Trial Notebook: A Practical Primer On Trial Advocacy

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The backbone of trial advocacy, the essence of being a successful trial advocate, is thoughtful and meticulous preparation from case inception through action by the convening authority. A trial advocate's demeanor and eloquence are the result of diligence and careful preparation.

The trial notebook should also contain: the script from the Military Judges' Benchbook, the local rules of court, a two or three page quick reference to the Military Rules of Evidence, a one-page list of common objections, common evidentiary foundations (business records for example), copies of new and important appellate case law, a calendar, a current pay chart, and other. As a practical matter, judge advocates must always remember that