

DCMA Prepares for the Future

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The Defense Contract Management Agency is the Department of Defense component that works directly with defense suppliers to help ensure that DoD, federal, and allied government supplies and services are delivered on time, at projected cost, and meet all performance requirements. DCMA directly contributes to the military readiness of the United States and its allies and helps preserve the nation's freedom.

DCMA professionals serve as information brokers and in-plant representatives for military, federal, and allied government buying agencies, both during the initial stages of the acquisition cycle and throughout the life of the resulting contracts; as well as contingency contract support in Iraq and Afghanistan. Currently, DCMA works with more than 18,540 contractors and oversees more

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than 324,450 active contracts. DCMA is headquartered in Alexandria, Va., with 65 major field locations and more than 750 locations worldwide. DCMA works with a number of foreign defense ministries under reciprocal arrangements negotiated by the State Department and DoD. In fiscal year 2008 alone, DCMA conducted more than 14,500 onsite quality assurance visits in Iraq and Afghanistan, discovering 13,000 quality defects and issuing 128 corrective reports.

DCMA was created in 2000. Previously, it had been part of the Defense Logistics Agency and had been called the Defense Contract Management Command. The initial command workforce in the early 1990s was about 26,000 civilian and military members. Through consolidating activities, DCMA has reduced personnel to about 9,500. The professional workforce is composed of engineers; contract administration specialists; price cost analysts; transport, packaging, and

industrial specialists; and quality assurance experts. About 600 employees are based overseas today, including a contingent in Iraq.

Transformation Plan

Human capital is a priority in DCMA; it is one of the four pillars of the DCMA Transformation Plan. It's a necessary part of DCMA's future success because in the past decade, DoD downsized its acquisition workforce by half, resulting in a current serious imbalance in the skills and experience of its remaining workforce and the potential loss of highly specialized knowledge as many of its acquisition specialists retire.

Given the reduced workforce size and the current operations tempo, the acquisition workforce is facing a serious deficit in the personnel it needs to successfully accomplish its mission. The problem of a reduced workforce is exacerbated by DoD estimates that as



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**Randy Sawlsville, executive director of
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many as half of the remaining acquisition personnel are currently eligible to retire. More shortfalls will begin occurring as more workers become eligible for retirement. The fact that many members of the workforce opt to work past the initial age of retirement eligibility can only postpone, not resolve, the eventual shortfall.

There is also concern that actual and projected reductions could be exacerbated by increased competition for technical talent from other industries. Emerging technologies, products, and services mean that a new mix of skill sets and knowledge is needed in the workforce, and those with required skills are highly sought after by a variety of employers. Skill imbalances that exist can increase workload on remaining employees, causing lowered morale and job dissatisfaction. Potential shortfalls in the size of the workforce are one item that must be addressed; gaps in the skills needed to fulfill missions and strategic plans is another item that must be addressed as the future needs of the acquisition workforce are considered.

To meet the workforce challenge, acquisition organizations are rethinking every approach to human resources management, from how to recruit and train at all skill levels to how to provide competitive compensation and true job satisfaction. The human resources team at DCMA, run by Randy Sawlsville, executive director of human resources, and Joe Winiarz, director of the Human Resources Operations Center, has sought to find creative and incentivizing

solutions to resolve any future workforce shortfalls in their organization. Sawlsville is responsible for the overall human capital strategic, operational, and tactical policy, processes, and procedures in support of more than 9,500 civilian and military personnel at DCMA.

In 2000, DCMA consolidated military contract administration organizations under one uniform procurement policy. The intent of the consolidation was to eliminate duplicative overhead and payroll costs associated with maintaining independent contract administration offices, while upgrading the quality of contract administrative services and workforce within the department.

Since the agency’s creation, staffing and budget have decreased annually. DCMA has dealt with the staffing cuts by consolidating office and personnel infrastructure, redirecting contractor oversight, and implementing risk- and performance-based surveillance methods to handle the increasing contract workload.

