



By Alex Licea and Harlan Kefalas

Whether it is flipping through the pages of military journals or reading articles on various military websites, we both notice one trend:

Many if not most of the pieces we read are written by officers, both active and retired.

Now, we appreciate and respect our officers for writing about great topics which foster meaningful discussions. However, the NCO perspective is lacking, especially when compared to our representation across the force.

As fellow writers, we admire the existing body of work. It is full of interesting ideas and shared wisdom which allows readers to flex their intellectual muscle. Their example inspired us to begin writing ourselves. We want to be the flag bearers for our great NCO Corps brothers and sisters who may feel intimidated by writing or simply do not know how to get started or get published.

For our fellow NCOs out there across the services, here are eight reasons why we encourage you to join the professional discussion through the written word.

Everyone has a unique story that deserves to be told. Sharing varied experiences and perspectives only makes the Army and military profession stronger. It also helps to journal your experiences and describe your thoughts and emotions at that time with fellow colleagues. Someone may read your words at a critical time in their life, and be inspired. Service members deploying to war for the first time may find comfort reading the stories of those who came before them.

Sharing how you prepared for and made it through Airborne, Sapper or Ranger School will help future provide valuable insight to future attendees. Explaining how you handled a difficult situation as a team or squad leader will help others when they face a similar situation. We all have a story to tell so go ahead and tell it. You might help someone.

Writing, as a process, is a journey. Walking the writing process forces one to explore their own thoughts. Some thoughts are refined, others discarded. Ultimately, it ends in a better understanding of who you are through personal reflection. Publishing is not the end of the journey, a reader's comment may reveal another path or make you think about a better way to approach a topic.

We also became better writers through the editing process. Pieces that we thought were solid came back full of track changes from the editor. Or, we got the dreaded "rewrite" in big, bold red ink. Our writing is far from perfect, but with each piece we learn and improve as writers and as communicators.

Find your voice. You have something to say so why not say it well. Writing will set yourself apart from your peers while increasing your personal brand. Developing your individual writing style and voice will take time. Like many things in life, patience is vital during this

process.

All NCOs have plenty to say vocally and should put it on paper. If you want to consider yourself as a thought leader and advocate for the NCO Corps, this is your time to share the solutions with the world.

The NCO perspective is valuable. Many officers will say that one of the most important people in their military career was their first platoon sergeant. Often, the platoon sergeant is the first teacher and continues to serve as a mentor or friend more many years.

NCOs are considered the backbone of the military. NCOs also are the primary executors of missions. As doers, they have intimate knowledge of what works, what doesn't, and can explain why. Despite being one third of the active duty force, and twice the size of the commissioned officer corps, NCOs are underrepresented in written professional discussions.

Share insights with wider audience. NCOs take pride in sharing their knowledge, but they are often limited to the size of their formation. Today, with numerous blogs and social media, NCOs have the ability to share their lessons with thousands. A NCO who writes about a problem at Fort Lewis can help a young soldier at Fort Stewart, a deployed staff sergeant in Afghanistan, or an officer at the Pentagon.

If your topic concerns tactical or survival skills, it may be even more useful to share especially if there ever is a zombie apocalypse.

Writing will become a part of the NCO Education System. If you believe that practice makes perfect, then NCOs should be practicing now for their institutional education, and be able to write well in advance of their professional military education school attendance.

Writing assessments will be a part of professional military education for Army NCOs for all NCO course such as the Basic Leader and Advance Leader Course. This focus on writing

comprehension is just one part of the NCO 2020 initiative, which focuses on the enhancement of military education as a means to develop NCOs and test their mental agility and reflective thinking. What better time to hone your writing skills than right now!

Increases your professional reputation. If perception is reality, what better way to demonstrate your professionalism than contributing to professional discourse? Writing displays your critical thinking abilities and communication skills to the world.

For transitioning members, when a possible employer Googles you, what are the results they will see? Having a professional article show up at the top of the search engine results may be the reason you get that first job following your military service. Plus it may help you bury those embarrassing spring break photos or goofy YouTube videos further down the search results.

