

## “#CGHowTo” – “Help Right Now” for Coast Guardsmen in the Field

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### ABSTRACT

Sharing expertise from the Coast Guard’s Force Readiness Center’s to the field is hampered by limited infrastructure, lack of focus on “point of performance” support, and often confusing direction in multiple policies. This paper will discuss our effort to leverage a commercial unsecure video service (YouTube) to develop and distribute short “how to” videos to the fleet under the auspices of the Coast Guard’s Innovation Program.

We started with a simple premise that we turned into an officially sanctioned ‘Innovation Challenge.’ We asked, “What if every time a School House got two questions from the fleet on the same topic, it triggered them to create a short “How To” video?”

Information the organization provides to performers is the number one influence on performance (see “Where the Performance Issues Are and Are Not” Performance Improvement Quarterly, 29 (1) PP. 35 – 49). This innovation challenge uncovered barriers to sharing information, including communication, technological, cultural, societal, and policy. This paper will discuss the results of the initial innovation challenge with 35 entries, and the strategies to reach the entire Coast Guard through a second round. Finally, up-to-date quantitative and qualitative data will be included.

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Timothy J. Quiram** is the deputy director for Coast Guard training. He lives and works in DC and is part of the Force Readiness Command, headquartered in Norfolk, VA. Tim is a certified performance technologist (<https://www.ispi.org>), frequent presenter at professional conferences, and was the architect and a co-author of the widely read study titled “Where the Performance Issues Are and Are Not: A Meta-Analytic Examination” first published: 07 April 2016 <https://doi.org/10.1002/piq.21213>. Tim is also a senior DHS fellow, member of the DHS surge capacity force responding to hurricane Sandy, and a graduate of the Virginia Peninsula Chamber of Commerce Leadership Institute.

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## “#CGHOWTO” – “HELP RIGHT NOW” FOR COAST GUARDSMEN IN THE FIELD

### INTRODUCTION

#### A Brief Summary of Coast Guard Training Underlying Values

Since the 1990s, the Coast Guard has embraced the application of systems thinking to the creation and execution of training. By embracing the practice of “human performance technology”<sup>1</sup>, defined by the Coast Guard as,

“A careful and systematic approach to solving problems – or realizing opportunities – related to the performance of people, groups, or organizations. It results in solutions that improve a system in terms of achievement that the organization values.”<sup>2</sup>

the Coast Guard has been able to stretch its meager resources by ensuring training was only used when there is a true gap in skills and knowledge; a gap validated by analysis. This approach is codified in the Training System Standard Operating Procedure 2, Analysis,

“Analysis is also an important link to producing cost-effective training. This is why the Coast Guard has adopted the requirement that all training be subjected to a rigorous analysis prior to being funded in the formal training system. The Coast Guard enjoys the reputation of being one of the few military organizations that routinely conducts analysis before developing training interventions. Analysis before solutions ensures that we do not jump to training as the preferred solution to every performance problem or need.”<sup>3</sup>

#### “Information” as a Performance Enabler

The Coast Guard has developed its own high-level model of human performance technology (HPT). The model is a derivative of the work of Dr. Thomas Gilbert, who created the behavioral engineering model<sup>4</sup>

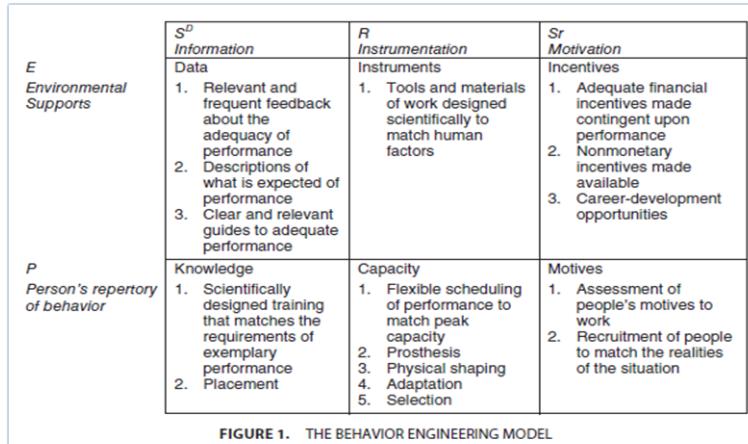


FIGURE 1. THE BEHAVIOR ENGINEERING MODEL

Note. Adapted from *Human Competence: Engineering Worthy Performance*, by Gilbert, T. 1978/2007, p. 88.  
Copyright 2007, the International Society for Performance Improvement.

