

# **AQEC MEMORANDUM 2014-009**

## **SUCCESSFUL DEBRIEFING**



### **QUESTION:**

*“What is the best method to debrief a patrol or evolution?”*

### **AQEC/SNC RESPONSE:**

*The attached information came from a USCG Academy Command and Operations School. The Academy “Tips for Successful Briefings” has been tailored for debriefing an evolution in the USCG Auxiliary Boat Crew program.*

*Debriefing an evolution is an excellent method of evaluating the evolution and provides a platform to discuss “Lessons Learned.” Boat Crews should be consistent in evolution debriefing.*

*The goal for debriefing is threefold: (1) It is for knowledge management, (2) Used to verify all understood the task, and (3) Concur all are in agreement.*

*The USCG Fifth District Southern Region Qualification Examiner (QE) management Processing Guide states;*

*“Crew Debrief – According to good TCT practices a crew debrief is held at the end of each patrol. The coxswain candidate may ask:”*

- *What went well*
- *What did not go well*
- *What will the crew do different next time*

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*From Quotations with Character by W. David Edman*

*“Teaching mariners about risk assessment is to explain their actions may affect their life expectancy.”*

# TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL DEBRIEFING

Information contained in this article came from a UCCG Academy Command and Operations School. The Academy “Tips for Successful Briefings” has been tailored for debriefing an evolution in the USCG Auxiliary Boat Crew program.

## WHY DEBRIEF:

Debriefing is threefold;

- 1) It is for knowledge management
- 2) Used to verify all understood the task
- 3) Concur all are in agreement

What are we trying to accomplish by debriefing an evolution? It’s an excellent method of evaluating the evolution and provides a platform to discuss “Lessons Learned.” Boat Crews should be consistent in evolution debriefing.

## THE EVOLUTION:

- ⇒ Concentrate on what went right and/or what could have been done better.
- ⇒ Make a mental note of what transpired in the evolution or jot it down so you don’t forget it.

## THE DEBRIEF:

- ⇒ By letting junior personnel (trainees, crewmembers, coxswains) speak first, it makes them feel empowered and part of the process.
- ⇒ Only allow one person to speak at a time. It’s a simple courtesy, yet imperative to gain group understanding and performance. Side conversations are distracting and rude. If you think of a point while someone else is talking, make a note and come back to it later. Maybe you won’t need to speak to that point because someone else may cover it.
- ⇒ Be a good listener. We were given two ears and one mouth. Consider using them in that proportion.
- ⇒ Disagreeing wastes time, produces ill will, and does not get results. Once explained, leave it alone.
- ⇒ Don’t argue and don’t complain. If there is an issue that is not easily resolved, consider going “one on one” with that member after the session.

*From Quotations with Character by W. David Edman*

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- ⇒ Focus on what went right. Finding a positive outcome in every evolution is important. Positive praise is powerful. Find something that went well, no matter how insignificant. If things went well, discuss why they went well. Was it planning or pure luck!
- ⇒ Next focus on what can be improved. Avoid using negative terminology, such as; “You did that wrong . . . .” Instead try: “I believe we can improve on the way that last evolution was done . . . .” “Let’s try it this way . . . .” or . . .

*“We really need to do it the Book Way!”*

- ⇒ Don’t try to impress someone by bringing up points that have already been made. Stick with the objective and don’t stray off the desired path.

### **THE WRAP-UP:**

- ⇒ The senior person (Coxswain or QE if it’s a Checkride) should consider going last to tie it all together. If Boat Crew members have spoken to all the issues, then the senior person may be left with nothing more to say, other than . . . “good job” or “good briefing.” This type leadership can have a lasting effect and positive benefits.
- ⇒ Make your point briefly and concisely. Think first, then speak briefly. Pause, if needed, to collect your thoughts.
- ⇒ Be factual. State what you heard or observed. Don’t speculate on what might have happened. Just say what did or didn’t happen. Stick to the facts and remember why you’re debriefing.
- ⇒ If it has already been said, don’t repeat it. This just wastes time.
- ⇒ Move on to the next evolution

The information contained in this article is intended as a reference for USCG Auxiliary Boat Crews when debriefing.

This article was written by Warren D. Edman, AQEC/SNC D5SR.

*From Quotations with Character by W. David Edman*

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