

## NAVIGATING THE FUTURE

By JO1 Jd Walter, USN  
Naval Personnel Development Command Public Affairs Office

For Sailors, managing their careers is now as easy as point, click, and grow, thanks to Navy Knowledge Online (NKO). The flagship of the Navy's Revolution in Training, NKO is the portal through which Sailors will access vital career information, educational and training requirements, college programs, and other professional and personal development opportunities.

Launched in September 2002 as the vehicle for the Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark's initiative to enhance operational readiness and increase mission effectiveness by revolutionizing the Navy's training and education structure, NKO has evolved into a major component of the Navy's integrated delivery system for lifelong learning initiatives, personal development, and knowledge management.

The Department of the Navy (DON) is setting the pace for success with NKO, a dynamic, broad-based online system, designed to be accessible to all Sailors, active duty, reserve and retired, and DON civilians and contractors, whether on the job, on the road or at home. Using NKO gives Sailors the opportunity to not only manage their careers in a more efficient manner, but it also enables them to engage with mentors, subject matter experts and managers concerning all facets of their careers. *"This is going to allow Sailors to access what is most important to them; the information required to excel, both professionally and personally,"* said Commander, Naval Personnel Development Command (NPDC), Rear Adm. Kevin Moran. *"It is going to allow Sailors to take maximum advantage of the tools and opportunities available to them, no matter where they are stationed or deployed."*

While NPDC's knowledge management team is responsible for the overall management of NKO, each of the Navy's new Learning Centers is tasked with developing, populating, and subsequently managing their own NKO interests via their center pages. Here, Sailors will find all the information that is relevant to a given occupational cluster, specific job task or mission area. This approach to centralizing all the tools and opportunities might include the posting of technical manuals and schematics, reference materials for courses, links to training and educational sites, and other career management tools. It also enables the creation of chat rooms and message boards, moderated by subject matter experts focused on systems, equipment, and programs taught by the individual center. NKO's management teams will also be able to utilize this captured content as reusable knowledge to enhance the Navy's training and knowledge transfer. *"The idea of having the individual centers manage their own content is consistent with the Revolution in Training's goal of distribution of professional and personal growth tools to the Fleet,"* said Lt. Eric Morris, NKO Opera-



*In Norfolk, Va., users log on to NKO after working hours at Wind and Sea, the base Internet Cafe. Official U.S. Navy photo by JO1 Jd Walter.*

tions. One of the most important tasks facing the centers is the conversion of valuable knowledge captured through the chat rooms, message boards and polls, into a distributable commodity for community-wide use. This information may take the form of frequently asked questions (FAQs), white papers and best practice documentation, which will help formalize the vast amounts of knowledge gained from experience into a format that is readily available to all Sailors.

Instant messaging (IM) is also available on NKO for one-to-one communication and mentoring. The IM feature and the capacity for chat rooms were given major consideration during the initial design phase. Both features allow for maximum connectivity between deckplate Sailors and subject matter experts. When navigating the portal, a user need only "mouse over" any document posted to view the author's contact information. This feature also alerts the user as to whether the author is online at the time, providing the user immediate access to the author through the IM function. Possibly the best aspect of IM is its multi-tasking ability, conducting multiple chats or IMs at once. *"We want to connect people and ideas,"* said Morris. *"NKO puts frontline Sailors in instant contact with the appropriate subject matter experts so they can do their job better, increasing both their professional proficiency and efficiency."*

The system supports temporary and permanent chat rooms designed for discussions and collaboration within the various Revolution in Training working groups. The chat feature allows community managers to identify user groups based on specific attributes, such as occupational field or mission area, rank or platform so they can send notifications alerting them of an upcoming chat. Transcripts of the chats can be saved to FAQ files for reuse or distribution. This not only increases the realm of impact for a particular chat session, but also creates a retrievable document containing valuable knowledge often lost during physical meetings.

Both IM and chat rooms provide Sailors with a service that is rapidly growing in popularity both inside the military and within the civilian sector because it provides instant communications without additional system or software requirements. It also eliminates the need for time-consuming downloads and since the communications are run through the browser, both methods are secure.

To begin using IM, which is auto-launched, click on "Add Contact" to add a user or to see who is online. To chat, scroll through the list of chat rooms to find those that are active and click to gain entrance. Users can also create their own chat rooms and maintain access control once the chat is initiated.

Another prominent feature of NKO will be the posting of Sailor Continuums (5 Vector Models) for every occupational field within the Navy as they are developed by the Learning Centers. These will be the roadmaps that Sailors will use to navigate their careers. Interactive in nature, the continuums will highlight milestones Sailors must reach to be eligible for promotion. These milestones will not only detail what is expected, but they will also be linked to corresponding training or educational requirements. Sailors will be able to connect to a virtual course, request approval and register for a residence course, and access online reference study materials.