<sup>1</sup> Human performance technology is defined by the International Society for Performance Improvement as, “a systematic approach to improving productivity and competence, uses a set of methods and procedures -- and a strategy for solving problems -- for realizing opportunities related to the performance of people. More specific, it is a process of selection, analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation of programs to most cost-effectively influence human behavior and accomplishment. It is a systematic combination of three fundamental processes: performance analysis, cause analysis, and intervention selection, and can be applied to individuals, small groups, and large organizations.”(ISPI, 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Standard Operation Procedures for the Coast Guard’s Training System, Volume 2, Analysis, pg86,

<https://www.forcecom.uscg.mil/Portals/3/Documents/Training/2.%20Analysis.pdf?ver=2017-01-25-141918-107>

<sup>3</sup> Standard Operation Procedures for the Coast Guard’s Training System, Volume 2, Analysis, pg2,

<https://www.forcecom.uscg.mil/Portals/3/Documents/Training/2.%20Analysis.pdf?ver=2017-01-25-141918-107>

<sup>4</sup> Human competence: Engineering worthy performance, (Gilbert, 2007.)

and a newer model, ‘the 6 boxes’ model developed by Dr. Carl Binder<sup>5</sup>. Two central characteristics of all three models are:

- 1) the boxes or buttons are listed in descending order from the most common influence on human performance to the least common, and
- 2) the items in the top row are under the authority, control, and responsibility of the organization, and the items in the bottom row are under the authority, control, and responsibility of the individual.

### **Review meta-analysis**

In 2016, the Coast Guard published a meta-analysis of its extensive library of HPT analysis products. The study attempted to quantify the frequency of each of the elements of the Behavioral Engineering Model, and the Six Boxes. The study found,

“In general terms and regardless of the model used, our findings support the idea that the vast majority (between 65% and 74%) of performance problems can be attributed to the organization or environment and only 35% or less can be attributed to the individual worker.”<sup>6</sup>

### **From “Help Right Now” to “#CGHow-To”**

Our current innovation challenge started over a year ago as an idea posted to a service-wide innovation challenge looking for new innovation projects. The initial idea was called “Help Right Now” and the explanation was,

“Ask anyone in the 20s how to do something and chances are they’ll go to YouTube for a video. Try it yourself – pick the most obscure topic imaginable, search YouTube and you’ll find a ‘how-to’ video. *How to catch a rabbit. How to make Jell-O. How to skin a buck.* It’s all there. Problem is, you are never sure of the validity of what you’re seeing. Coast Guard Training Centers have expertise and equipment to create short instructional YouTube videos to do almost anything in the Coast Guard. I propose FORCECOM prototype a private YouTube channel to host Training Center created and validated ‘how-to’ videos to answer the questions they are getting asked from the field, and the things Standardization and Assessment teams are finding. Since the lion’s share of instructors are active duty members coming from an operational unit, and returning to serve with the students they have trained, their expertise is current and they are motivated to help. This channel would be devoted solely to ‘how-to’ videos, no public affairs materials, no messages from leadership, no mandated training videos – only short, semi-professional, validated, ‘how-to’ segments.” (Open Idea Forum: Help Right Now! – Performance Support Private YouTube Channel, 2017)

Over the course of almost a year, multiple users commented on the idea, and many provided links to existing “bootleg” YouTube channels. Perhaps the most notable being one developed by the Engineering Systems School at Training Center Yorktown. In each case, we got access only by promising our goal wasn’t to shut down their effort. There was a widespread belief that if “leadership” knew about their project it would be stopped. Perhaps the most important development from this almost one year of discovery was its effect to solidify our overarching goal. We cannot overstate the importance of the steely-eyed focus we developed to create, “short, semi-pro, ‘how-to’ videos that help people complete Coast Guard tasks.” In short, we wanted to weed out all the other content that would inevitably compete, things like a short video from the flag officer, or a recording of a lecture, etc. This site was going to be the home of videos that helped people do their job in the field. We were focused squarely on the “data” block of Gilbert’s Behavioral Engineering Model (see figure 1).

