

**U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY  
OFFICE OF  
PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE**



**EVERGREEN  
N-TRAIN 2012**

***SIGNPOSTS FOR THE FUTURE***

*We must anticipate our desired futures  
or we will be dealt a future not by choice but by happenstance.*

**Index**

Page 3	<b>Summary</b>
Page 4	<b>NTRAIN 2012 <i>Evergreen</i> presentation</b>
Page 4	<b>Signposts discussion synopsis</b>
Page 8	<b>Conclusions and recommendations</b>
Page 8	<b>The course ahead</b>

## Summary

On Thursday, January 26, CDR André Billeaudeaux, from the Coast Guard Enterprise Strategic Management and Doctrine Directorate (CG-095), presented the Coast Guard *Evergreen* brief “Signposts for the Future of the Coast Guard” to those District Commodores, Assistant National Commodores, District Chiefs of Staff, Directors and Deputy Directors able to attend.

"Signposts" provides high-level insights about future paths, challenges, and dilemmas facing the Coast Guard that were determined through the *Evergreen* process.

The brief covered 12 key “signposts” that were identified by the Coast Guard’s most recent *Evergreen* scenario workshops. After each signpost was described, the attendees were invited to discuss and comment on how it might apply to the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Because of the length of the brief there was limited time for each discussion, however several common themes emerged. Some have been heard before. In particular, “keeping up with and learning new technologies” and “resistance to change” are two areas senior leadership has cited as challenges for the past few years.

The goal of this session was to familiarize Auxiliary senior leaders with what the Coast Guard sees as critical to the future of the entire organization – Regular, Reserve, Auxiliary, and civilian staff. Based on the response, we recommend future workshops to allow senior leaders time to discuss selected signposts in depth, and to propose potential strategies for addressing them.

The report that follows summarizes the discussions at N-TRAIN 2012.

– U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary  
Office of Planning and Performance  
February 2012

### **NTRAIN 2012 *Evergreen* presentation**

At the request of the Coast Guard Auxiliary Office of Planning and Performance, CDR André Billeaudeau, from the Coast Guard Enterprise Strategic Management and Doctrine Directorate (CG-095), conducted a two-and-a-half hour *Evergreen* presentation during NTRAIN 2012. Participants were the senior leadership of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary (District Commodores and their Chiefs of Staff, and the Directorate Chiefs and their Deputies).

LDCR Billeaudeau presented the Coast Guards “Signposts for the Future” *Evergreen* brief. There are 12 “signposts,” which are high-level insights about future paths, challenges, and dilemmas facing the Coast Guard. Rather than waiting until the end of the presentation, after the description of each signpost the participants briefly discussed its impact to the Auxiliary, now and in the future.

The section immediately following names each signpost, gives a brief definition, and summarizes the comments made during the discussion. Please note that those signpost topics that have only a few comments do not necessarily indicate a lack of interest in the signpost but rather are due more to the limited time available for discussion.

### **Signposts Discussion Synopsis**

1. Well, It’s Complicated - *The increase in complexities facing the Coast Guard, particularly in technology, is exponential.*

Key items identified:

- There are many more methods for getting funding than ever before, and there is more competition for available funds.
- Obtaining and maintaining qualifications are more complex year-to-year.
- Keeping up with and learning new technologies gets more challenging, particularly for the older demographic represented in the Auxiliary.
- Deciding what is relevant, and conversely what is not, is difficult when we are bombarded with so much information and so many new technologies every day.
- The continuing demand for new missions stretches our membership thin. Along with this item was a discussion on: the need to make the decision to let some older activities go, in favor of focusing on new needs; executing targeted recruiting for new mission skills; keeping old mission, but lowering their priority in favor of the new.

2. Resistance Is Futile - *Technology in all parts of society will be a key factor in shaping our operating environment.*

Key items identified:

- We are frequently hindered by the “we’ve never done it that way before” mentality.
- We’re generally behind the technology curve. We don’t actively seek out new technologies. We’re pulled into them, reluctantly
- There’s a general feeling the older demographic of our members hinders adoption of new technologies.

