we would have them add-on a 15 minute live SAR exercise with each aircraft performing safety overwatch for the other. This increased the readiness of all crew members and improved confidence that we were ready for all possible deployed scenarios.

– CAPT Matt Wellman,
USFFC Fleet Improvement Office

How Do We Maximize the Impact of Our Assessment?

Long term change happens when actions become repeated and reinforced, and those repetitions become ingrained patterns of "how things work around here." The key to long term adoption of continuous self-assessment and improvement is in establishing the cadence of activity, holding the appropriate parties accountable for actions and results, celebrating both the big and the little wins, and keeping up the pressure and momentum to aim for even bigger results. Wash, rinse, repeat.

Wash.
Rinse.
Repeat.

Establish a Cadence

Developing a cadence for team and unit self-assessment is crucial for continuous improvement in the Navy. Cadence, or the regular rhythm of activities, enables consistent progress and sustained performance enhancement. Questions to ask yourself as you establish this rhythm for continuous self-assessment include:

- How often does the unit need to review the goals and standards?
- At what intervals are data points collected?
- At what intervals are data points analyzed, reviewed, and discussed?
- What actions should the team take before, during, and after formal checkpoints?
- Are due dates communicated and understood?
- What can I get ahead of to avoid interruptions to our activities and progress?

Tip! See sections *How Much Time Should the Assessment Take?* and *How Formal Should the Assessment Be*? for additional considerations for establishing a cadence.

Cadence matters because it provides predictability and regularity, which are essential for maintaining focus and discipline. It contributes to building a structured environment where self-assessment is an integral part of daily, weekly, or monthly operations. This regularity ensures that issues are addressed before they become critical, improvements are continuously made, and team members know what to expect and when. Moreover, a consistent cadence allows for the collection and analysis of performance data over time, helping teams to identify trends, measure the effectiveness of interventions, and make data-driven decisions.

However, sometimes the operational tempo can interrupt the cadence that you have worked so hard to establish. What is possible during peacetime is not always possible during conflict. What is possible while a unit is deployed might be interrupted by the unpredictability of external factors while in port. Keeping a cadence as predictable as possible is important across the board, including team and unit self-assessments and training. Take a look at how one leader works hard to establish predictability with his units.

The biggest problem my Sailors had was the non-consistency of things. Their way of thinking is "I need to know when training is so I can plan my life around it. If I expect to have training at 0900 and then tomorrow it is at 0930 and then next week it is at 1030, I can't get into a rhythm." On the ship it is all about rhythm. On a deployment, it becomes like Groundhog Day, I know where and when I am eating, I know what I am doing, I know where I am supposed to be. It makes the days go faster because the rhythm doesn't change. So, when I had training on the ship, I kept those time slots consistent – Tuesday and Thursday at 0900. If something came up that trumped training, we just didn't do training that day. I wouldn't move the training. There wasn't going to be guesswork on what we were doing on any given day. Maintaining that standard across the board for longer periods of time worked out extremely well for us.

We came back from deployment and the ship went into the yard. The reason people hate the shipyard so much is because there is no rhythm. The yard period is the hardest thing you do, because you have all these other organizations needing to get their work done, interfacing with you, and their work is the priority. We needed to establish a normal battle rhythm with all of those stakeholders, this code, that code, this shop, that shop. I needed to understand what their expectations were, what they needed from me, what I needed from them. We needed to have alignment, instead of each one coming in at different times or one after another to see us and we just get into a pattern of putting out the biggest or next fire or attacking the alligator closest to the boat.

– MCPO George Chesney, Navy Senior Enlisted Academy

Hold One Another Accountable

Keeping a team on track requires continuous communication. One effective strategy is to hold **periodic status meetings** where team members discuss what they committed to doing, what they actually accomplished, what they learned, and what the next steps are. This not only promotes transparency but also encourages learning from experiences and promotes unit alignment. Holding one another accountable can easily fit within an established cadence for self-assessment.

Some leaders find that simple actions, such as ensuring key dates, deadlines, and events are visible to everyone through the use of **shared calendars or reminders,** are very effective. Employing **activity trackers**, such as Excel spreadsheets or task lists, can provide a clear overview of goals, steps, timelines, and accountable parties. Regular **wrap-up emails** sent weekly can help you keep priorities and activities top of mind for the team, enhancing shared situational awareness. Visual workplace management techniques, like **using whiteboards**, can create focal points for priorities and status updates, and facilitate huddles for quick discussions.

