# Developing Program Management Leadership for Acquisition Reform

*The 8th Annual Acquisition Research Symposium*
*Panel #20: Investing in People: Research in Workforce Professionalism*

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# Introduction

- • The Defense Acquisition Community

  ➢ Charged with providing the highest quality and most cost effective weapons systems.

- • Current cost overruns will be unsustainable.

- • The Program Manager's pivotal role in program success makes it an essential area for reform.

  ➢ Grossly understaffed

  ➢ Not a professional component

  ➢ Workforce nearing retirement

  ➢ The pull of the private sector

# Overview

- Developing effective PM leadership
  - Leadership continuity
  - Systems engineering training
  - Hands-on training
  - Trust-building
- USAF C-17 program turnaround
  - Example of the effects of building trust

# Continuity of Leadership

- Weapon systems spend more time in development than an officer's typical tour.

  ➢ Most military PM's guide a program through only one milestone.

  ➢ Continued career progression requires officers gain a broad exposure to a variety of programs.

- One solution: shorten program duration

  ➢ "Exquisite" systems often exceed technical capabilities

  ➢ Technological uncertainty translates into delays and expense

  ➢ Neither JCIDS nor PPBES fully address issue

  ➢ Need to examine requirements process

# Systems Engineering

- Empower PM's with system engineering skills to:
  - ➤ Identify unrealistic requirements early
  - ➤ Manage technical risk early

- System engineering in defense acquisition
  - ➤ Developmental planning prior to formulation of formal requirements
  - ➤ Stresses alternative solutions
  - ➤ Focuses on the development of core technologies

- Result: prevention of overreliance on immature technologies

# Training and Experience

- The Defense Acquisition University
  - ➢ Training courses
  - ➢ Experience requirements
  - ➢ Workforce planning
- Professional military education
- Gaining and applying acquisition experience is an essential leadership quality.
  - ➢ In business, experience often equates to sound decision-making.
- Opportunities to gain experience must be created early in an officer's career.

# Building Trust

- How trust is lost
  - ➢ Underlying motivations set conditions for distrust
    - ✓ Congress limiting funding streams to please constituents
    - ✓ The military shifting requirements to overwhelm a threat
    - ✓ Suppliers promising unrealistic capabilities to increase profit
  - ➢ "Norm of reciprocity" creates vicious cycle
    - ✓ Human tendency to exaggerate perceptions of negative behavior
    - ✓ Tendency to reciprocate with negative behavior
    - ✓ Generates a genuinely negative response
    - ✓ Downward spiral created, eroding trust

# Building Trust, cont.

- Breaking the vicious cycle

  ➢ Distinguish between perceived and actual dishonesty

- Triggering a cycle that builds trust

  ➢ Create the perception of fairness in interactions and outcomes

    ✓ Listening to, and seriously considering, the other side's opinion

      o Greater satisfaction with results

      o Improved follow-though on agreements

      o Better chance of future successful cooperation

# The USAF C-17: Background

- A program in crisis

  ➤ Two-year delay on first flight

  ➤ Estimated unit cost grew from $178.4 million in 1988 to over $260 million by 1993

- Principle reason for the program's problems: lack of trust

  ➤ Stemmed from negative relationship between the US Government and McDonnell Douglas

# The USAF C-17: the Effects of Building Trust

- Creation of "CEO" meetings

  ➢ A path of communication between USAF and McDonnell Douglas leadership

  ➢ An opportunity to explain behavior and reach an understanding

  ➢ Broke cycle of mistrust

  ➢ Created perceptions of fairness by agreement on concessions

- Resulted in shift in management environment

  ➢ Cooperation, partnership and optimism

# Summary

- ## Key opportunities for effective PM development

  - ➢ Leadership continuity, systems engineering training, hands-on training, and trust-building

- ## Acquisition reform efforts must include consideration of the PM.

  - ➢ Effective PM leadership is critical to delivering systems on time and within budget.