

# DEFENSE ARJ EXECUTIVE EDITOR



Welcome to the *Defense Acquisition Review Journal* (ARJ) theme edition on contracting trends in acquisition. Our featured author for this edition is Professor John Krieger, the Director of the Contracting Center of the Defense Acquisition University's Curriculum Development Support Center. In his article, "Professionalism in the Acquisition Contracting Workforce: Have we gone too far?," Professor Krieger questions the basic-required credentials of the acquisition contracting workforce. The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) threshold requirements for this career field include a bachelor's degree and 24 semester hours of business-related courses. Since recruiting and retaining acquisition professionals in this career field have become increasingly difficult, it may be time to reconsider the basic eligibility criteria for hiring. The author asserts that experience may be equal in importance to education, and that a wider variety of educational and professional backgrounds for members of the acquisition contracting workforce would expand the pool of talented candidates. He argues that we should hire the best and brightest, no matter their degree areas, and then train them to the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities that they will need to do federal government contracting, which is not what they would have learned in most business degree programs.

The following article, "Contracting Out Procurement Functions: Current Status" by Dr. Roland D. Kankey, J. Scott Williams, Billy R. Harry, and Alan S. Gilbreth, summarizes a large research study sponsored by the Air Force Deputy Assistant Secretary (Contracting) to assess the current status of contracting out procurement functions within the Department of Defense (DoD) and federal agencies. For years, the DoD acquisition workforce has been decreasing, but the workload has not. This has created a dilemma for DoD procurement organizations, causing these organizations to contract out some of the work. The study determined that government agencies display considerable variety in their use of contractor support for procurement functions, and the article summarizes the current status of contracting out procurement functions and recommends that contracting managers retain a limited capability to contract out to meet their mission requirements.

The third article, “A Proposal for a New Approach to Performance-Based Services Acquisition,” by Vernon J. Edwards and Ralph C. Nash, Jr., discusses the concept of Performance-Based Services Acquisition (PBSA). Since 1991, the Office of Federal Procurement Policy’s specifies that PBSA is the government’s preferred approach for service contracting. However, despite numerous efforts—publication of many guidebooks and significant investments in training and consultant services—PBSA remains difficult to implement. An analysis of services acquisition suggests that while PBSA may be useful for routine, common, and relatively simple services, it is not applicable for services that are too long-term and complex to permit complete specification of results and competitive pricing at the outset of contracting. A new approach for contracting these kinds of services is recommended.

The fourth article, “Customer Focus and Army Procurement: Is it Possible?,” by Keith R. Shelton and Dr. Drumm McNaughton, examines the concept of customer focus from a DoD contractor’s perspective. Current business scholars consider customer focus to be a critical factor in maintaining competitive advantage. The literature is full of research and recommendations considering the *what* and *how* of customer focus. Modern defense product developers, like all modern business enterprise, seek competitive advantage. Customer focus, and the promise of competitive advantage within that concept, is seen as a critical component of a modern defense company’s strategy. This article explores the difficulty of true customer focus within the rather strict and regulated Army procurement system. Several common problems are discussed, such as defining the customer, the inherent rigidity of the procurement process, public relations, and product focus. The authors argue that by understanding the customer better, a contractor can create the necessary visions, strategies, and trust leading to a successful program. Finally, constant focus on the end user—the combat soldier—can build morale and enthusiasm within the firm and a positive brand name outside the firm.

In the next article, “Lessons Learned in Acquisition Management,” Dennis K. Van Gemert and Martin Wartneberg analyze why many projects and programs fail to meet their initial intended goals. Managing project scope is essential to meeting all objectives. Changing scope (such as requirements creep or funding cuts) will almost certainly derail any original estimates of program performance. Several other lessons learned discussed in the article deal with the following areas: immature technologies, use of management reserves, risk analyses, effective communications, staffing and resource issues, frequent personnel turnover, overly optimistic contractor claims, and integrating sound system engineering principles into program management decisions. The authors conclude that we have become very good at documenting lessons learned, but not so disciplined in the institutionalization of these lessons. Documenting lessons learned is just the beginning of knowledge management. These lessons must be socialized among program participants to the degree that they are transferred to upcoming generations.

The last article, “Test and Evaluation Lessons Learned from the Field,” by Karen M. Stadler, summarizes lessons learned reported by Defense Acquisition University (DAU) students taking Advanced Test and Evaluation (TST-301) over a 4-year time-frame (FY02-FY05). As part of TST-301, all students prepare and present

briefings on test and evaluation (T&E) issues and lessons learned based on their actual T&E experiences in acquisition. These students typically have many years of T&E/acquisition field experience and their presentations contain a wealth of valuable information, which could help others avoid common sources of error when designing and executing test events. Data from this article is taken from a sample of 393 TST-301 graduates, and lessons learned are grouped into 18 categories. The top five categories of lessons learned are Test Design and Execution, Test Planning, Teamwork and Communication, Funding/Budget/Cost, and Scheduling.

Contracting trends in acquisition and other Defense ARJ themes provide opportunities for dialog among members of the Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (AT&L) community. Journal readers are encouraged to share their experiences in the field, any materials and methodologies that verify research conclusions, tutorials, and fresh viewpoints regarding subject areas relevant to the AT&L workforce by sending submissions to [DefenseARJ@dau.mil](mailto:DefenseARJ@dau.mil).

Dr. Paul Alfieri  
Executive Editor  
*Defense ARJ*