### **Why use an “Innovation Challenge”**

One of the common questions we have gotten is, “why not just roll this out to the entire Coast Guard right now?” We found the framework of the “Innovation Challenge” extremely helpful for three reasons.

First – it gave us license to take more risk than a formal program would ever survive. The risk was focused on the potential impact if content wasn’t correct, and the potential for negative publicity.

Second – it freed us from the “requirement” to buy equipment and set up processes. Specifically, early on, one of our Training Centers tasked each school to produce videos. Naturally, the schools put together lists of required equipment and a series of great questions that would be appropriate if we were implementing this program as a new requirement for their job performance. Because it was an innovation challenge, we reminded them that participation was voluntary,

<sup>5</sup> The six boxes: A descendent of Gilbert’s behavior engineering model (Binder 1998).

<sup>6</sup> Where the Performance Issues Are and Are Not: A Meta-Analytic Examination (Hartt, Marken, & Quiram, 2016).

there was no funding, and we created a special video explaining how to film, edit, and upload a “how-to” video with just your iPhone<sup>7</sup>.

Third – it gave us the ability to fail fast and shut down the entire challenge if the concerns about content validity or a public affairs black eye proved to be true. Our reasoning went something like this: when concerns were voiced, “Understand. We’ll never know if that concern outweighs the potential benefit of supporting field performance unless we give it try. If it turns out to be a show-stopper, we can immediately suspend the innovation challenge, rapidly assess what happened, and then change the rules or permanently shut it down.”

### **Initial “Help Right Now” Innovation Challenge**

On December 1, 2018, we kicked off the innovation challenge for the Force Readiness Command (FORCECOM) only. The FORCECOM Commander sent an email to just over 3,000 unit members encouraging participation. At the end of 63 days, the challenge had 25 entries. We were initially disappointed by the numbers, but we found it took some time for the message to penetrate to the staff in our school-houses and for them to create content. There was also a sense that people wondered if this was just the latest “fad” or whether we were serious. We helped reinforce our commitment to the challenge with communications from the FORCECOM Command Master Chief (CMC) to the senior enlisted, and by frequent mentions in both formal and informal conversations.

### **Morph to #CGHowTo – for FORCECOM**

The natural question after the FORCECOM only innovation challenge was, “What did we learn? followed by, What’s the next step?”

The team at the Performance Technology Center (PTC) put together a very direct and unfiltered after action summary. We’ll discuss the details more extensively later in this report, but two findings were particularly interesting. First – several times video submitters, or their supervisor, contacted us and asked that we remove their video over concern from their senior enlisted supervisor. Either the submitter became concerned that the video hadn’t been vetted or the supervisor called and said the video submission hadn’t been authorized. Second – several senior enlisted expressed concern that the formal training system had fallen in such disrepair that we were now resorting to homemade YouTube videos to train the workforce. Both concerns highlighted we had some work to do sharing the message about what we were trying to accomplish.

### **Final Coast Guard-wide #CGHowTo challenge**

On April 4, 2019, we launched the Coast Guard wide version of the innovation challenge. “#CGHowTo” was kicked off with an official announcement through our traditional communications venue<sup>8</sup>. We simultaneously released communication from the FORCECOM commander to all the flag officers and members of the senior executive service, and a week later reinforced the message with communication from the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard, (MCPOG) and Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard (VCG). The VCG shared:

“At its core, this challenge seeks to leverage the professional exchanges that take place every day between our talented technicians and specialists in shops, hangars, and workspaces across the Coast Guard for the benefit of the entire Service. This initiative is designed to gather field-sourced How-To videos that address on-the-job tasks that our people have special expertise in, or that require some extra performance support...I understand there is some risk associated with this challenge, but in the end, innovation requires risk and I am excited about the potential these videos offer. In order to advance as a Service, we have to foster a culture of experimentation and continually find opportunities to unleash the power of our workforce for Service-wide change.”

