

## STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Why do we act like Truth is limited to numbers and charts, percentages and dollar signs? A technology readiness level of 5, and an ISO 9000 certification, and an ECP, TRR, QPR, BEA, SOW (pick one)? And what were we talking about again?

The terrible Truth is this:  
Program management is not about programs.  
Or management.  
It's about people—Mike the new engineer,  
and Deb the experienced logistician,  
and Sgt. Stephenson in Afghanistan—again.

And people are poetic deep down.  
We abide in metaphor.  
And people are poets deep down.  
We breathe in verse.  
And people are poems deep down.  
We dwell in symbol.

So ... program managers need poetry.  
Doggerel or haiku,  
a stanza or a sonnet,  
only poetry can convey the stuff that really matters,  
the creamy goodness of life  
and the work's startling reality.

And that's the point, after all.  
And that's the truth, you see.  
And that's the challenge, I think.  
To seek and find and embrace  
your own gut wrenching and glorious  
programmatically poetry.

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presentation would need a more in-depth introduction and more formal presentation of the desired learning outcomes. For the next session in Prague and the subsequent presentations, we refined the introductory portion of the materials using the analogy of building a house. First, plans and drawings are necessary, correlating with the need for acquisition regulations and laws. Next, the materials and construction are needed, paralleling the solicitation, evaluation, and award phase. The second and following training sessions also included opening remarks by the American Ambassador and key host-nation leaders. These dignitaries reinforced the spirit of cooperation among the coalition partners, and their support reflected the United States' commitment to include coalition partners in the reconstruction of Iraq.

We used lecture as the primary method of instruction, with handouts and direct link to the Internet. The most significant challenge was working with simultaneous translators. The team quickly learned to speak slowly, with frequent pauses, and to use terms appropriate to the local language. For example, "tender" proved a better term than "solicitation" because "tender" is the common term of art in Europe. And in a source selection slide, the term "notional" caused some confusion with the Romanian audience, even though all attendees spoke English. An official from the U.S. Embassy suggested using instead the word "example," which is a cognate of the Romanian *exemplu*.

In addition to the language challenge, it wasn't easy to convey the concept of capitalism and its business practices. All the initial training locations were former Warsaw Pact satellites of the former Soviet Union, and many of the host-nation official and industry representatives had not made the transformation from a Socialist mindset. In one country, the audience seemed to have a profound sense of entitlement to receive contracts simply because their government had provided humanitarian and military assistance in Iraq. This audience also felt that the playing field was not level and their companies, especially small businesses, were at a disadvantage beside American firms. The other countries, however, recognized that global competition is a fact of life. The industry representatives understood that participation in the process could be as a prime contractor, partner, or sub contractor. The team frequently emphasized that the FAR contract process is mechanical, fair, very competitive, and non-political. With every training session, the team emphasized that the officials evaluating proposals and making contract awards were career civil service and active-duty personnel with no investments, corporate ties, or personal agendas.

### Regulatory and Pricing Requirements

Yet another challenge was participants' lack of reference to an American statutory and regulatory process. Most of

of government acronyms, sample solicitations, the PowerPoint® training presentation, source selection guides, Iraq contracting regulations, hotlink connections for additional information on solicitations and regulations, a list of all fiscal year 2004 contractors, and a guide for doing business in Iraq.

### Training Challenges: Expectations, Language, and Culture

In the first training session in Warsaw, attendees had anticipated that we would hand out solicitations and make awards on the spot, so the team quickly realized that the