DCMA began strategic human capital planning in 2000 in response to guidance from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics; and the agency issued its first human capital strategic plan in 2002. The careful consideration and approach to human resources in the DCMA Human Capital Strategic Plan led to the agency being recognized as a gold winner in the 2003 USD(AT&L) Workforce Development awards ceremony. The plan

identified key areas that needed more support and outlined a plan to develop concrete solutions for recruiting new talent to fulfill those needs. The plan also identified 15 specific actions or strategies to address gaps identified in the three major analyses of DCMA personnel needs. Early on, DCMA recognized that human capital involved recognizing the gap between the current workforce and future requirements. The Human Capital Strategic Plan defined what strategies were needed to close the workforce gap—not only recruiting new employees, but also recognizing gaps in skill that may occur throughout the agency as workforce requirements evolved. The following discusses various aspects of DCMA's Human Capital Strategic Plan.

Bringing in New Employees

The majority of the DCMA acquisition workforce has more than 20 years of work experience, and an employee's average age is 52 years. Nearly half of the current workforce will be eligible to retire in the next five years. As a result, DCMA is focusing on hiring and developing interns and journeymen. Coming to assist in that effort is Section 852 of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2008, which establishes the Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Fund and provides DoD agencies and services with money to recruit and retain talented members in acquisition career fields.

To bring in new talent, DCMA uses its Keystone Intern Program, a selective three-year management training program designed to prepare college graduates and others for careers as professional contract managers and administrators. DCMA provides on-the-job training and real-world experience that can lead to career-building opportunities in business, engineering, information technology, quality assurance, personnel management, and other fields in the DCMA organization. The program is open to people with many different backgrounds and academic majors.

The Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Fund will allow DCMA to recruit up to 300 interns into the Keystone Intern Program, enabling DCMA to pay for an intern's training and salary over a period of one to three years, and afterwards, interns would join the workforce as fully trained employees. Thanks to the fund, DCMA will be able to maintain an intern base of 250 employees per year. To ensure the Keystone Intern Program is successful across the agency, DCMA has established recruiting goals for various job series and locations to meet projected attrition in locations across the globe.

Additionally, the fund helps support the Student Career Experience Program, which is an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) program implemented by DCMA to introduce new potential workforce members to the agency by providing students with temporary employment opportunities. In the SCEP, students are given an opportunity to learn the agency's mission, culture, processes, and customers. SCEP experiences link directly to a student's program of study.

The Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Fund also supports the hiring of more than 80 advanced journeymen annually over the next five years to mitigate losses and grow a successive workforce in the critical acquisition series.

Two DCMA recruiting programs target veterans wounded in combat. Operation Warfighter allows injured servicemembers to volunteer with DCMA to gain experience while recovering. The Recruit a Hero Program allows for hiring severely disabled veterans. To facilitate those hires, DCMA attends roughly seven to eight DoD-sponsored events throughout the year focused on these special programs.

"We recognize the value represented by veterans who are recovering or have Service-connected disabilities, and we are committed to giving back to those veterans with work opportunities where and whenever possible," said Sawlsville. Partners in the programs are the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the Veterans' Administration, OPM, and local military transition centers.

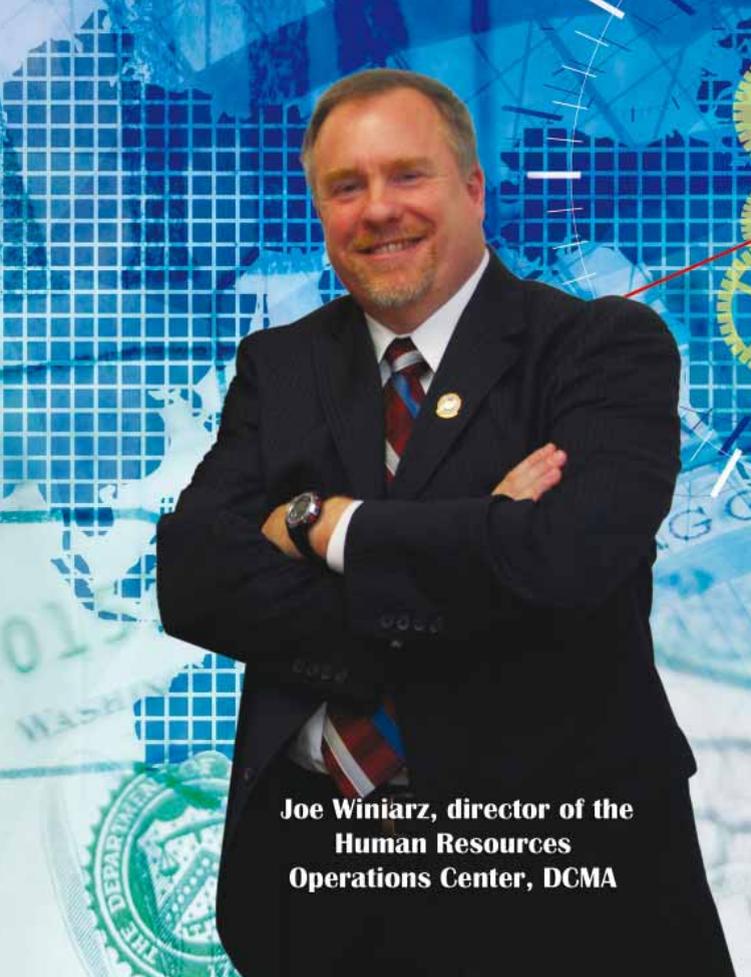
Before the Section 852 fund opened up new workforce development opportunities, budget reductions had negatively impacted critical investments in skill training and maintaining core competency capabilities. DCMA was unable to recruit top talent or develop new talent, while being forced to accept higher levels of contract risk. DCMA predicts the agency's future will change as a result of the establishment of the Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Fund.