Key Strategies for Keeping the Team on Track:

- Weekly Accountability Meetings: Discuss commitments, accomplishments, status, learnings, and next steps.
- Shared Calendars: Highlight key dates and events to maintain awareness.
- Goal Trackers: Use activity trackers or spreadsheets to list goals, steps, timelines, and accountable parties.
- Periodic Wrap-Up Emails: Send weekly updates to monitor progress and ensure shared situational awareness.
- Daily Visual Management: Implement whiteboards for quick access to priorities and status updates.

Celebrate Progress

Celebrating progress is crucial for maintaining team morale and motivation. Recognizing achievements not only validates the hard work put in by the team but also creates a positive reinforcement loop, encouraging continued effort and dedication. When you take time to celebrate milestones, whether big or small, it fosters a sense of accomplishment that can energize the team to tackle the next challenge and builds a culture of excellence.

Celebrations can be simply a pat on the back, public recognition in a team meeting, a shout out in an email or newsletter, time off as a reward, a lunch or team barbeque, a hand-written note of appreciation, or just a one-on-one acknowledgement expressing gratitude. However, you choose to mark the occasion, do it with authenticity and in earnest.

Keep Pushing for More

Building a culture of excellence through team and unit self-assessment involves integrating these practices into the fabric of your operations, making them second nature and part of how things get done. As you become more adept at self-assessment and adopt the practices outlined in this playbook, you'll find that you can continuously identify and address minor issues before they escalate into larger problems.

It's not just self-assessment, but also self-improvement, otherwise you're missing half of the equation.

– Chris Tarsa, Executive Director, Naval Safety Command

However, relying solely on routine can lead to a false sense of security. It's easy to let established processes take over, diminishing the critical thinking necessary for effective self-assessment. Therefore, it's essential to periodically review the assessment process itself. Engage the team by asking critical questions, such as:

- How can we ensure the sustainability of our standards?
- What steps can we take to make our practices repeatable?
- How do we continue to derive value from our continuous improvement initiatives?
- Are there practices we've adopted that are no longer effective or beneficial?

Just as celebrating milestones is vital, taking time to reflect on improvements reinforces team commitment and further strengthens a culture of excellence.

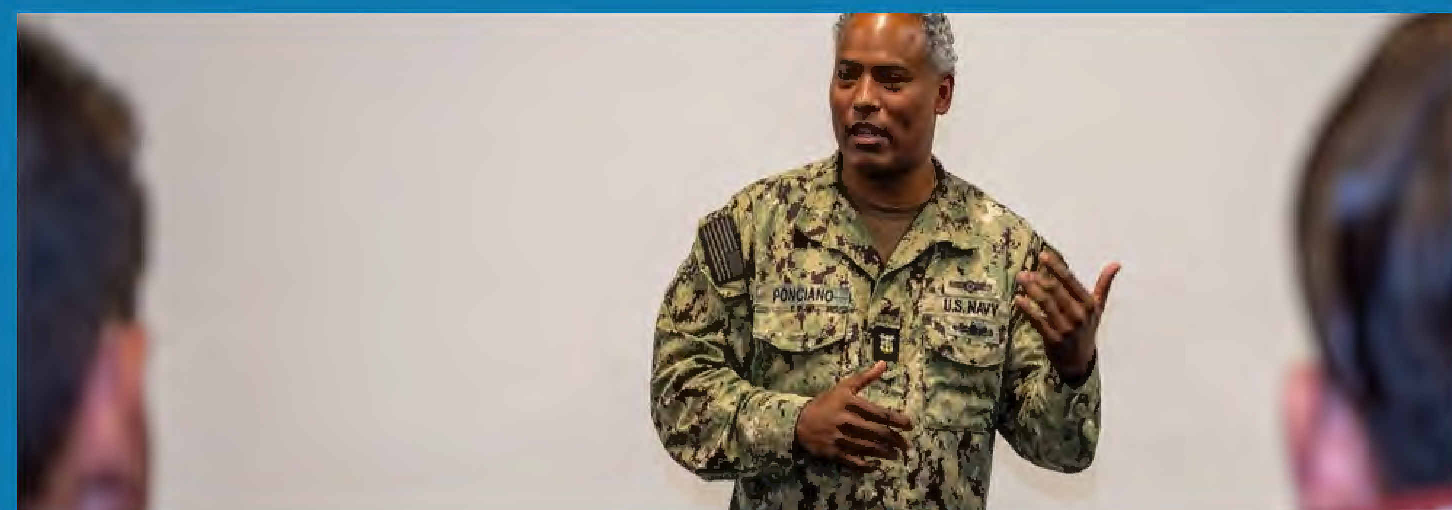


CHART MARKERS: KEY RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

CHART MARKERS: KEY RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

This chapter is dedicated to assisting users by providing supplemental resources to the content in previous chapters. See below for additional support with and information on 1) conducting team and unit self-assessments, 2) assessment and problem-solving 3) building healthy teams 4) the Navy's Get Real Get Better initiative, and 5) other Navy resources where you can learn more and find additional support.

