Could Your Organization Use a **Leadership** Booster Shot?

*Woody Spring  ■  John Larson*
Leadership is a key ingredient for all organizations. In the professional acquisition community and others like it, functional experts can quickly find themselves in situations where they need more leadership dexterity when promoted to fill key leadership positions.

The best leaders not only continue learning new leadership techniques throughout their careers; they also develop and mentor leadership within the organization to enable:

- Developing managerial effectiveness
- Inspiring others
- Developing employees
- Leading a team
- Guiding change
- Managing internal stakeholders and politics

More and more leaders have begun making strategic investments in the professional development of their personnel. They know the vital importance of long-range planning, which includes the people variable—one of the keys to an organization’s long-term success. In the last 6 years, the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) has had the good fortune to be part of their learning formulary through its Acquisition Leadership Development Program.
Table 1. Modules and Focus Areas Explained

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Focus Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is Leadership?</td>
<td>Leadership attributes and their effectiveness in an acquisition environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing Leadership Differences</td>
<td>Personality preferences (i.e., temperaments) in the context of your strengths and challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing People’s Differences</td>
<td>Personality preferences of others and how best to work with them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Styles at Work</td>
<td>People’s styles to enhance relationships, increase productivity and add richness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading High-Performance Teams</td>
<td>Building and leading teams that raise the bar on performance standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading in Different Environments</td>
<td>Leadership differences in various acquisition leadership environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Product Teams (IPTs)</td>
<td>Importance and challenges of IPTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Facilitation Skills</td>
<td>Facilitating small teams and developing associated competencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Roles of Leadership</td>
<td>Four essential functions required of successful leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change Leadership</td>
<td>Dr. John Kotter’s eight-step model and Dr. Kurt Lewin’s three-step model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching in a Changing Environment</td>
<td>Reflective and effective learning and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Acquisition Leaders</td>
<td>Leadership tenets in the Department of Defense and the guidelines for leadership development plans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workshop (ALDW) series. These workshops provide a mixture of hard-hitting content and practical exercises representing typical workplace challenges.

ALDW Explained
At its core, ALDWs promote the development of leadership skills that the acquisition workforce requires through customized training solutions based on workplace needs. Organizations can select from a variety of workshop variations. The sample modules along with their focus areas are outlined in Table 1 and were distilled from a wide range of parent DAU courses.

This “menu” of ALDW options are especially applicable for intact teams to help them work together to explore and develop (or refine) their skills. With few exceptions, each ALDW module is a standalone topic; although many modules work synergistically when integrated and embody a greater understanding of the leadership essentials. ALDWs can be applied to grow leadership skills in junior personnel, or perhaps more rigorously help senior leaders explore complex and impending leadership challenges they sometimes face. Simply stated, an ALDW is a very flexible construct that can address organizational imperatives at all levels, especially those that pave the way for high-performance teams.

Table 2. Acquisition Leadership Development Workshop Modules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Development</th>
<th>Self-Development</th>
<th>Skills for Leadership</th>
<th>Skills for Teams</th>
<th>Stakeholder Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is Leadership?</td>
<td>Leading High-Performance Teams</td>
<td>Four Roles in Leadership</td>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing Leadership Differences</td>
<td>Leading in Different Environments</td>
<td>Change Leadership</td>
<td>Providing Effective Feedback</td>
<td>Problem-Solving Tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Styles at Work</td>
<td>Team Facilitation</td>
<td>Developing Acquisition Leaders</td>
<td>Declaring an Extraordinary Future</td>
<td>Dale Carnegie: Influencing People</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ALDWs can start with a discussion on leading up, down and across, or ignite the participants’ interest with a critical thinking challenge. No matter what the facilitator uses at the starting gate, the participants quickly learn more about the deeper context of leadership and the extensive tools that are at their disposal. To enrich the workshop experience throughout an ALDW, DAU facilitators draw from their technical knowledge and personal experiences to reinforce the lessons learned from similar leadership challenges they faced. ALDW participants need not be employed in acquisition-coded positions to attend the workshop. Unlike other training solutions, there are no prerequisites—just two expectations that participants need to: (1) approach these workshops with open minds and (2) demonstrate a willingness to think more about their own thinking (i.e., metacognition) as they learn how to put proven methods into action.

Table 2 shows how ALDW modules can be aligned for growth and alignment within intended focus areas (e.g., self-development, skills for leadership, skills for teams, and stakeholder relationships).

These delivery combinations can also include modules that focus on self-examination and evaluation—all key tools that promote more self-awareness such as shown in Table 3.

Since intact teams very often face challenges (and future opportunities) that require agreement, the delivery combinations can include modules that help teams break through various decision logjams characteristic of some workplace challenges:

- Dealing with Conflict
- Building Trust
- Accountability and Empowerment
- Groupthink

In a more magnified view, Figure 1 shows how a module focused on building (or restoring) trust can be addressed in a customized ALDW. The resultant practical exercise includes
a structured activity model that drives to the root cause of a known case of mistrust followed by the steps and strategy to restore trust. After the participants complete a rigorous exercise, their commander is asked to join the workshop for a decision brief, which includes a review of their strategic plan to guide the workforce and specific performance targets to verify the participants achieved their targets. The participants take a lot of pride in their plans, and show a great eagerness to hear their commander say, “Make it so.”