3. Shape-shifting Domains – *We have the choice of: scaling our roles to new demands or defining a narrower niche of services.*

Key items identified:

- An example for the CG is more presence in the Arctic; for the Auxiliary MDA assistance for control of “occupy movement protests” in various cities.
- We resist change, we don’t look forward, we don’t perceive potential changes on the horizon.
- When change is inevitable, we’re more comfortable reacting to it instead of anticipating and adjusting our course in advance.
- The “legal filter” frequently stops innovative thoughts. New ideas, new ways of doing things, are shot down by the conservatism of lawyers, both in the Auxiliary and the Coast Guard.

4. Semper Paratus Curse - *Being true to our motto in a expanding and challenging maritime domain; meeting surge readiness demands without compromising local presence; developing new models to manage operational risk.*

Key items identified:

- This is very hard for the Coast Guard to do. Their culture is reluctant to give up control and tends towards “protecting their turf”.
- We wonder if non-traditional activity is acceptable by the lawyers at HQ. Even when it is, the review can be too slow to be able to react to meet the need.
- Even in the Auxiliary, we’re not always willing to share with other organizations. For example, there is resistance to having other groups do Vessel Exams and teach our courses.
- One example is preparation for the Americas Cup. It will use non-traditional partnerships with yacht clubs and other groups, but it’s taken years of planning.
- We insist on doing things “our way,” instead of considering possible alternatives proposed by outsiders.
- There is a lot of inertia. We don’t want to change. When we must, it is very hard for us to get started.

5. Ignorance Management - *Knowing what we know when we need to know it. There is an exponential proliferation of information. We have to decide what is OK to not know.*

Key items identified:

- Leaders must articulate the vision, which starts at the top, and get buy-in from the members.
- We have people in leadership roles who need to be trained as leaders.
- Do we trust our people? Yes, but not unconditionally. We say ...
  - Trust, but verify
  - Trust until they fail
- We need the skills to deal with the volume of information coming at us. Unlimited access is seductive. We’re not using to asking the question “What’s important?”
- In an era when everyone can be copied on email, all received information is not equally valuable. We need to filter the senders.

- Address how a technology fits, don't adopt just because it's new.

6. The Innovators Dilemma – *Maintaining efficient current operations, while encouraging innovations. Get the benefits of new ideas tomorrow, while getting the job done today.*

Key items identified:

- Within the constraints of a vision, there will be more than one way of accomplishing the desired outcome.
- We need to balance status quo and innovative thinking. Devote the majority of time and effort to managing day-to-day activities but also allocate time and effort to new, future planning.
- Accept more-necessary risk. Be willing to fail
- Inertia sets in. It's easier to do things the same old way.
- Innovations require stamina and persistence. Not every one will succeed.
- Prioritize – don't try to take everything on, especially all at once.
- Get buy-in from the affected group(s).
- Acknowledge that it takes time; it is not something that happens overnight
- A critical factor is creating a culture for change.
- Older members may be resistant to change. Recruiting younger members may inject enthusiasm for doing things differently.

7. Friends and Family – *Embrace a total force philosophy and take an entirely new approach to volunteers. Use of Auxiliary and other volunteers is not ad hoc and peripheral, but is fully integrated into regular CG business.*

Key items identified:

- Auxiliarists have skills, but are not matched up with CG needs (e.g. CG uses Aux medical doctors and dentists, but not Aux psychologists). The Skills Bank that's in development addresses some of this, but ...
  - It has to be rolled out to the CG.
  - The CG has to embrace and use it.
- The Auxiliary is good at using skills of family members who are not in the Auxiliary.

8. Selective Revolving Door – *All about personnel and staffing flexibility; confront the generalist/specialist dilemma; scaling up and down to meet rapidly changing circumstances.*

Key items identified:

- Recruit the skills you need instead of assuming the solution is to train existing members.
- Keep in mind that there is more than one solution to every problem.