Conducting Team and Unit Self-Assessments

In the main body of the document, you may have completed the Meta-Assessment to establish how well you are currently conducting self-assessments. If you scored a 2 on any of the items, you were directed here. However, if you did not complete the assessment, the below questions can still help you reflect and think through your team and unit self-assessments and the processes you use.

The 4A Compass

Step 1: Align

- ☐ Do you have clear goals and standards for the assessment?
- ☐ Are the goals SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound)?
- ☐ Do the standards align with command and unit/team expectations, and are they agreed upon by the team?
- ☐ Do you have specific questions the assessment is meant to answer?
- ☐ Are the metrics measurable, relevant to the goals, and verifiable across individuals or sources?
- ☐ Are there plans for integrating and implementing the self-assessment?
- ☐ Do the participating team members know the timeline, understand their roles, and have the necessary tools/resources?
- ☐ Are the assessment goals and protocol transparent to all participants?
- ☐ Are there plans to address delays, unmet milestones, or unexpected results?
- ☐ Does the assessment align with urgent needs or high OPTEMPO decision-making?
- ☐ Is participation diverse and representative of the team or unit?
- ☐ Are there existing knowledge management plans and resources to support the assessment?

Step 2: Assess

- ☐ Who has the information you need to better understand your current performance?
- ☐ Have you identified and have access to relevant individuals (or sources) with key insights into the metrics and performance indicators you're assessing?
- ☐ Is there a clear plan for data collection, storage, and traceability?
- ☐ Will you collect quantitative data (e.g., ratings), qualitative (interviews, observations), or both?
- ☐ Is the data collection method appropriate for your type of data and metrics?
- ☐ Do you have a plan in place to ensure you take steps to properly safeguard, if needed?
- ☐ Do you or your team have any concerns about the information being collected?
- ☐ Are tools or resources in place to store, organize, and analyze data?
- ☐ Do you have a plan to prepare the data for analysis?
- ☐ Is someone else (outside of your team) responsible for collecting or storing the data?

Step 3: Analyze

- ☐ Do you have a clear data analysis plan and is it appropriate for the type of data you collected?
- ☐ Did you identify who would analyze the data, interpret results, and share the findings?
- ☐ Are there safety, privacy, or security concerns regarding the results of the assessment?
- ☐ Did the results indicate deviations from the standard or the goal, and do they make sense?

- ☐ Were the initial questions and objectives met?
- ☐ Are the visualizations or representations of the data accurate and audience-appropriate?
- ☐ Are findings shared clearly and transparently with stakeholders and team members?
- ☐ Are findings documented for transparency and future reference?
- ☐ Are next steps and goals developed collaboratively with the team and aligned with team and command expectations?
- ☐ Is there a process to address deviations from the standard?
- ☐ Did you identify whether you can make a quick fix, jump into problem-solving, or elevate the issue?

Step 4: Address

- ☐ Are resources and support identified and available to execute the plan?
- ☐ Is the timeline appropriate, transparent to all stakeholders, and monitored effectively?
- ☐ Are quick fixes or barriers identified and addressed?
- ☐ Do you have a process for tracking, documenting, and communicating steps toward goals?
- ☐ Are lessons learned, successes, and challenges documented for future use?
- ☐ Is there a system for after-action reviews and reflective discussions?
- ☐ Are methods for maintaining standards or goals in place?
- ☐ Are barriers, issues, and challenges elevated effectively?
- ☐ Are performance standards consistently reported or logged?
- ☐ Does the team understand their role in executing the plan?