The innovation challenge is ongoing as we craft this paper, but two months into the three-month challenge we have 104 videos posted, with the top three most popular being, 1) #CGHowTo Throw a Heaving Line<sup>9</sup>, 2) #CGHowTo Prepare Shipment of Oil Samples<sup>10</sup>, 3) #CGHowTo Request an Exercise Support Team.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN0UHY\\_aUj4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN0UHY_aUj4)

<sup>8</sup> ALCOAST 109/19, <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSCG/bulletins/23bdfe5>

<sup>9</sup> 1,100 views, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toFHnvUNbZU>

<sup>10</sup> 398 views, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqDOUMC0TrY>

<sup>11</sup> 344 views, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhkjZZ5qLEA>

## WHAT WE DID AND WHAT WE LEARNED

### Our Materials and Methods

The first two-month challenge was internal to FORCECOM and therefore manageable to advertise and garner support. Through an official announcement and email from the FORCECOM Commander, we asked training centers and members who specialize in providing support to the fleet to create videos that answered the “how-to” questions they were receiving from the field. The rules were basic - choose a topic to help a Coast Guard member complete a task, review the criteria on the self-evaluation rubric (see figure 2), create a video ideally under five minutes long and submit it for review.

Category	Evaluation Criteria	Weight	Self Eval Score
Gives “How To” accomplish something	Following the steps of the video will help the viewer to perform a Coast Guard task by learning “How To” accomplish something.	70	
Get’s to the point quickly	No more than 10 seconds before the “How To” is clear.	10	
Introduction	Begin the video with a brief introduction: e.g. “Today I’m going to show you how to (do what).”	10	
Mentions References / Procedures	Mentions any existing procedures / references – use specific titles, sections, pages, etc.	10	
Scoring	100		

Title	Title clearly and concisely describes content. Title includes #CGHowTo	NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/>
Audio & Video	The audio is clear, with no unnecessary background noise. The video is stable and properly focused.	NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/>
Safety / PII / Info Security / Classification / Profanity	Does this video contain any material that would endanger, compromise, discredit, or embarrass the Coast Guard?	NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/>
Copyrighted / Trademarked / Proprietary Material	Does this Video contain music, copyrighted material, trademarked material, or proprietary information?	NO <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/>

Figure 2. Screenshot of self-evaluation rubric.

We established a FORECECOM YouTube channel separate from any other Coast Guard affiliated site, but did not advertise it for this challenge. We did not yet want the publicity of the site until we learned more. Every submission received the hash tag #CGHowTo in front of the title to make it easily searchable or videos were viewable on the Coast Guard innovation website. Submitters sent the link to their video along with the completed self-evaluation rubric that confirmed they followed the basic rules of the challenge. The team from the Performance Technology Center reviewed the videos for criteria and quality. Only a few were turned away for being informational and not “how to” videos.

### Lessons Learned from Round 1

The first challenge was a success in that we collected a long list of candid lessons learned. The two most important areas of feedback fell into cultural or technological challenges followed by additional outliers.

More than once, someone submitted a video then circled back asking that their video actually not be posted on YouTube for various reasons including concern that the overall initiative would not be accepted by supervisors or was not approved by the chain of command. Members worried this could negatively impact their advancement in the organization. Despite a workforce full of subject matter experts, there was widespread hesitation to create videos for the belief that someone was more qualified to demonstrate the task better. This equated to fear of receiving criticism from viewers. Also related to Coast Guard culture, the feedback included anxiety over what was considered a violation of security. The military cultural mindset to protect personal and sensitive information, even on personal social media sites, is so engrained and does not have a clear delineation in which it was ok to share information.

Outdated Coast Guard technology was a source of frustration for users to both submit videos and view them. The Coast Guard network naturally has multiple levels of security, but this made accessing YouTube a challenge. Some members reported not being able to play videos at all while others were discouraged with extremely slow load times. In response, most who wanted to participate had to use personal devices and accounts to create and view videos. This proved to be one of the more significant deterrents.

For this initial challenge, we launched the initiative under the auspices of the Coast Guard's Innovation program. All submitters were supposed to enter their video by posting a link to the innovation website; however, the team found several videos simply by searching Google for the "#CGHowTo," which means there were videos meant for the challenge, but not submitted via the instructions provided. We believe creating another user name and password for yet another website was a deterrent. Due to this, there were no crowdsourcing lessons learned because very few people logged into the Coast Guard innovation challenge website to watch videos and the FORCECOM YouTube channel had not been advertised. Lastly, while aiming for "how to" videos, the workforce seemed to not fully grasp the nuances between "how to" and "instructional" given the array of content received.