9. Up Close and Personal – *We are expected to deliver services personally, yet we are driven to use more high-tech, impersonal, solutions.*

Key items identified:

- We have to be aware of the need to balance technology with the personal touch.
- An example is the CG Alaska TV program. It's a hybrid of technological reach-out that is perceived as personal by the audience.

10. Risky Business- *Leverage the public's effect on the desired outcomes.*

Key items identified:

- It's easy to impose fines for bad/risky behavior, but how will the CG reward "safe" behavior?
- If the Coast Guard charges for SAR or imposes fines, then Auxiliary services become more valuable to the public.
- Auxiliary prevention programs specifically address this.
- The best way is to start with training school children. They'll grow up being aware of safe boating practices.
- When the goal is to reward safe boating behavior we have to reconcile charging for PE courses vs. offering free courses.
- Reaching out to diverse populations (e.g. Spanish language courses) increases the penetration of the safe boating message.

11. Vital Organs - *Relevancy, flexibility, preparing for opportunities. Stay relevant for future demands, and be flexible enough to meet them.*

Key items identified:

- We must lobby for what we need.
- Members tend to complain or attack instead of making a positive presentation to promote their ideas.

12. Our Evolving Image – *Managing our image is part of the toolkit of every Coast Guard member – Regular, Reserve, Auxiliary and civilian employee.*

Key items identified:

- We in the Auxiliary help project the image of the CG, both positive and negative.
- Impact is frequently made one person at a time.
- The Auxiliary has knowledge of local players and situations that can be valuable to the CG.
- Leaders own perception management.
- Consider the impact of new technologies, including social media such as Twitter and Facebook.
- Leaders must model the behavior they want to get.
- We have begun to manage PA by reaching out with some new media, but it's not consistent across the organization.
- We have to answer "What is our brand?;" "How do we perceive ourselves?;" "How does the CG perceive us?"
- How should we talk to the various components of the public?
- There is the feeling that we are becoming more strategic in our communications.
- We need to deliver one, consistent message
- The CG's image was tarnished by the non-emergency towing policy.

## Conclusions and recommendations

As stated at the beginning of this document, there was limited time for discussion of each signpost. Nonetheless, there were several recurring themes in the comments made by participants.

The signposts that generated the most discussion were:

- **Semper Paratus Curse** – *Being true to our motto in an expanding and challenging maritime domain; meeting surge readiness demands without compromising local presence; developing new models to manage operational risk.*
- **Ignorance Management** – *Knowing what we know when we need to know it. There is an exponential proliferation of information. We have to decide what is OK to not know.*
- **The Innovators Dilemma** – *Maintaining efficient current operations, while encouraging innovations. Get the benefits of new ideas tomorrow, while getting the job done today.*
- **Our Evolving Image** – *Managing our image is part of the toolkit of every Coast Guard member – Regular, Reserve, Auxiliary and civilian employee.*

And the following thoughts were voiced more than once:

- Keeping up with/learning new technologies
- Deciding what is relevant
- The Legal filter
- Resistance to change
- More than one solution to every problem

We recommend that the combination of the above signposts and common themes be explored further by the leadership group in future workshops.

## The course ahead

Because of the brevity of the discussion portion of the NTRAIN session, we do not have enough information to draw any substantive conclusions. We expect to be able to do so after a more in depth session is conducted. To that end, the Auxiliary Office of Planning and Performance will request three hours at NACON 2012 for our next workshop. Our proposed topic is to continue the “Signposts” discussion, focusing on the topics noted in the Conclusions section above, with the goal of identifying potential strategies for addressing them.

To download the reports and documents produced by the U.S. Auxiliary Office of Planning and Performance, go to [http://cgaux.org/strategic\\_analysis/](http://cgaux.org/strategic_analysis/). Note there is a feedback section for your comments on the website.

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