



## FROM THE EDITOR

In this edition of Top 50, we highlight a submarine, crew and support element as a model of how communication puzzle pieces can come together to create a cohesive family. For USS BOISE (SSN 764), this puzzle was born from the communications philosophy of Cmdr Sittlow and his wife, supported by both the leadership and family support teams. The goals of these separate parts illustrate how mission and family readiness are intrinsically connected. With a proactive communications plan, this submarine's crew had the support needed to perform superbly, earning the Battenberg Cup for operational excellence in 2010.

We'll also provide you tools for assessing your current communications strategy. Is it the right strategy for your goals? Are you using the right tools for the right messaging? Our Top 10 list offers considerations for ensuring your communications plan is relevant and appropriate for your team. In our Tools and Resources section, we provide you with CHINFO's Social Media Handbook, the definitive guide to managing all that is social media in your communications strategy. We'll also show you how to maximize your communications plan, working hand in hand with your Ombudsman and Family Readiness Group.

We are in the busy part of our awards season with two of Navy's most prestigious training award submittals occurring this month. Our Top 50 initiative has matured over the past several years as is evidenced by providing award submission support to a growing number of ships and shore installations. Look for the upcoming NAVADMIN which will detail new award opportunities in the October-December 2011 quarter.

All the Best,

*Wayne Wagner*

## On BOISE, Communications is a Family Affair

Recently, USS BOISE (SSN 764) earned the prestigious Battenberg Cup, which is reserved for the top performing ship on the East Coast. According to Vice Admiral Richardson, commander, Submarine Forces (SUBFOR), "Every member on the BOISE team knows their job and knows they are valued by their command and Navy."



BOISE's command team prioritized its communications strategy, supporting the link between mission and family readiness. "At the core of our success is an ability and desire to make information available to both the Sailor and his family," says Cmdr Brian Sittlow, commanding officer. "It is the underpinning of Leslie's (his wife) and my command philosophy, that we have communication paths within our chain of command, watch sections, and off-ship support organizations that ensure correct actions are performed. My goal for the entire BOISE family: Make your written and spoken words loud, crisp, concise, and well-timed."

"Being a member of the submarine force creates communication challenges not seen elsewhere," says Michiko Couchman, BOISE's Family Readiness Group (FRG) President. While a very high percentage of any sub's crew has grown up in an environment of "information on demand" through use of varieties of social media, underwater operating conditions don't allow frequent opportunities for texting, emails and Facebook updates to communicate with loved ones.

Recognizing this restriction, "Part of our communications strategy is to get information out frequently and ahead of events," says Ombudsman Beckie Fannin. "If we

*Continued on next page*

## Awards Corner

### 2011 Recognition

- Optimas Award for Service
- ASTD Excellence in Practice Award
- Training Magazine Top 125 List: #7
- ASTD BEST Award
- Disability Matters Award-Workforce Category
- 50 Out Front Companies for Diversity: #26
- Training Magazine Top 125 List: #7
- HCMD-Most Innovative Recruiting Program
- Diversity Council Honors Award: Navy #1 on Top 25 List
- ERE Recruiting Award Best Military Talent



### Awards Submitted

- BEST Award, *American Society for Training and Development* (Placement will be announced Oct 2011)
- Alfred P. Sloan Award for Excellence in Workplace Flexibility, *Family and Work Institute* (Announcement Nov 2011)
- Workplace Leaders in Financial Education Award, *SHRM and American Institute of CPAs* (Announcement Oct 2011)
- Optimas Award, *Workforce Management Magazine* (Announcement Oct 2011)

### Upcoming Awards

Award Name	Deadline to NIZ	Submission Deadline	Expected Notification
Excellence in Practice Award, <i>ASTD</i>	15 Aug 2011	29 Sep 2011	Jan 2012
Training 125 List Award, <i>Training Magazine</i>	27 Aug 2011	03 Oct 2011	Jan 2012



## On BOISE, Communications is a Family Affair *(Continued from page 1)*

communicate and prepare families for every contingency ahead of time, the families and crew will be prepared and know what to do."