### **Updated Plan for the Coast Guard-Wide Challenge**

The rules for the Coast Guard-wide innovation challenge did not change, but our processes did. Support for the innovation challenge and the willingness to accept risk was communicated from top leadership. Notably, those senior enlisted, who have the ability to rally support from the operators most inclined to produce videos shared their enthusiasm for this initiative. The endorsement was passed down from operational unit commands to the field.

Some senior leadership that now had a stake in this challenge expressed concern over the risk for videos to contain information that could discredit the Coast Guard. In response, we created an internal evaluation rubric and added four members to the team that reviewed all video submissions. The new process ensured each video was scored twice not just for criteria and audio and visual quality but also for professionalism, political, and cultural sensitivities. If there was any doubt about a video, it was routed up the chain of command for discussion and final approval.

We recognized the need to make video submission as easy as possible to encourage participation. Videos are no longer being submitted via the Coast Guard innovation site. All submissions go directly to an official inbox. The self-evaluation rubric was also converted to a user-friendly electronic form easily able to submit with the video link in one click. We provided additional resources such as how to make a video on an iPhone and how to self-evaluate and submit videos. Even though it was clear videos did not have to be professional quality, getting started was a daunting task for some.



### **Lessons Learning from Coast Guard-Wide Innovation Challenge**

The Coast Guard-wide Innovation Challenge ends on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019. To this point, we have learned more.

It is a violation of Coast Guard policy to log into personal email on the secure network. YouTube is affiliated with Google and therefore requires a personal gmail account. In order to comment or like a video, one must be logged into their personal account. Anyone viewing videos on the Coast Guard network is not able to "like" or comment on videos. This is important for not only choosing winners for the challenge but also crowdsourcing. One of the major goals of this initiative was to let the workforce decide which videos were job enhancing performance support tools. We are now primarily gauging the success of a video based on the number of views it receives rather than the "likes" or comments, but specific feedback is still a goal.

There is still resistance. We recently asked to advertise the innovation challenge through one of the widely distributed Coast Guard bulletins. Our initial request was denied due to our YouTube site not being officially sanctioned. The use of social media sites for anything other than official Coast Guard messaging is uncomfortable territory for some program offices charged with protecting the social media policies.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary is a robust voluntary workforce that supports all missions. They were invited to participate in the challenge, but because they are not able to access the Coast Guard data network, they did not have access to the

resources or self-evaluation rubric. Upon learning this, we distributed all the information as e-mail attachments, but their engagement was delayed.

## Results

### Quantitative

To date, there are 104 videos posted. Training units lead the way with submissions at 78%. The submitter demographics included: Enlisted 54%, Officer 18%, Civilian 28%, and Auxiliary 0%. Of the enlisted structure, the majority of submissions came from the pay-grade of E-7. Of officer submissions, the majority came from the pay-grade of O-4, and of civilians the majority from the pay-grade of GS-12. Of interest, we intend to further study which mission areas are most represented.

### Qualitative

We are developing a post-innovation challenge survey instrument. Two months into the challenge, we have received input regarding specific videos and the challenge as a whole. The “younger generation” shares eagerness about performance support videos that are immediate, direct, and can be used at the point of performance. Even then, YouTube doesn’t fully satisfy the hunger for advanced technology solutions beyond brick and mortar classroom settings. We often hear, “is there an app for that?”

