



CG OPC's, Influencing Others to Achieve a Goal



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What if there was a way for you to be more efficient, effective and ultimately make your job easier? If there were a CG resource available that could help you do these things, would you take advantage? The great news is that just such a resource exists! In 1994, leadership began a Coast Guard wide improvement effort which included designating billets specifically dedicated to assist individual units and staffs improve their performance and achieve their goals. These first positions were called "Quality Performance Consultants," and in 2006, were re-named "Organizational Performance Consultants" (OPC's). Considered valuable CG resources, there are now 28 full time OPC's spread out throughout the CG, about one half are active duty members and half civilian GS employees. Over the years the OPC's have participated in many high impact events including an onsite knowledge management effort associated with the Deepwater Horizon event. This is exciting because the OPC's primary role is to assist you in your individual unit/staff's improvement efforts; and as this happens, the Coast Guard in general will improve. The CG has a rich tradition of empowering individuals and placing high levels of responsibility at low levels within the organization in order to grow experienced leaders, utilizing OPC services is your opportunity to become a bigger part of that tradition.

In our efforts to achieve the simple overall goal of making the CG better, OPC's have received praise for many of the projects they have been involved with, however until recently, much of the feedback regarding the efforts of OPC's has mainly been anecdotal in nature. We, the OPC's, wanted to formally involve the CG in our efforts by providing an opportunity for others to contribute formally. So, in October of 2011, using the Vovici Electronic Survey Tool, the OPC's deployed a survey to many internal Coast Guard customers. Of the responses received, 94% rated the service delivery provided by OPC's either met or exceeded expectations. 95% of customers stated that the effectiveness of OPC services met or exceeded expectations. Additionally 91% of CG customers rated the Return on Investment (ROI) for OPC services as meeting or exceeding expectations.

The meaning of the word “facilitate” is simply “to make easy” and, regardless of the goal and method used, all OPC services and interactions should fall into that definition. While regular meeting facilitation and presentation are key elements to the OPC world of work, the responses to a question about the types of OPC services used, are worth noting. The most used services are those related to guiding and facilitating planning sessions which can include SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) exercises, strategic planning and action planning events. Another highly used service is a facilitated self-assessment called the “Commandant’s Performance Challenge”. This assessment involves the creation and/or validation of a “Performance Factors Profile” (a document that provides a high level organizational snapshot) followed by the OPC(s) guiding local leaders through an assessment of their unit/staff’s performance looking through the lens of the nationally recognized *Baldrige* management framework. Other highly placed services are: regular consulting (assisting a leader think through and develop a proposed course of action), the Myers-Briggs type indicator workshop, Team building workshops, and training such as and the popular Commandant’s Performance Excellence Criteria (*Baldrige*) orientation course.

One customer summed up in writing what many others have said verbally,

“The OPC’s were most beneficial in helping me break the “tyranny of the present” – finding the time and discipline to develop long term shared vision The OPC’s allow us a disciplined approach to focusing more on long term”

In summary, you have a great resource for your improvement efforts in the Organizational Performance Consultants (OPC’s). With a focus on making the CG better and working under the Vice Commandant as CG-09541, your OPC’s have a bag full of improvement tools and the skills necessary to use them. The function of an OPC is simply to “facilitate” (or make easy) jobs and functions within the CG, ultimately resulting in Organizational Performance Excellence. With today’s budgets being tight, using the OPC’s is the low cost option to help you focus efforts and meet your goals.

Comments received at the end of the survey;

“I have always found OPC’s to be very helpful, well-trained and experts at facilitating/teaching their subject matter”

“Very useful to CG units”

“This is an organizational gem to have the OPC’s on hand”

“Would be great to have more OPC billets/capacity throughout the Coast Guard. They provide great service and have fantastic skills that are challenging or impossible to develop in our program staffs given the experience challenges”

“We as an organization need you to be successful”

Leadership Competencies Addressed:

Performance Appraisal; Management and Process Improvement; Aligning Values; Influencing Others