These continuums will provide Sailors with real-time assessments of their progress along each vector (professional, personal, leadership, certifications and qualifications, and performance), expert advice on professional growth and development, and upward mobility, as well as direct access to courses, career information, and other information to ensure career progress. The continuums contain all the relevant and important information organized by occupational field, knowledge, skills and abilities, and will serve as the core knowledge integration and distribution channel for Sailors throughout their Navy careers by combining unique personalization, robust search capabilities, and collaborative tools in a dynamically integrated environment.

*"This is where NKO pays off," said Moran. "By bringing together all the resources related to a given career path or mission area, the Navy will streamline the process of identifying goals, granting immediate access to the tools required to successfully meet that goal, providing a virtual support network of technical experts and community leaders to work with the Sailors to ensure their success."*

Through NKO's collaboration feature, Sailors will have access to what is, in essence, a portable hard drive, on which is stored all the relevant information pertaining to their careers. This feature allows Sailors to post up to 50 megabytes of data and then, if they choose, securely share that information with their shipmates. This Enterprise Collaboration Center (ECC) organizes files into knowledge centers. The knowledge centers have either Navy community, personal or team files. Communities are arranged around function or mission area and are managed by community administrators. These files contain documents that subscribers need to do their jobs. Personal and team files can be created by anyone to share knowledge securely. Most users will only create and utilize folders within the personal and team knowledge centers, but they will be able to request and be granted access to other areas within communities. Upon registration, every Sailor will have a private knowledge center created for them, but may choose to add additional folders. The centers section of NKO links users to the homepages of the different Learning Centers and Training Support Centers, and includes information pertaining to that center, such as announcements from center leaders, community managers, detailers, administrative notes, calendars, news, document centers and additional career management links.

NKO leverages the success of Army Knowledge Online (AKO), the

Army's enterprise portal with 1.2 million users. Both portals utilize software from the Appian Corporation, the developer for both NKO and AKO. For external content integration, NKO and AKO use Web services and XML. NKO currently has 45,000 users and is scalable for the entire Navy enterprise.

Currently, NKO is accessible from anywhere via the Internet. A SIPRNET (NKO-S) version for classified information is in development and is expected to be operational by midyear. A shipboard version is also under development. Over the course of the next several months, NKO will also see improvements to its message boards, collaboration and IM features.

New users should log on to NKO at [www.nko.navy.mil](http://www.nko.navy.mil) and then click the "I'm a New User" button and follow the step-by-step registration process. Upon completion of the registration process, the new user completes a profile form and selects one of the Learning Centers based on his community of occupational fields. Users can learn more about NKO's functionality by clicking on the NKO Primer button on the homepage. Detailed instructions and a user guide are accessible via the "User Guide" button on the top right portion of the homepage.

*"NKO is a great example of what the Navy's Revolution in Training is doing for our Sailors," said Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy MCPON(SS/AW) Terry Scott. "This will give Sailors a single access point to all their professional and personal development milestones, and the training and educational resources that support their success. I strongly encourage Sailors to log on to this site, become familiar with it and use it to manage their careers."*

*NKO is 128-bit encrypted via a Secure Socket Layer. To access NKO log on to [www.nko.navy.mil](http://www.nko.navy.mil) and click on the "I'm a New User" button. From there, you will be asked to provide personal information that will be validated against DEERS (Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System) to ensure consistency and user privacy. Users will create their unique password during the initial log in session. Once the DEERS validation process is successfully completed, the user will receive an e-mail confirming access that will include instructions for retrieving forgotten or lost login information. Users will also be given several options depending on which Learning Center they are affiliated with, their rank, occupational field or mission area, NECs (Navy Enlisted Classifications), duty stations, time in service, as well as other data fields contained in the NTMPS (Navy Training Management and Planning System) database.*

*The core services of NKO are accessed through the tool bar located on the left of the screen. In addition to buttons for Learning Centers, Training Support Centers, Naval Missions and Communities, users will find NKO Search, a robust Verity K2 engine, and the NKO White Pages. The White Pages contain information on every registered NKO user. Users can search and filter based on attributes such as name, pay grade, center affiliation and NKO account type. Once a search is returned results can be sorted by telephone number, e-mail address, first, middle or last name, rate or community. The results also provide hot e-mail addresses that automatically launch e-mail to the selected NKO user. It also reflects the user's online status and allows one to add new people to IM contact lists.*