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

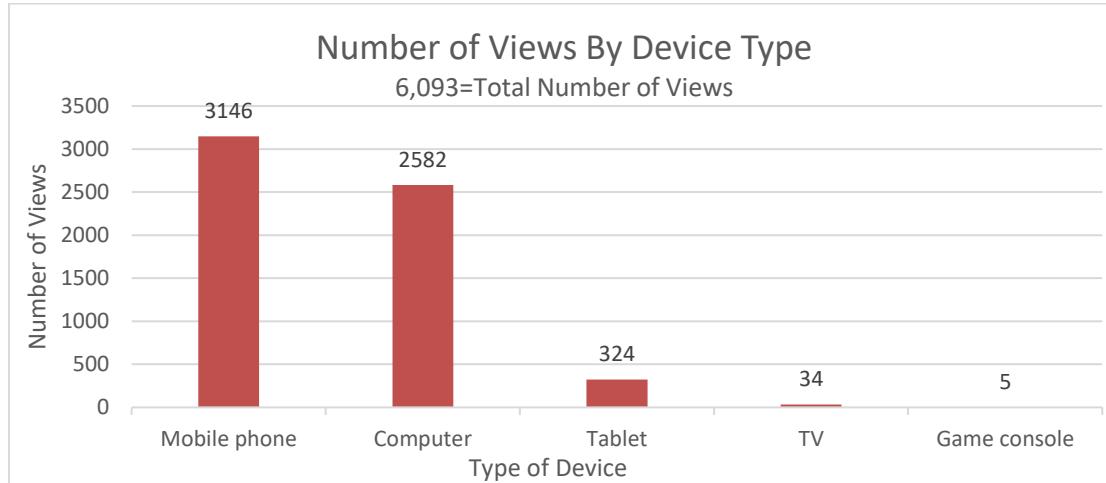
### Other Technical Issues

The Coast Guard network contains security applications that block downloading YouTube videos. The team had to use a third party downloading website to obtain a copy of all YouTube videos submitted. Once downloaded, an off-network computer was used to upload the videos to the CGHowTo channel. To expedite the process, the team created a unit gmail account and sent all submissions off network for uploading.

### Use of YouTube as a Platform

YouTube offers a free stage to host performance support videos where and when support is needed. It was assumed most of the workforce was familiar with YouTube, used it regularly and probably even had the application on a mobile device. We could easily establish a channel and control what published in real time. Following so many questions regarding operational security, we explored using other protected media platforms such as MilTube and Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS) to stage videos, but that limited how and when they could be viewed due to login requirements. Additionally, accessing YouTube over commercial mobile networks lifted some of the burden off of the Coast Guard network bandwidth (see table 1.).

Table 1. How videos were viewed.



### **Accessibility to underway cutters**

During the year-long discovery and conversation phase, when the innovation challenge morphed from “Help Right Now” to “#CGHowTo” we acknowledged up front that these products were not designed for underway Coast Guard Cutters<sup>12</sup>. Our cutters, especially our small cutters, have extremely limited bandwidth. A frequent concern from their commanding officers centers upon the growing reliance on this limited bandwidth for support and administrative tasks while the bandwidth is already bursting with the information flow required to support operations. By defining the target audience, we effectively sidestepped the legitimate bandwidth concern that can stifle innovation.

### **Equipment to film and edit videos**

We briefly mentioned this concern earlier, but it bears repeating. A frequent concern was the lack of equipment and expertise to both film and edit videos. The concern was voiced first in the “FORCECOM only” innovation challenge, when schools believed the challenge was a new requirement versus a voluntary program. In addition to clarifying the voluntary nature, we made several attempts to demonstrate how to create and edit a video with nothing more than the nearly ubiquitous iPhone. Even this effort showed the difficulty communicating the vision that these videos were to be short, right to the point, how-to products. The first attempt was long, talked at length about the broad steps to creating any video, and never got to the point of answering, “How exactly do I do this? What app should I use to edit? How can I add text? Etc.”

Our second attempt was spot on and became the go-to answer to anyone seriously asking how to create and edit a #CGHowTo video<sup>13</sup>. We also created a video early on just using the iPhone to demonstrate what we meant by “semi-professional quality<sup>14</sup>.”

### **Legal concerns**

Interestingly, concerns from Coast Guard attorneys primarily surfaced during the formal clearance process used to announce the Coast Guard wide innovation challenge. The concerns were two-fold. First, how do we know the content is accurate and what happens if it isn’t, specifically what sort of liability do we have. The second had to do with permission to use YouTube in our official communication.

The second concern was the easiest to mitigate. We submitted a formal request to YouTube to use their name in our ALCOAST<sup>15</sup>. After describing the context and providing the wording of the draft ALCOAST, they quickly agreed we could use their name.

The first concern over content accuracy and liability was a little more difficult, and ultimately we see this as a work in progress.

We advocated thinking about it from a different angle and using three vectors of content accuracy. The first vector was based upon a common question, how does any user confirm the accuracy of any YouTube video? They watch it, look at any comments, look at the number of “likes”, and usually verify the content by looking at other similar videos. Then they make a decision which procedure to follow. Our first vector at content accuracy was that Coast Guard users should do the same things. Comment if they believe the procedure is incorrect, cite any references, and use with some caution, not relying on one source.