Evaluations demand good writing. All evaluations require written justification for performance ratings. Evaluations are linked to promotions. Improving your ability to clearly communicate your job performance may also improve the likelihood you are selected for promotion. More importantly, your subordinates deserve fair evaluations, which requires writing ability - not just searching for bullets on the Internet and changing some numbers.

The new NCOERs require narrative writing, not only bullet writing. For the strategic level NCOER, the writing is entirely narrative. Practice communicating ideas and writing persuasively throughout the year will make writing evaluations easier and improve evaluation quality.

Now is your time

So what are you waiting for? If you are wondering where to start writing - just put pen to paper, or finger to keyboard. Get your thoughts out of your head. Write about what you are passionate about or have an interest in. Maybe your interest is in movies or cooking. This

could become your launching pad into the world of writing and eventually starting a blog. As you hone your skills, you can use it to steward your profession by writing about leadership, taking care of soldiers, and/or making the Army or military better.

Below are some tools to help your writing:

[Hemingway App](#) - checks grammar and readability.

[366 Action Words](#) - great list of action verbs to help avoid passive voice.

[15 Free Webapps for Writers](#) - you may find some of these useful.

[41 sites with stock photos](#) - including pictures in your work helps communicate or illustrate your point.

[27 Best Books on Writing](#) - we've read some of them, and our writing is better because of it.

Once you believe your work is fit for public viewing, here are military-related blogs/websites that accept submissions:

[Task and Purpose](#). A news and culture site geared toward the next great generation of American veterans. They offer an outlet for well-written analysis and commentary on veterans and greater military affairs.

[War on the Rocks](#) a platform for analysis, commentary, debate and multimedia content on foreign policy and national security issues through a realist lens.

[The Strategy Bridge](#) a non-profit organization focused on the development of people in strategy, national security, & military affairs.

[The Military Leader](#) a way to provide easily-accessible, shareable leader development insight for those who need it.

[From the Green Notebook](#) - collection of lessons learned and observations from the ubiquitous green notebook. Plus we used it to push out this information to you across the interwebs.

[Bourbon and Battles](#) - geared toward young(ish) leaders who want to explore writing about bourbon, battles, history, leadership, lessons learned, and other military related subjects.

[We Are The Mighty](#) - provides relevant, engaging entertainment to the military community by celebrating military service with stories that inspire.

[Army Press](#) - gateway for all Army professional journals. Holds a NCO writing contest.

[NCO Journal](#) - official magazine of NCO professional development.

For self-publishing without the headache of creating your own website or navigating the editing process:

[LinkedIn](#) - If you haven't created your own personal professional network, start now. The site provides everyone with a profile the chance to write articles on professional development or career advice.

[Medium](#) - Easy. Just create an account and begin your storytelling journey. You can write about anything. From your experiences on a deployment to giving parenting advice, this site is easy to use.

[Tumblr](#) - All you need is an account, and you can start posting. Geared more for pictures.

Let Us Help!

And if you still have no idea where you'd like to go, or if you think your work isn't good enough, hit us up on Twitter. We'd love to help you get your writing released into the world!

We know you each have a story to tell that is interesting and compelling! We urge you to go ahead and tell it!

MSG Alex Licea is an active duty Public Affairs professional, father, writer, lifelong learner and loves watching movies. Alex enlisted in the U.S. Army in 2002 and earned his Master's Degree in Public Relations and Corporate Communications from Georgetown University. He enjoys traveling and has been all across the Middle East, Central and South America. His writing has appeared on several sites such as We Are the Mighty, Bourbon and Battles, and Business Insider. Alex is originally from Miami, Florida but currently lives in the Washington, D.C. area. Follow Alex Licea on Twitter [@alexlicea82](https://twitter.com/alexlicea82) and on Medium at <https://medium.com/@alexlicea82>.

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Notes:

Percentage calculated from November 2016 active duty numbers.

https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp_reports.jsp

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