Spreading the Word

Having established a program to welcome incoming members of the workforce, the next step was to attract the right talent. Recruiting and marketing efforts are being increased to attract a younger, more diverse, and more technologically savvy workforce to the DCMA "brand." The recruiting and marketing efforts will increase awareness and visibility among recent graduates of possible jobs in the acquisition defense career field. Many graduates are not aware of non-military jobs in DoD that provide both good career options and the opportunity to serve the country. DCMA has begun an effort to address its branding strategies and has collaborated with several experienced companies through the OPM Center for Talent Services to develop and advertise DCMA's employment value proposition. Additionally, DCMA is developing realistic job previews that tell the tale of opportunities available within the acquisition community and specifically within DCMA. By developing a clearly defined brand and providing potential employees across various generational streams with a realistic picture of how they can contribute to the defense of our nation, DCMA hopes to develop continual interest in the agency.

Recruiting Challenges

Recruiting in certain areas provides additional challenges. DCMA has an ongoing need to hire qualified administrative contracting officers, property administrators, and quality



**Joe Winiarz, director of the
Human Resources
Operations Center, DCMA**

Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act level II requirements.

Guiding an organization smoothly through changes is also an important part of human capital management. A case in point: On Nov. 9, 2005, the Base Realignment and Closure commission's recommendations became law, which included the recommendation to relocate DCMA's headquarters and international and special programs divisions from Alexandria, Va., to Fort Lee, Va. Although only a small portion of the agency's current workforce will be affected, there is much agency focus on the move, given that the employees affected are mostly from the headquarters. To facilitate the formal move, currently scheduled for the summer of 2011, a human resources transition plan has been developed and a small agency footprint has been established at Fort Lee. By mid-summer of 2009, new headquarters employees will be hired almost exclusively at the Fort Lee location. While not yet finalized, roughly 65 percent of current employees are expected to not move. There are several incentives available to current employees who wish to move to Fort Lee, but it will be a challenge to recruit potential employees while in a transition period. Opportunities exist as well to hire new employees and leverage the recent executive order allowing the direct hire of qualified military spouses.

Focusing on the Incoming Workforce

DCMA works through its two programs, the Keystone Intern Program and the SCEP, to target current students and recent graduates. DCMA primarily looks at four-year universities near operating locations, especially those with major programs in business, engineering, and applied technologies. All Keystone interns are paid, full-time employees. Part-time SCEP employees can be transitioned into the Keystone Intern Program.

Relating education to work experience, DCMA looks for business majors or students with at least 24 semester hours of credit in business courses for contract administrator positions, which require a business background. Graduates of accredited engineering programs are recruited for engineering positions, as are graduates with technology degrees to fill positions in quality assurance, supply chain management, and industrial management.

It is important to communicate with academic institutions the sorts of skills and abilities that will be needed in the acquisition workforce. DCMA recognizes it may have missed some key opportunities in the past few years in terms of developing and sustaining relationships with academic institutions that feed its core occupational series. Recently, DCMA has reinvigorated the vital aspect of developing relationships and has begun the process of transitioning its recruiting strategy from a decentralized to a centralized one, allowing those relationships to be targeted and monitored. DCMA representatives are attending recruiting events and hiring/career fairs, focusing on attracting the right new talent for incoming positions at the agency.

assurance personnel to fill emergency essential positions. All positions require deployment overseas to support U.S. military forces engaged in combat or crisis situations, with current deployments focused in the U.S. Central Command area of operations. Over the years, the need for personnel performing contracting, quality assurance, and other duties in theater has grown and continues to grow. DCMA provided 100 volunteers for duty in theater at the end of 2007 and will likely have further growth as the operations tempo in Afghanistan changes.