Our second vector of content accuracy was to require submitters to reference any existing guidance on their topic and to self-certify in their evaluation rubric that their video follows existing guidance. We are seeing better effect from this vector as nearly every video contains this information, and we have had no substantive comments challenging the procedures in the current submittals.

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<sup>12</sup> “Cutter” is the term used for commissioned Coast Guard vessels 65 feet and longer. All cutters are referred to as USC CG (United States Coast Guard Cutter) vice USS (United States Ship).

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN0UHY\\_aUj4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN0UHY_aUj4)

<sup>14</sup> #CGHowTo Inspect a Life Raft For Automatic Deployment, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KySgJkwRA44>

<sup>15</sup> ALCOAST is the title of our official messages that are addressed to all of the Coast Guard

Our third vector of content accuracy was going to be some type of content review by the experts in each school. This was the vision of the initial “Help Right Now” innovation idea. We haven’t fully developed this concept as this schoolhouse content accuracy review begins to be much more than a voluntary innovation challenge and more of a new program requirement. Going beyond an innovation challenge to a full ongoing program will require us to make an informed decision about either creating a new requirement for Training Centers, or accepting the current level of risk.

### **Public Affairs concerns**

This concern about #CGHowTo operating as an unauthorized social media site persists even now. The Coast Guard has codified their social media policy in the External Affairs Manual.<sup>16</sup> Initially we looked at including our videos as a playlist on the Coast Guard’s official YouTube account.<sup>17</sup> Our model was one of the current playlists entitled “Cooking With a Coastie” which contains 15 videos with a combined 1,617 views.<sup>18</sup> Our public affairs program, which runs the official YouTube account was supportive, but our testing led us to ultimately abandon this venue to host our videos for two main reasons. First, the team was already fully taxed and we therefore experienced delays in posting content. Second, they were reticent to remove any content once posted. They expressed public affairs concern with removing content and its impact to diminish the credibility of the site.

We absolutely needed to have the ability to quickly remove and update content, especially as equipment and procedures in the field changed. This led us to re-read and rethink our approach. #CGHowTo was not a social media campaign, it was an innovation challenge providing performance support to the field. As a performance support site, #CGHowTo wasn’t subject to the specific rules governing a social media presence. The director of governmental and public affairs was happy to allow us to pursue this direction, especially as it was a voluntary innovation challenge, partly designed to uncover the true risks and benefits of field sourced “how-to” videos. Naturally, we communicated this risk and approach to our senior executives before kicking off the Coast Guard wide innovation challenge.

Our branding of #CGHowTo as a performance support, not social media presence continues. Even as late as two months into the innovation challenge, after public support from both the VCG and MCPOCG, we experienced push back over including it in communications to the field.

### **Operational Security concerns**

Separate from a common fear of public speaking or presenting in front of a camera was the unease of becoming a target for an unknown audience. Publishing a video in uniform with personal identifiers including name and rank on a public-facing website was contrary to the low social media profile military members are recommended to maintain. To support those who wanted to participate but did not feel comfortable identifying themselves, we did not require any personal introductions. It was discussed if not knowing who created the video would make viewers question the credibility, but we opted to trust the content to speak for itself. Multiple videos were submitted without any individual identifiers – they contained only screen captures or hands demonstrating much like common do-it-yourself videos found on YouTube today<sup>19</sup>.

### **Culture Issues**

Videos submissions were slow to start. It was new territory contrary to the protecting information mindset engrained in military culture. The majority of initial submissions came from training units that were under the organizational structure of the innovation challenge leadership. There was another surge of submissions following a Coast Guard-wide announcement and encouragement from senior leadership (see figure 4). Based on when videos were viewed, it also seems to have been adopted by the workforce overtime (see figure 5).

