

# Acquisition Workforce Demonstration Project

## Two Insiders Review the Power of Applying IPTs to a Broad Range of Project Settings

GREG GIDDENS • DR. PETER S. FISKE

The Acquisition community is becoming familiar with the Integrated Product Team (IPT) approach; a powerful means of accelerating the design schedule of systems by assembling a team of individuals representing all the stakeholders in the project. But many may not realize that the IPT concept is broadly applicable, and equally powerful in a variety of project settings. In fact, in the Pentagon the IPT concept is demonstrating its value in a project that is far removed from the day-to-day operation of the acquisition community: the Acquisition Workforce Demonstration Project.

The Acquisition Workforce Demonstration Project is a new effort underway to show that modifications to the federal personnel management system can improve the quality and professionalism of the acquisition workforce. The project is being run by a team of dedicated acquisition professionals from acquisition organizations around the country who are familiar with the functions and dysfunctions of the existing civilian personnel system. This Process Action Team (PAT) was chartered by Secretary Perry last fall. It will be the largest personnel demonstration project ever, involving perhaps as many as 50,000 DoD civilian employees.

From the outset, the PAT adopted the IPT approach in developing the set of initiatives that would form the

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basis for a new personnel system for selected acquisition organizations. The team drew in members from the Services and Agencies and found both personnel specialists and specialists in the acquisition process. They also drew in members from DoD's Office of Civilian Personnel Policy (OCPD) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

In previous DoD personnel demonstration projects, the OCPD and OPM were treated as “checkers” and called in to inspect the workforce demonstration plan only *after* it had been assembled. When problems with the plans were identified, solutions had to be retrofit back into the project, often resulting in delays and frustration on both sides.

By assembling an IPT representing *all* the stakeholders at the outset, the Acquisition Workforce PAT worked contentious issues from the outset.

Instead of nasty surprises, the group was able to identify problem areas early and devote additional resources to them. By being open and collaborative, the team was able to progress at a much accelerated pace, and may eventually end up with a superior product.

According to Greg Giddens, the Director of the Acquisition Workforce Demonstration PAT, being on the same team does not mean giving up one's individual position and perspective. “Quite the contrary,” says Giddens. “Being on the team helps focus everyone on the goal and how best to get there. There will always be problems, issues, and obstacles. The IPT process does not remove barriers in and of itself. It does, however, provide an environment that promotes an early understanding of the problem set and the domain of potential solutions. All issues are addressed up-front and early and worked out accordingly with no surprises.”

Watch for more news coming out soon about the Acquisition Workforce Personnel Demonstration Project in upcoming issues. Meanwhile, the power of IPTs to facilitate projects in a multitude of situations and settings is the story behind the story.

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