Preparing the Crew

Engaging Your Team

- ☐ Do you include team members in decision-making?
- ☐ Are improvement decisions made collaboratively?
- ☐ Can team members share perspectives during discussions?
- ☐ Are major changes discussed with the team beforehand when feasible?
- ☐ Do team members voluntarily suggest improvement ideas?
- ☐ Do team members voice challenges as they arise?
- ☐ Are there regular discussions on operational effectiveness?
- ☐ Do you hold consistent team meetings?
- ☐ Are team goals or standards clearly established and communicated?
- ☐ Do team members support and hold each other accountable?

Creating Roles and Responsibilities

- ☐ Have you previously assigned assessment roles within the team?
- ☐ Are assessment roles and responsibilities clearly defined?
- ☐ Is there a plan for assigning and communicating these roles?
- ☐ Are team members aware of and committed to their roles?
- ☐ Can team members articulate their role responsibilities?
- ☐ Do you have a system for tracking assessment progress?

Creating a Healthy Team Environment

- ☐ Is there a physical or virtual space conducive to assessments?
- ☐ Do you manage emotions well when hearing bad news?
- ☐ Do you share your mistakes and lessons learned?
- ☐ Do you treat errors as opportunities for growth?
- ☐ Does the team frequently recognize and encourage one another?
- ☐ Are you and your teammates honest and open in daily operations?
- ☐ Are you receptive to and do you give constructive feedback?
- ☐ Do you maintain an open-door policy for feedback?
- ☐ Do you model active listening?
- ☐ Do you follow through on your commitments?

Assessment and Problem Solving

As the Navy continues to move towards a mindset of continuous improvement, additional instruction and initiatives have been developed to build upon the concepts of team and unit self-assessment and properly educate Sailors. In this section are playbooks dedicated to assist with assessment and problem-solving. Included in the Programs section are systems and frameworks put in place to teach and guide Navy leaders. Lastly, described in further detail are models of assessment and problem-solving that inspired content of this playbook.

Playbooks

Navy Performance Improvement Education Resource (NPIER): Provides a toolbox of proven problem-solving methods for any level of Echelon to use. The purpose of NPIER is to provide methods to problem-solve that do not require advanced data analysis techniques.

Performance to Plan (P2P) Playbook: A playbook that leverages the proven problem-solving method of driver-based performance management to support transparency, accountability, accelerated learning, and data-driven decision-making in the Navy.

Programs

Flag and Executive Leader Implementation Course (FELIX): A three-day course that teaches Navy senior leaders how to properly self-assess and problem-solve. Attendees learn about leadership behaviors described in the Get Real, Get Better initiative, change management modeled through ADKAR (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, Reinforcement), and several methods for problem-solving.

Naval Sustainment System—Shipyards (NSS-SY): A Navy corporate initiative focused on meeting on-time ship and submarine delivery commitments at all naval shipyards. This Navy-wide approach is designed to address all functional areas affecting execution performance in public shipyards to include planning, material procurement, engineering, waterfront execution, facilities, information technology and Fleet partnership. At the heart of NSS-SY is the Get Real, Get Better approach.

Navigation Plan Implementation Framework (NIF): A framework for producing and sustaining readiness, capabilities, capacity, and Sailors that enables the Navy to employ powerful problem-solving methods across 18 coordinated objectives.

Navy Lessons Learned Program: A program meant to promote process, policy, and responsibilities to systematically refine and improve Navy operations while integrating lessons and best practices policy.

Navy Safety Management System (SMS): A formal organizational-wide approach to managing safety risk and assuring the effectiveness of safety risk controls. An SMS often involves a systems approach that inculcates procedures and policies throughout the command to achieve desired goals: Safe Place, Safe People, Safe Property/Material, Safe Processes/Procedures (4Ps). An SMS must provide resilient, defense-in-depth based system that instills continuous learning.

This SMS framework establishes a unified and resilient safety management system across the Navy, predicated on a risk control system that delivers decisive management of risks and issues to ensure operational excellence through continuous improvement. The aim is an effective SMS that avoids unnecessary harm to people or damage to equipment across the entire scope of the Naval activities.

Supporting materials for the Navy SMS:

- **4P's Risk Resilience**
- **Assurance and Assessment Process**
- **Assurance Directorate**
- **Risk Registry**
- **SMS Overview**
- **Navy Safety & Occupational Health Manual**

Navy Safety Management System Levels of Assessment: A three-party (i.e. level) assessment framework to determine whether a command identifies, communicates, and accounts for risk at the appropriate level. At each level, an accountable person has the authority and responsibility for the execution of the SMS or Safety Management Plan (SMP). That person is to ensure that risks and issues associated with equipment and resources, competent persons, infrastructure and compliance are identified, controlled, and owned. That person owns the risk within their command and their responsibility cannot be delegated. A description of the three Assessment Levels is below.