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<sup>16</sup> Coast Guard External Affairs Manual, Commandant Instruction Manual 5700.13, <https://media.defense.gov/2017/Mar/24/2001721516/-1/1/0/COAST%20GUARD%20EXTERNAL%20AFFAIRS%20MANUAL>

<sup>17</sup> The Coast Guard YouTube site currently has 30,949 subscribers, <https://www.youtube.com/user/USCGImagery>

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgOje37c-b1M3\\_AcQ8SE2tpmvqRNLzS7K](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgOje37c-b1M3_AcQ8SE2tpmvqRNLzS7K)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4i088gGsZ0>

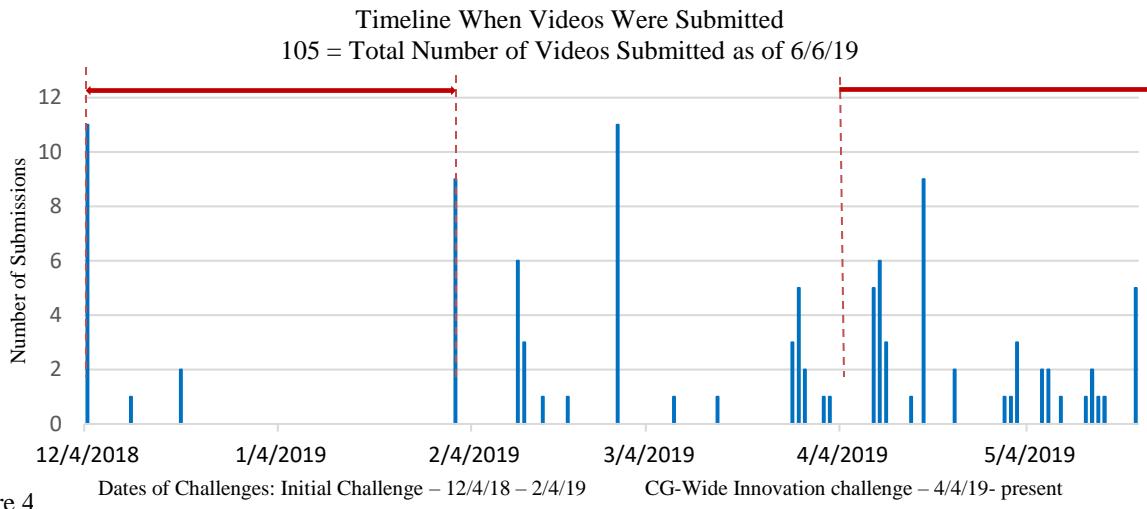


Figure 4

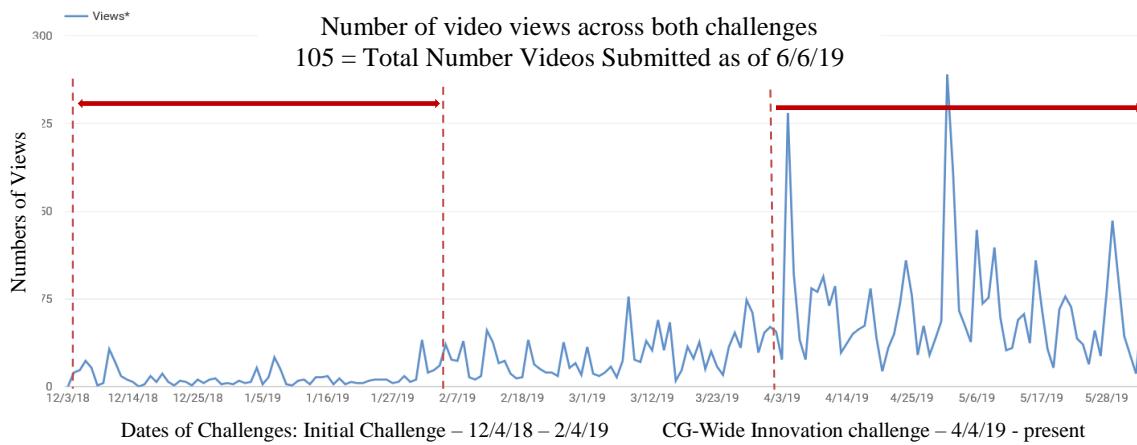


Figure 5.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

At the conclusion of the ongoing innovation challenge, we are planning the following actions:

- 1) Complete a full after-action review with lessons learned.
- 2) Gather additional qualitative and quantitative data.
- 3) Propose a way forward that formalizes the level of risk the service is willing to take by using YouTube as the video hosting site, and formalizes, or not, the resourcing needed to move forward.

Long term, as human performance professionals, our vision is to see a role and home for a vibrant library of how-to videos that are used on the job, available 24X7, rapidly address changing needs, and give the viewer exactly what they need to accomplish a Coast Guard task. These videos will never replace the foundational skills and knowledge needed to create a specialist, but they can be used during and after that training.

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