Stakeholder management has become more and more crucial in promoting leadership gains, and DAU developed a series of workshops that address stakeholder management, including:
- Forging Stakeholder Relationships
- Stakeholder Engagement Plan
- Stakeholder Communication Plan

What Can You Expect in the Workshop?
In addition to our commitment to best meet the needs of acquisition professionals, DAU provides certified and seasoned facilitators. Our facilitators help participants collectively understand their risks and issues, investigate the solution space and develop actionable recommendations. This last item is all about ownership and leaves the intact team with the responsibility to implement the actions to achieve the intended outcomes. As the participants craft their own heading, they also become ideally suited to serve as the actions’ champions back in the workplace.

What Past Participants Have to Say
If testimonials indicate the usefulness of ALDWs, the comments below reinforce the reports of its efficacy. More important, what measurable impacts have these ALDWs had? Note that many customers were very grateful but preferred not to be quoted. The following statements were made by a representative group that volunteered to be quoted:

- Howard Goldman, Commander Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division, Newport, Rhode Island: “… developing the stakeholder plan was valuable in that it forces you to give a thorough examination of who your stakeholders are and what their interests are. The DAU instructors were outstanding.” The real value of the training will be in our follow-up and execution of the four communication plans that were initiated during the workshop.

- Student comments from recent 2-day workshop:
  “This is a very insightful class...able to use the tools...”
  “VERY informative class! Well worth my time”
  “Material is very relevant in a team environment.”
  “Relevant. Beneficial. Informative. FUN!”
  “Very useful and I will recommend to others.”
  “Outstanding course.”

- Acquisition Manager, U.S. Pacific Fleet: “DAU has been an excellent resource for me and together, we have ensured hundreds of Navy and Joint personnel have been able to take classes in preparing performance work statements. We will never know the true impact of all that training but I have seen the results in multiple performance work statements prepared by graduates of your PWS classes. I’ve seen first-hand how much more confident the employees are in preparing their requirements.”

- PE0 C4I Tactical Networks Program Office (PMW 160): DAU provided PMW 160 leadership an independent and objective assessment of the CANES [Consolidated Afloat Networks and Enterprise Services] program and organization. Additionally, the effort provided the PM [program manager] and DPM [deputy program manager] actionable organizational and related process improvements to enable more successful execution for CANES. Impact: Mr. Jim Churchill (Acting PM) commented the Independent Program Review was “pure gold” and asked for DAU West to support future efforts to implement recommendations with the PMW 160 Leadership team.

- Naval Weapons Station, Seal Beach, California (one of many customers who seek this workshop series): The ALDW helped rectify a corrective action by bringing shop workers,

As the participants craft their own heading, they also become ideally suited to serve as the actions’ champions back in the workplace.
foremen and supervisors together to explore leadership, accountability and building (restoring) trust, as well as problem-solving tools for use by all personnel.

RADM David Lewis, Space and Naval Warfare Systems Commander: “We’ve seen an increase in critical thinking. An example is DCGS-N. … Two years ago, we saw classic acquisition thought for a monolithic 5-year program to get capability out to the Fleet. Now we are fielding full capability builds every 18 months. We’ve also seen deeper thought into CANES integration issues among the variety of platforms. DAU’s training in this area has helped.”

Col Ryan Britton, former ICBM Program Director, Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center: “DAU conducted a series of Acquisition, Risk Management and Source Selection workshops that focused on tackling the major issues including workforce competencies, and acquisition and program strategies that could interfere with program achievements. I planned for a 9-month protest—didn’t materialize—attributed to DAU’s support. These workshop series were well received and directly resulted in improved acquisition outcomes.”

Author Spring’s Leadership Retrospect

As a former Army officer, whether a platoon leader in Vietnam, an Experimental Test Pilot team lead, a major acquisition program manager, a NASA astronaut, or a division manager with industry, I have experienced the requirement for continuous growth in different types of leadership and the need for various tools and techniques for both my personal success and that of my programs in different environments. In many instances, I wish I could have had an organization like DAU available to me to help facilitate the issues and challenges my programs and I faced on our journey to success. Leading programs—to be able to function without you, mentoring subordinates to be leaders, enabling organizational innovation, trust, and responsibility and leaving programs in better condition to succeed than when you assumed the leadership are universal leadership challenges. John Larson, this article’s co-author, and I thoroughly enjoy our current jobs as DAU professors and our involvement with Mission Assistance workshops in the workplace and at the point of need. We are not alone; every DAU Mission Assistance facilitator feels the same way.

Summary

Does your organization require a shot of energy to gain the learning lift it needs? With a booster shot of the leadership “knowhow,” found in our Acquisition Leadership Development Workshops, organizations can achieve noticeable performance gains with greater efficiency and effectiveness. How can we help you? Visit the DAU website at www.dau.mil or contact the DAU Business Unit in your region to learn more. Depending on your need, we may recommend an organizational assessment survey tailored to your organization which is intentionally designed to uncover any issues (See Spring’s article—“Take a Deep Dive with DAU” in the January-February 2017 issue of Defense AT&L magazine). Based on survey results, DAU would then have enough objective data to help you determine the most appropriate workshop agenda that draws from the modules described above. Contact us for your leadership inoculation, today.

The authors can be contacted at woody.spring@dau.mil and john.larson@dau.mil.

MDAP/MAIS Program Manager Changes

With the assistance of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Defense AT&L magazine publishes the names of incoming and outgoing program managers for major defense acquisition programs (MDAPs) and major automated information system (MAIS) programs. This announcement lists the one such change of leadership reported for both civilian and military program managers for the months of January and February 2017.

Navy/Marine Corps

COL David C. Walsh relieved COL Steven R. Girard as program manager for the H-1 Upgrades (4BW/4BN) program in PMA 276 on Feb. 14.