Each member of the communications team, from the CO, XO, and chief of the boat, to the CO's wife, the ombudsman and FRG President, was involved in developing the boat's annual information campaign. Well before Hurricane Irene hit the mid-Atlantic Coast, the families had been through a hurricane preparedness lecture stressing hurricane kits, phone trees and registration instructions for Navy Family Accountability and Assessment System. Other topics including family educational opportunities, family financial management for the holidays, nutritionist briefings, and stress management resources were woven into a program given to Sailors and their families. "The effectiveness of the families' link to the ship starts with Cmdr Sittlow and his wife. Perhaps what is most special about this leadership team," says Ms. Couchman, a seasoned submarine spouse, "is that they are in lockstep. One is an extension of the other. Even when having to tell bad news, they do it with a smile, always leaving us with the feeling that the glass is half full, not half empty."

"I have direct access to the CO when I need it," says Ms. Fannin. "I'll send Cmdr Sittlow a draft of a message I want to send to the dependent spouses. Many times he will follow that up, almost at the same time, with an aligned message to the crew. It worked beautifully during hurricane preparations this year. Two of our messages went out almost simultaneously, both aligned perfectly."

Cmdr Sittlow and his wife attended Command Leadership School together and left with a command tour charter. Pieces of this are practiced every day. Regardless of how busy the skipper is, he prioritizes being at support group meetings of family members, regardless of the time of day, to discuss what he can about schedules and accomplishments. "He will always identify how valuable our volunteer contributions are," says Couchman. "He stays until the last question is answered."

"Being a submariner's mother, father, girlfriend, or spouse is not easy. Frequent periods of communication blackouts make deployments long," says Leslie Sittlow, "But, we are a family. In fact, every one of these Sailors and families is part of MY family. It is so important to let our families know that we're so happy to have them here."

### Calling all Commands!

We at the Top 50 team would like to hear the innovative ways commands and activities across the fleet are creating better work-life balance for Sailors and civilians. We have seen initiatives like telework programs and flexible work schedules started in many of Navy's shore commands. Navy has broadened paternity and adoptive leave, and one year deferment of sea duty for new mothers. Some ships have implemented four day work weeks. We know there are plenty of dedicated efforts to improve workplace environments. Let us highlight your efforts in the areas of workplace flexibility or family support. These efforts may become the next feature article in the Top 50 newsgram, an initiative recognized by corporate America, or shared with commands Navy-wide.

Please send your best practices to Mr. Wayne Wagner [wayne.wagner@navy.mil](mailto:wayne.wagner@navy.mil) or Ms. Fay Rose [fay.rose@navy.mil](mailto:fay.rose@navy.mil).



### Quote of the Month

"Mission Readiness and Family Readiness are intrinsically tied. A command's communications strategy is critical to that tie being effective."

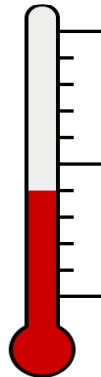
Cmdr Brian Sittlow,  
commanding officer,  
USS BOISE (SSN 764)

## Top 10 Tenets of a Communications Strategy

1. Is there a recent command-wide survey in which organizational communications questions were asked? What were the answers? Are there existing problems or a foundation for problems in the future? Include communications questions in your command climate survey.
2. Start your first communication with a town hall format, giving employees the opportunity to react and ask questions. Promptly follow through with answers if you do not have answers on the spot.
3. Each mode of communication should be assessed for timeliness, effectiveness and value to employees. Consider what can be changed from broadcast communication to personalized communication.
4. Have a meeting with your leadership team to detail your communication strategy and the importance they play in it. They will be the ones interpreting your one-way messaging.
5. Build a system focusing on channels, messages and people in the most effective way. Develop a system that separates unique messages by most effective channels. Be careful of the easy but often overused common modes of communication such as newsletters, mass-emails, intranet, and videos which can be seen as impersonal and impasse.
6. Equip supervisors with comprehensive, accurate information so they can communicate a consistent message to their teams' employees.
7. Set up rapid-response channels for urgent communication.
8. Set up a meeting schedule with the Chiefs mess, JO contingent, and rank and file employees on a regular basis to exchange information.
9. Develop an engagement strategy with your workforce's families. In many organizations, this means the ombudsmen and FRG President. Playing an active role will ensure the messages to your workforce and families are aligned.
10. Be visible and accessible to employees, whether in small group meetings, social events, brown-bag lunches, or town-hall events.