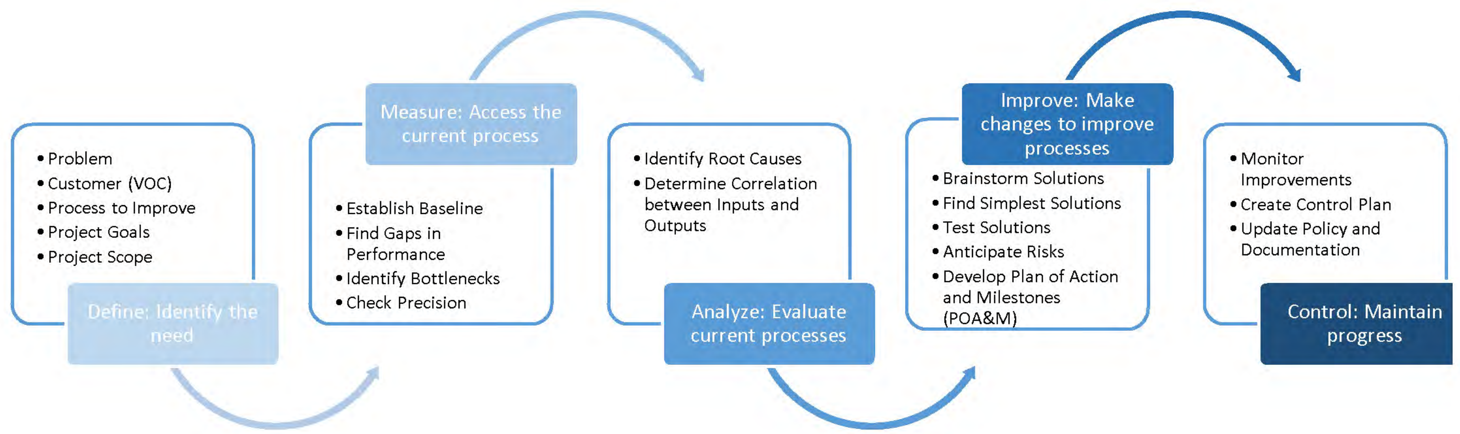
- **1st Party - Self Assessment**: Commands and units assess the effectiveness of risk management through their SMS.
- **2nd Party - Senior to Junior Assessment:** Commands assesses the effectiveness of their subordinate commands' SMS or SMP.
- **3rd Party – External Assessment:** An assessment from an outside party, performed by NAVSAFECOM.

The first two parties provide the framework for commands and their subordinates to implement and execute continuous monitoring of their risk control processes. Once the command determines that they and their subordinates are safe to operate and operate safely, third party assessments performed by NAVSAFECOM can be conducted. For more information take a look at the previously mentioned supporting Navy SMS materials, including the **Risk Assurance and the Assessment Process information sheet.**

DMAIC Framework

DMAIC is a data-driven improvement cycle that stands for Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, and Control. Its purpose is to methodically identify inefficiencies and problem areas with the goal of improving, optimizing, or stabilizing existing processes. It has evolved to become a non-linear process through dynamic application of problem-solving tools and methods that focus on determining current state, establishing a standard, identifying problems and developing solutions, and continuous improvement and learning.

The first step of DMAIC is to **Define** the problem statements, opportunities for improvement, the project goals, and stakeholder requirements. This can take the form of gathering information to define statements and the extent of the problem. Stakeholders should assist in driving the focus, scope, direction, and motivation for the improvement team.



Some simple questions to ask yourself during the define phase are

- Why are we working on this project?
- What is the scope of this project? Is it broad enough to be important but narrow enough to be doable?
- What is the current process, and why do we need to improve it?

Tools to implement and organize the define phase include

- A3 Processing Report
- SIPOC Diagram
- Voice of the Customer inquiries (VOC)

The purpose of the second phase, **Measure**, is to understand the extent of the problems identified in this first phase. The objective is to identify existing processes and measure potential causal factors. During this phase you will establish a baseline of the current process and collect data, while also validating the measurement system.

Some questions to ask yourself during the Measure phase are

- How is the current process performing?
- What should be the target for success?
- Are there opportunities for "quick hits" to realize immediate improvements?

