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Learning Organizations: Their Importance to Systems Acquisition in DoD

p. 3

Col Robert L. Tremaine, USAF (Ret.), and Donna J. Seligman

The success of the Defense Acquisition Workforce depends on experience, and since the majority of what it learns is on-the-job, a wide array of learning techniques dominates. Together, they behave as a learning ecosystem full of opportunities—and even learning hazards. While all these learning techniques jockey for the fastest learning lane amid variable workplace demands, proven learning methodologies help form the foundation of an organization's learning faith. Many organizations already promote learning in the workplace. But, what have Department of Defense acquisition organizations that operate as Learning Organizations (LOs) implemented to achieve performance gains? The authors of this research sought out such organizations to better understand the key ingredients that make them authentically high-performing and appropriately armed LOs.

Continuous Competition as an Approach to Maximize Performance

p. 27

Ginny Wydler, Su Chang, and Erin M. Schultz

Research shows that continuing competitive pressure applied during development and production leads to better industry performance, often at reduced cost. However, the entrenched practice of one-time competition for an entire program life cycle often endows the winner with a very strong monopolistic power that lasts for decades. This article describes continuous competition as leverage to acquire more effective results. It offers an alternative method for continuous competition—Competitive Multisourcing with Distributed Awards—under an applicable set of conditions and an appropriate business case.

Past Performance as an Indicator of Future Performance: Selecting an Industry Partner to Maximize the Probability of Program Success

p. 49

James Bradshaw and Su Chang

The federal contracting process should enable a government organization to select a contractor that will become a true business partner. Today's source selection processes evaluate how well a contractor proposes a solution; however, the government's processes are ill suited to evaluate how well a contractor can deliver on its proposal. The Department of Defense (DoD) relies too heavily on the contractor's proposal versus evaluating past performance. The lack of past performance data and processes to evaluate companies' qualifications has contributed to program failures, cost overruns, and schedule delays. Without adequate data and processes, the DoD increases its risk of duplicating previous program failures and misses the opportunity to capture this information, thereby preventing repeated mistakes with the same contractor.

Acquisition Program Funding Stability—A Myth

p. 71 *COL Robert D. Morig, USA (Ret.)*

Program stability and funding stability are continuously promoted as key to successful acquisition reform. Funding stability, according to prevailing wisdom, leads to program stability. Unfortunately, the dynamic, evolving, and methodical requirements generation, technology enhancement, and resourcing processes prevalent throughout the Department of Defense (DoD) are not conducive to funding stability. This article discusses results from a survey of financial management practitioners that provide insight into factors that both enable and detract from achieving funding stability. The author presents program stability as a myth in the real world environment where the “norm” is characterized by changing program requirements, technologies, and funding. He further hypothesizes that stability cannot occur without major change in the Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution, and Congressional Enactment processes.

Dynamic Consequences of Cost, Schedule, and Performance Within DoD Project Management

p. 89 *Patrick R. Cantwell, Shahram Sarkani, and Thomas A. Mazzuchi*

Project management has been a constant challenge for the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) acquisition community. While most DoD projects are technologically advanced, the tools and methods to manage these projects are the same as for simple, repetitive projects. The authors argue that traditional approaches fail because they only evaluate the relationships between two of the three elements of cost, schedule, and performance. Instead, they have developed a system dynamics model that allows cost, schedule, and performance to interact and influence one another. This model is complementary to other research and intended to be usable by the practicing project manager. The results from model runs will provide consequences for three potential control alternatives in DoD project management.

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Professional Reading List

The Age of Invincible: The Ship That Defined the Modern Royal Navy
by Nick Childs

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