## What is your Communications Temperature?

- Are you repeating key messages five to seven times?
- Are you creating opportunities for two-way communication?
- Are you preparing the communicators to deliver effective communications and have the necessary conversations?
- Are you finding effective ways to reach your audience?
- Are you using assessment tools to evaluate the effectiveness of communication messages?



- Are you using the preferred senders to deliver communications in your organization?
- Are you answering the questions, "Why is this change happening?" and "What is the risk of not changing?"
- Are you answering the question "What's in it for me?"
- Are you resisting the urge to have communications come from the project team or project leaders?
- Are you using face-to-face communication?

## Tools and Resources

Navy Command Social Media Handbook, a critical resource for leaders and staff members on guidelines for use of social media in the command, leadership challenges in managing a command social media program and crisis communications.

[http://www.cnrc.navy.mil/PAO/socialnetwrk/soc\\_med\\_hnd\\_bk.pdf](http://www.cnrc.navy.mil/PAO/socialnetwrk/soc_med_hnd_bk.pdf)

Navy Fleet and Family Support Group FRG Handbook, an excellent resource on the value of the FRG program and how to use one in your command.

[http://www.cnrc.navy.mil/navycni/groups/public/@hq/@ffr/documents/document/cnicp\\_a197800.pdf](http://www.cnrc.navy.mil/navycni/groups/public/@hq/@ffr/documents/document/cnicp_a197800.pdf)

Navy Command Leadership Toolkit, from how to select a command ombudsman to the wealth of resources available to enable a proactive ombudsman communications strategy, this CNIC originated toolkit is indispensable.

[http://www.cnrc.navy.mil/CNIC\\_HQ\\_Site/WhatWeDo/FleetandFamilyReadiness/FamilyReadiness/FleetAndFamilySupportProgram/OmbudsmanProgram/CommandLeadershipToolkit/index.htm](http://www.cnrc.navy.mil/CNIC_HQ_Site/WhatWeDo/FleetandFamilyReadiness/FamilyReadiness/FleetAndFamilySupportProgram/OmbudsmanProgram/CommandLeadershipToolkit/index.htm)

## Points of Contact

Mr. Wayne Wagner (Primary)  
Strategic Affairs Office, N1Z  
703-693-2322  
[wayne.wagner@navy.mil](mailto:wayne.wagner@navy.mil)

LCDR Jessica Morera  
Chief Strategist, N1Z  
703-693-0184  
[jessica.morera@navy.mil](mailto:jessica.morera@navy.mil)

CDR Kathy Kesler  
N1 Public Affairs Officer  
703-693-0865

CDR Angela Katson  
Director, Diversity Office, N13  
703-695-3936  
[angela.katson@navy.mil](mailto:angela.katson@navy.mil)

FLTCM Scott Benning, N1  
CDR Stormi Looney, N10  
CDR Jenniffer Gundayao, N12  
Ms. Sofiya Velgach, N13  
Mr. Iliia Christman, N14  
Mr. Richard Linton, N15  
CAPT R. Scot Hopkins, N16  
Ms. Fay Rose, N1Z

Mr. Adam Ramsey, OCHR  
Ms. Michele Harrison, NETC  
Mr. Jim Grover, OCNRC  
Mr. Michael Dowdy, NPC  
Mr. Rick Gualandi, NRC  
PNCM Carrie Wentzel, PMO  
Mr. John Drake, NSTC

*The appearance of corporate organizations and businesses in the contents of this publication does not constitute or imply their endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the Department of Defense, the Department of the Navy or the Chief of Naval Personnel.*