DCMA recruits for those hard-to-fill positions with several tactics. All emergency essential positions are advertised online at USAJOBS.com as well as with the Army vacancy board, accessible through the Army's civilian personnel online portal. As with its other recruiting efforts, DCMA tries to leverage attendance at recruiting events or hiring/career fairs as a way to advertise the unique positions. Routine attendance at such events as the National Property Management Association and the National Contract Management Association conferences provides another recruiting opportunity. In addition, the DCMA Public Affairs Office places advertisements in professional media vehicles to advertise emergency essential positions. Still, despite a variety of incentive tools tailored to attract well-qualified potential employees—including a 25-percent retention or recruiting incentive—those positions remain incredibly challenging to fill given the demands of the positions and the specific



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Of course, there will always be competition with the private sector for quality employees with in-demand skill sets. DCMA presents employment in the federal government and the acquisition field as offering particular opportunities and challenges for those seeking employment. Currently, with the economy struggling, DCMA jobs may be even more attractive for potential employees who hope to find some stability and career security. But as an employer of in-demand talent, DCMA recognizes it must remain competitive with its total compensation and benefits package, generous leave packages, and growth opportunities.

"We believe we have a strong employment value proposition, but we want to make it stronger and build on the DCMA brand," said Sawlsville. DCMA has recently partnered with experts to evaluate current programs and make recommendations to improve the employer value proposition of DCMA. "We want to become a 'best-in-class' employer," said Sawlsville. "Most important, we are a 'people agency,' and we do all we can to demonstrate that." DCMA strives to offer exceptional developmental opportunities in leadership and technical areas as well as a smorgasbord of work/life programs such as flexible work schedules, telework, virtual work locations, tuition assistance, education sabbaticals, physical fitness time, and monetary assistance with gym memberships.

Maintaining a Healthy Workforce

Hiring the correct mix of employees is equally important to having an adequate workforce number. DCMA must continue to identify gaps in the skills and competencies of the current or projected defense acquisition workforce, as well as changes to the types of skills needed in the projected future. To that end, DCMA recently completed a contracting competency assessment that provided a great deal of information for use by the agency's human capital planners. Part of the current human capital strategic plan is to complete assessments for acquisition and industry competencies for all core acquisition career fields. DCMA is also exploring the possibility of using acquisition and professional competency learning maps to address current and future developmental needs and incorporate them into career guides. In addition, leadership competencies will be incorporated and aligned with the technical competencies that drive the organization.

As emerging technologies make acquiring new skill sets an ongoing proposition, training can also provide an incentive to keep employees motivated and satisfied. DCMA career guides provide a developmental road map throughout an employee's career. At any point in a career, an employee can assess where he or she is and what competencies—technical or leadership—he or she needs to develop for a position of increasing responsibility. The DCMA electronic individual development plan, linked to the agency's civilian training management system, provides employees 100 percent visibility of agency, Defense Acquisition University, and

SkillPort® [e-Learning] training opportunities. Employees can tailor their developmental requirements to keep pace with a changing technological environment and emerging trends. Over the past years, DCMA has increased the investment in critical education through tuition assistance funding and the implementation of critical skill and leadership initiatives. For the current fiscal year, DCMA has allocated more than \$16 million to fund training.

Increasing and ensuring employee satisfaction is an ongoing goal. DCMA conducts organizational surveys of its workforce approximately every two years. Between the formal surveys, focus groups are conducted from a random sampling of employees to determine their professional job satisfaction. As a result of those formal and informal assessments, action plans have been created to address areas of concern identified, and progress is measured and reviewed by the agency's senior management biannually at a minimum.

Continual Support

Since fiscal year 1990, DCMA's civilian workforce has declined by 59 percent to under 10,000 personnel. Yet DCMA continues to support its DoD mission and the warfighter. With forward-thinking programs, concern about employee job satisfaction and quality of work/life, and funding for new recruitment and training, DCMA has taken strides towards ensuring the correct pool of personnel with the specialized skills needed to meet today's and tomorrow's missions.

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