Examples for value stream mapping in the measure phase are

- Current State Process Mapping
- Pareto Diagram
- Spaghetti Diagram

The third step of DMAIC is **Analyze**. The purpose of this phase is to determine the root causes of organizational problems and ensure that improvement is focused on the underlying causes, not just the symptoms. Understanding the root cause starts with drawing upon experience and process knowledge to develop hypotheses about the relationship between causes and effects. This may also involve identifying correlations between inputs and outputs. You'll develop theories of causality and confirm or discard them based on data and testing. In this phase, more than one test may need to be conducted, or you may have to return to the previous phases.

Some questions to ask during the analyze phase are

- What are significant inputs affecting the output?
- Are those significant input processes stable and capable?
- What are the underlying sources of process variability?

Example tools for the analyze phase include

- 5S Method
- 5 Why Analysis
- Fishbone Analysis

The fourth phase is **Improve**. The goal of this phase is to address the root causes identified in the Analyze phase. You should discard waste along entire value steams, instead of at isolated points, and create processes that need less human effort, space, capital, and time. At this stage you may also pilot interventions or solutions and assess impact.

Some questions to ask during the improve phase are

- What improvement actions are necessary to achieve targeted performance levels?
- Have you established a process to track implementation?
- Are there any obstacles to improvement? What about unintended consequences?

- How might the current system push back?
- Have you evaluated improvement action alternatives?

Example tools for the improve phase include

- Kaizen – Continuous Improvement
- Prioritization Matrix
- Plan of Action and Milestones (POA&M)

The last phase of DMAIC is **Control** with the goal of controlling the improved process and future process performance by documenting what is needed to maintain performance. During this phase you should ensure that the results will continue to be measured over time, verify reduction in failures, and integrate and share lessons learned. A well-made control plan helps avoid the negative organizational impact from process deterioration. A control plan can include time-sensitive steps needed when performance measures are not within a desired range. To enhance service quality, a control plan should be constructed by the team and updated regularly based on evaluations after its implementation.

Some questions to ask during the control phase are

- What did you learn?
- What worked well?
- What could use further improvement?
- Are current practices being monitored and improved over time?
- Are people able to see that data?

An example tool for the control phase is

- X-Matrix

More information on the DMAIC framework and associated tools is available on the **Performance to Plan website.**

Building Healthy Teams

A crucial component of team-level self-assessment is building healthy teams and facilitating a psychologically safe environment for your unit. For this reason, playbooks and programs supporting this aspect of self-assessment are listed. Included is mix of official documents, surveys, and initiatives developed to draw awareness to the effects of the health of a unit on performance.

Playbooks

Mental Health Playbook: Assists command leaders in preventing mental health issues and ensuring their personnel receive appropriate mental health care when needed. Its goal is to help commands foster an environment where Sailors feel connected to the missions, the command, and one another.

Programs

Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Effective Strategies for Command Team Leaders: The Department of Defense's senior leaders and strategic leaders are expected to execute Department of Defense (DoD) efforts to foster a diversity-supportive climate of inclusion that capitalizes on the benefits of cognitive diversity. This document outlines strategies to develop leadership accountability and presents frameworks for oversight to facilitate the effective implementation of strategic initiatives promoting diversity and inclusion across the DoD.

Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS): A unit-/organizational-level survey that assesses command climate and helps military commanders and DoD civilian organization leaders improve their command climate by understanding their members' attitudes and experiences.

Full Speed Ahead: A training initiative that emphasizes characters, competence, leadership, personal growth, and organizational growth. It operationalizes the themes of Culture of Excellence (COE) of toughness, trust, and connectedness.

Health of the Force: The Health of the Force Survey annually assesses a range of metrics or protective factors that are associated with positive outcomes like retention, job performance, and engagement. Together they provide insight into the Navy's culture and climate and compliment the information that is collected by the DEOCS at the unit level.

Management Advisory Groups (MAGs): Management Advisory Groups (MAGs) is recommended as a way to help leaders understand other points of view. MAGs are formal or informal entities that provide non-binding advice, recommendations, or points of view to leadership.

Mid-Term Counseling: Mid-Term Counseling is completed halfway through a performance evaluation. The purpose of performance counseling is to enhance professional growth, encourage personal development, and improve communication among all members within the command. They are meant to be an open discussion of individual performance with reference to the performance traits on the EVAL or FITREP forms.

