



From Our Readers

“Speed it Up” and “Successful Presentations”: On the Mark

Thanks to Capt. Mounce for his delightful article “To Speed It Up, Size It Down,” in the May-June 2006 edition of *Defense AT&L*. I agree completely. One of my favorite stories is how Charles Lindbergh’s plane, the Spirit of St. Louis, was completed in about three months from scratch. Wow! And it was successful. I wonder how “mega-projects” ever have a chance.

I appreciate Mounce’s candor in his recommendation to do away with the military acquisition career field. This idea has been mumbled under people’s breaths for years, but this is the first time I’ve seen anyone come out and say it. Since most projects last more than three years (the average assignment for a military officer), it’s guaranteed that there will be disruption in leadership and its attendant problems. I am interested to know what will come of his remark.

I also liked the recommendation to “get rid of useless processes and procedures.” Under Lean thinking, this is referred to by its Japanese name “muda,” and it’s a wonderful idea.

Aristotle’s Rules ... Rule

In the same issue, I very much enjoyed “Aristotle and the Art of Successful Presentations” by Matthew Tropiano Jr. As a frequent victim of “PowerPoint poisoning,” I found his points about Ethos, Pathos, and Logos to be right on the mark. The article should be required reading for briefers, as it would surely save a lot of wasted time at meetings.

A final aside: There’s a subtle yet valuable byproduct of reading *Defense AT&L*. Many of the authors reference good books in their articles. I have ordered and read many of these books. Always nice to get recommended reading from others in your business.

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ence and respect toward elders, subordinates are reluctant to initiate activities without explicit guidance. Middle Eastern tradition also frowns upon public confrontations where one side may lose face, and so problem resolution is obscured rather than dealt with. Tribal loyalties also create parallel decision-making systems that impede formal staffing processes. Second, and more important, people are the core of an army, resulting in an entirely different experience from designing and developing a weapon system. Social and cultural traditions need to be considered in the design of the national security system in the same way that mechanical, aerodynamic, or electrical properties are considered in the design of a weapon system. Decision makers are often faced with a difficult choice: adapt the system to the ingrained culture, or try to shape and influence attitudes through training and mentoring. PMs rarely confront these considerations in a traditional acquisition environment.

Benefits of Embedded PMs

Iraq and Afghanistan arguably represent the most ambitious nation-building effort since the end of World War II. Capturing and sharing the lessons and insights from the current nation-building efforts enable leaders to more effectively manage these expensive and difficult tasks. The CSTC-A experience rebuilding Afghanistan and the Afghan National Army highlights the applicability of program management techniques to large-scale security assistance programs. A detailed program baseline enabled CSTC-A to better communicate its vision and plan with external

stakeholders, and provided a common roadmap that eased internal staff transitions. Program managers brought tools that allowed CSTC-A to express and evaluate the baseline. The program schedule expressed critical subsystem interdependencies; trade-study methodologies considered the most effective use of the last dollar spent; and capability milestones enabled decision makers to make informed resource decisions and maintain synchronization between related subsystems.

To realize the benefits program management techniques bring to a security assistance organization, trained program management personnel must be fully integrated into the teams responsible for developing subsystems that comprise the national security structure. As part of the teams responsible for developing personnel, logistics, or medical subsystems, PMs serve as force multipliers, helping to capture and express the expertise that operational and technical personnel bring. Including PMs on security assistance teams and ensuring they are properly dispersed throughout the organization will pay dividends in the form of better decisions, improved accountability and communication, and earlier host-nation capability at less cost.

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