



CAREER CORNER

USAASC PERSPECTIVE

FROM THE DIRECTOR,
U.S. ARMY ACQUISITION SUPPORT CENTER

TO BUILD A STRONGER WORKFORCE, RAISE THE VALUE OF THEIR WORK

In his initial guidance memo to the Defense Acquisition Workforce (DAW) on Oct. 7, 2011, Frank Kendall, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (USD(AT&L)), said a top priority for him is to continue strengthening the Acquisition Workforce. “We have increased the number of people in the acquisition workforce over the last few years. While some growth may still be possible, we will increasingly turn our attention to improving the capability of the workforce that we have. Every supervisor should consider a stronger workforce to be his or her most important legacy.”



Craig A. Spisak
*Director, U.S. Army
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To advance this priority, the DAW Management Group (WGM) created nine projects to implement and integrate Kendall’s guidance (see Figure 1). In this Career Corner, we’ll take an in-depth look at Project 3’s objective—create the aura of prestige, status, and fraternity/sorority—led by my organization, the U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center.

Four teams were established to focus on this project’s four objectives, which also include focusing on competency; following competency with accountability; and setting “right” standards and selection processes.

MISSION AND GOALS

Our team’s mission is to create initiatives for the DAW and ensure that the prestige and status of the workforce are well recognized both inside and outside the acquisition community. In other words, what else can be done to make DAW members valued, recognized as part of an exclusive club, and known for their first-class contributions to the Soldier?

During the initial meetings this spring, the team discussed several avenues to achieve the goal of promoting the defense acquisition profession, including awards; branding, marketing, and publicity; building a more exclusive acquisition corps; setting higher certification standards; creating DAW quality metrics; special seminars and meetings hosted by senior DoD leaders; and “halls of excellence” to recognize the achievements of current and former DAW members.

Many good initiatives are already underway to recognize the value of DAW. Current notable efforts to create an aura of prestige, status, and fraternity/sorority include the Navy’s PMT 401 Service Day; multiple acquisition websites, videos, and pamphlets (such as those at <http://www.afciviliancareers.com/careers/careerfields/sciandeng/> and <http://asc.army.mil/>), service acquisition magazines (*Defense AT&L*, *Army AL&T*, *Access AL&T*); numerous service award programs (Army Acquisition Excellence Award, Air Force Special Recognition Award in Acquisition Leadership, and the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, and Acquisition’s Top Scientists and Engineers of the Year Awards, to name a few); program manager forums; Acquisition Career Field Councils; and program executive office breakfasts.

The challenge is that each of these products exists very much within its own service and community. The motivational ideas and creative communication techniques are not equal, nor shared across the services. Determining how to pick and choose from the best, integrate them, and create a unified approach is the next step.



Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (USD(AT&L)) Objectives/Projects

- 1 **Institute a system to measure the productivity and performance of the acquisition system on a program basis.**
- 2 **Institute a system to measure the productivity and performance of acquisition institutions.**
- 3 **Elevate the status, prestige, and professional standards of acquisition personnel, focusing on key leaders.**
- 4 **Increase the cost-consciousness and cost-related performance of the total DoD AT&L workforce (personnel and training).**
- 5 **Institute a process for defining the affordability of Major Defense Acquisition Programs to include sustainment.**
- 6 **Establish an internal ability to evaluate the impact of acquisition decisions on the industrial base.**
- 7 **Strengthen proactive service contracting management at the major functional level (e.g., maintenance or information technology).**
- 8 **Achieve small-business goals.**
- 9 **Requirements alignment.**

(SOURCE: U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center.)

PROJECT #3 TEAMS

TEAM 1
What: Focus on Competency
How: Certification to Qualification – Require Demonstration of Qualifications (Engaging in FY12 Acquisition Qualification Standards/Proficiency Pilots)

TEAM 2
What: Follow Competency with Accountability
How: FY12 Fitreps and Civilian Appraisal Objectives include “strategic priority” objectives

TEAM 3
What: Set “Right” Standards and Selection Processes
How: Deploy selection boards, enforce standards for key leader positions, and measure/promote to them

TEAM 4*
What: Create the Aura of Prestige, Status, and “Fraternity/Sorority”
How: Special awards, AcqDemo, designated billets, special seminars/meetings, articles, “Hall of Excellence”

* USAASC is Team Lead

THE WAY AHEAD

We’ve established four subgroups, each with a goal to further define, research, and analyze the team’s initiatives:

- Validate acquisition qualifications—All service components should validate position designation and certification or qualification requirements, expand acquisition participation in the Defense Civilian Emerging Leader Program, and review noncompliance consequences and policy or statute changes for removal from the acquisition corps.
- Provide incentives—Meaningful incentives for key leaders should be tied to their programs’ success. Prestigious follow-on assignments are one incentive for successful leaders; so are mentorship assignments at the Service Acquisition Executive and AT&L senior-leader levels. Encouraging and promoting memberships in civilian professional organizations is also

important. Bottom line: Acquisition personnel must believe their work is valued. Attrition is related to the value placed on a person’s work.

- Deploy a strategic communications plan—The intent is to tell acquisition success stories through available media, develop a communication strategy that highlights successful acquisition outcomes, and ensure that senior service members recognize that acquisition professionals are important assets in attaining mission success.
- Enhance the DoD acquisition corps—Deploy special key-leader training sessions hosted by USD(AT&L) along with other functional and leader training; raise the acquisition corps’ status by developing an annual induction ceremony; and create a defense acquisition professional organization similar to the Association of the United States Army or the Defense Acquisition University Alumni Association.

Our team’s efforts to create the aura of prestige, status, and fraternity/sorority, like all the other USD(AT&L) WMG projects, are a work in progress. Team meetings are being held every two weeks throughout the summer, with the final report due to the USD(AT&L) by the end of the fiscal year.

The ultimate goal is to enhance our acquisition workforce with relevant and realistic incentives, increased capabilities, and recognition as important partners in providing the very best systems for our Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen. We want to further the DAW vision of “creating a high-quality, high-performing, agile Defense Acquisition Workforce to achieve technological superiority and protect America’s national security.” If you have comments or suggestion on this program, please send them to usarmy.belvoir.usaac.list.usaascweb-army-alt-magaz-ltr@mail.mil.