My Navy HR Coaching: A Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP)-led initiative to build and sustain a peer-to-peer coaching culture within the Navy with the goal not to make everyone a coach but to make our Sailors more coach-like. The mission of MyNavy Coaching is to inspire coaching partners to reach their potential and achieve maximum performance outcomes through coaching partnerships. The vision of MyNavy Coaching is to build an organizational coaching culture that instills and promotes coach-like attributes in Sailors which includes collaborative communication, a lifelong learner mindset, personal self-awareness, regular feedback, and professional growth.

Navy Leader Development Framework 3.0: Outlines how our Navy will develop leaders who demonstrate operational excellence, strong character, and resilience, through community at every level of seniority.

SAILOR 2025: The Navy's program to improve and modernize personnel management and training systems to more effectively recruit, develop, manage, reward, and retain the force of tomorrow. The Navy is focused on empowering Sailors, updating policies, procedures, and operating systems, and providing the right training at the right time in the right way to ensure Sailors are ready for the Fleet.

Task Force One Navy (TF1N): An initiative that focuses on recruiting, leadership training, and past and current experiences within the overall Navy command climate and our Navy culture in support of readiness. TF1N leveraged the COE governance structure and aligned efforts to the COE Campaign Plan to form a long-term implementation strategy designed to effectively dismantle barriers to equality, and ultimately move the Navy closer to achieving the desired end-state of warfighting excellence.

Get Real, Get Better Resources

The Get Real, Get Better initiative combines self-assessment, problem-solving, and psychological safety into leadership behaviors. Included in this section are resources developed to directly support GRGB.

Culture of Excellence (COE) 2.0 Playbook: A resource that explains the call to think, act, and operate differently by simplifying, streamlining, and aligning Navy culture programs into a single executable framework that builds great culture. It emphasizes building great people, great leaders, and great teams to address difficult problems and prevent harmful behaviors.

Get Real, Get Better Training Packet: A training packet that describes the leader behaviors of GRGB. Each set of behaviors dives into what the behavior looks like, doesn't look like, questions to ask yourself or team to ensure you're actioning behaviors, and actions that don't support the behavior.

Other Resources

Below are two other resources that provide additional information for organizations and that can support you as a leader.

MyNavy HR: A collective organization dedicated to attracting, developing, and managing the talent that ensures our advantages at sea while providing exceptional service to our Sailors and their families.

Naval Safety Command (NAVSAFECOM): Naval enterprise lead for non-nuclear safety standards, expertise, and oversight of the Navy and Marine Corps SMS.

Glossary

Accountability. Holding self and others accountable to foster an environment that administers all resources in a manner that instills public trust while ensuring integrity, responsibility, and transparency in all actions.

Assessment. The evaluation or estimation of the nature, quality, or ability of someone or something. A continuous process-based observation that measures the overall qualitative effectiveness. Improves operational readiness through identification of unsafe conditions, practices, procedures, and to increase the hazard awareness of personnel through proper application of risk management.

Barrier. An obstacle an individual cannot overcome without leadership intervention.

Command Climate Assessments (CCA). Assessments that deliver data driven feedback to provide insights into climate and culture across organization levels, and within specific commands, units, communities, and subsets of Navy personnel.

Command Resilience Team (CRT). Command leadership and program managers that provide commanders with visibility of resilience trends across the command and a means to improve support programs and enhance overall command readiness.

Continuous Process Improvement (CPI). A comprehensive philosophy of operations that is built around the concept that there are always ways in which a process can be improved to better meet the needs of the customer and that an organization should constantly strive to make those improvements.

Daily Management. The timing component of DVM; an action-oriented process used to run critical everyday operations. The leader uses visual data whenever possible to engage and align the team to measurable performance.

DMAIC. Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control; a data-driven improvement cycle and quality strategy used to find inefficiencies and problem areas, with the goal of improving, optimizing, or stabilizing an existing process.

Psychological Safety. A shared belief that people on a team can speak up, make mistakes, or take risks without fear of negative consequences.

Readiness. The ability of the Joint Force to meet immediate contingency and warfighting challenges while preparing for future challenges. The ability of military forces to fight and meet the demands of assigned missions.

Resilience. The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress.

Risk Assurance. Routine and formal assessments to justify confidence that risk requirements and standards are met. In terms of resilience, assurance means risks and issues associated with equipment and resources, competent persons, infrastructure, and compliance are identified, controlled and owned at the appropriate level by an Accountable Person.

Situational Awareness. The conscious recognition and ability to respond correctly to all factors that may degrade successful outcomes in an operating environment.

Team-Level Self-Assessment. The continual systematic monitoring and evaluation of performance, readiness, and effectiveness against an agreed upon standard or goal.

Visual Management. The visual component of DVM; a way to visually communicate expectations, performance standards, and risks or warnings. The purpose of this principle is to improve the effectiveness of communication, alignment across the organization, and performance on the shop floor. Assembling a group of individuals and utilizing dashboards, white boards, or other visual aids helps to achieve a common understanding and complete the process improvement methods with a universal vision.

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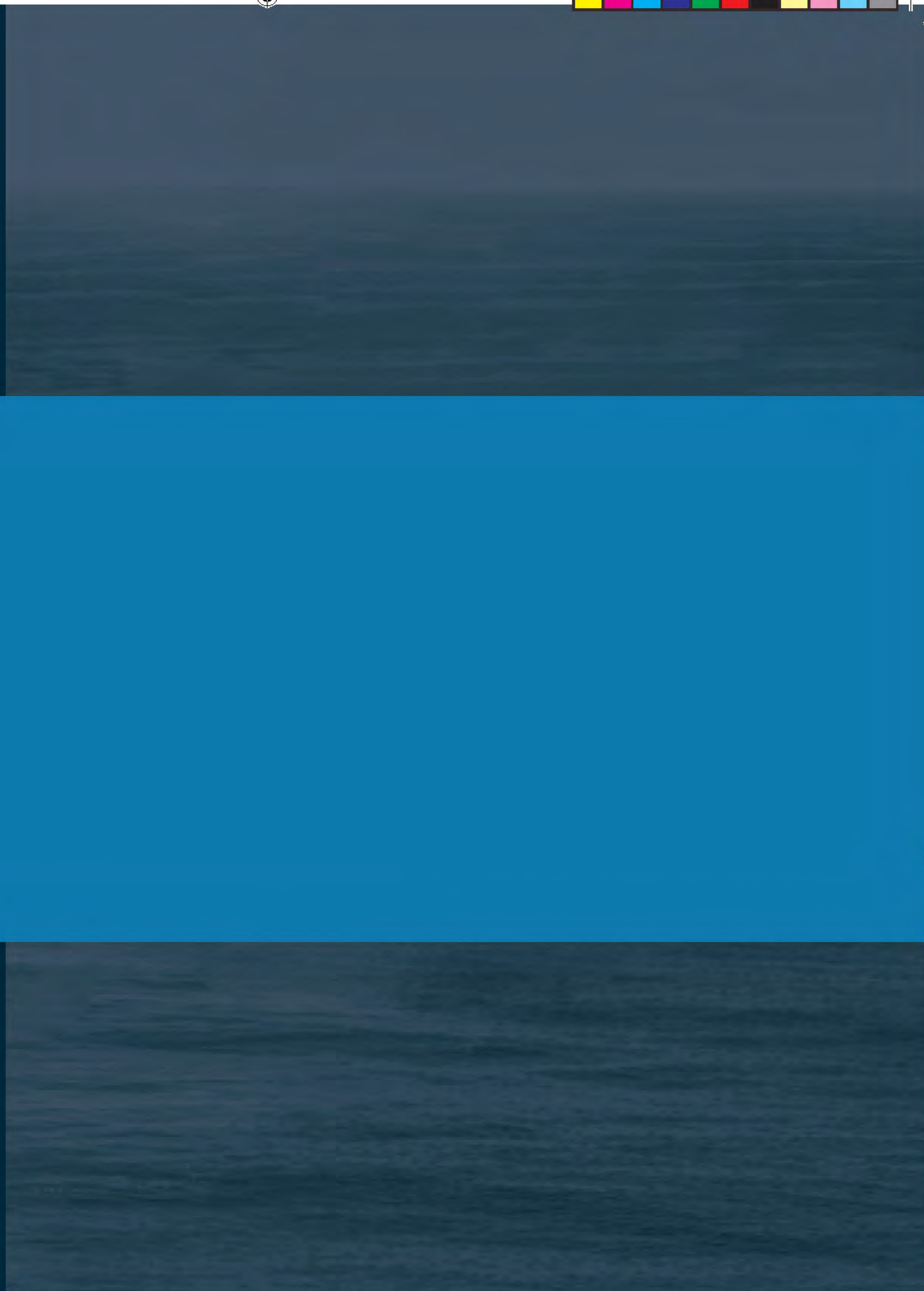

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