

KEITH L. WARE 2013 COMPETITION

BACKGROUND PAPER

USAASC PRINT CATEGORY F, WEBSITE/BLOG (UNIT AWARD)

BACKGROUND: *The U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center's (USAASC) website (<http://asc.army.mil>) serves as the information hub for the Army's widespread and diverse acquisition, logistics and technology (AL&T) workforce, and a premier destination for the general public. As the website's primary target audience, the AL&T workforce numbers some 40,000 people, military and civilian, in a variety of specialties, from medicine to engineering, from contracting to quality control, in locations spanning the globe. The AL&T workforce is mandated by the 1990 Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) to obtain and maintain certification, making it critical to have a reliable, accurate, and easy-to-navigate source of training and career development information. Prior to October 2012, the website was largely disjointed, existing on multiple platforms which were poorly integrated resulting in unreliable access and poor metric tracking capability. What was needed was for the website to exist on a single platform to increase functionality and provide consistent metrics. Additionally, much of the content was not logically organized and outdated causing accessibility issues for DAWIA members and lowering the site's credibility. The website needed a radical update to be relevant.*

RESEARCH: In October 2012, after an upgrade to the site's homepage, a three-person USAASC web team began collecting quantitative and qualitative data to establish a baseline for future measurements and to measure the success of future improvements. Within the first six months of fiscal year 2013, the site received 127,347 visits comprised of nearly **58 percent direct traffic**, and only 25 percent of visits generated from search engines. In April 2013, the team surveyed the site's users. One of the survey's most problematic findings highlighted that **24 percent of respondents didn't know the site existed!**

While some visitors were happy with the site, others found it cumbersome and difficult to navigate. The search function didn't work well, and the frequently asked questions (FAQs) had an unacceptably high bounce rate of **84 percent** — indicating visitors were not finding what they wanted and were leaving quickly. Because of the fluid nature of military life, vital contacts were often out of date. Only 27 percent of respondents indicated their preferred method of receiving workforce information was from the website, and e-mail was the preferred method for 54 percent. Of the respondents who used social media, about three-fourths used Facebook. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents indicated a desire for an online calendar tool to track developmental or educational openings and opportunities. In response, a series of individual, "deep dive" sessions were conducted over four months with representatives from USAASC's eight divisions to scour content, identify how the website could be tailored to support and enhance individual business practices, and offer ways to increase navigability. As a result, **56 web pages** were identified to be removed, added, or updated.

GOAL: Increase awareness and usage of the website among the 40,000+ Army acquisition workforce as the premier resource for acquisition news and career information.

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OBJECTIVES:

Short-term (by Sept. 2013)

- Increase visits from external sources (search engines, referral sites)
- Improve site credibility by updating content and increasing page views in key areas (career information, FAQs, and contacts)
- Improve site search functionality
- Develop an online calendar function
- Reduce the number of visits on old/broken links pages
- Grow audience on Twitter to 425 followers (or 50%) and 1,000 likes on Facebook (or 148%) to drive traffic to website

Long-term (by Sept. 2014)

- Increase site visits by 30%
- Increase Access AL&T news service subscriptions by 50%
- Improve and update all social media platforms to direct traffic to the website
- Incorporate more video elements into the website

IMPLEMENTATION: Comprehensive, short and longer-term plans were developed to improve the usability, navigability, and awareness of the site. Shorter-term goals included fixing 116 FAQs residing on more than 12 different pages and consolidating them to a single page. Contacts were also consolidated to one page and aligned with the organization's help desk. A calendar function was installed on the homepage to help users track career development, events and education opportunities, and is updated monthly. A site-wide Google-powered search function was added, vastly improving search results. The team implemented an agency-wide branding campaign for all online properties to enhance the organization's image as an innovative leader in the AL&T community. In addition, the team launched a subscription campaign for the site using Feedburner, as research indicated more than half of respondents preferred to get information via email. That effort is ongoing, as is the social media outreach effort.

USAASC is also using [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Flickr](#) and [YouTube](#) to drive awareness of the site, posting stories, photos, and career information, as well as adding the capability to share content from the website on social media. To improve navigability and help users find content quickly, the site applied "accordions" to conceal content until the user decides to view it, reconfigured the navigation bar, and added visual icons "above the fold" on the homepage aligned with the most viewed pages. Additionally, the team added a Director, Acquisition Career Management (DACM) page that makes it easier to find all career information in a single location. Tactics implemented to integrate social media and drive traffic to the website include *weapon system of the week*, a weekly post highlighting various weapon systems outlined in the 2013 weapon systems handbook; *From My Perspective*, a monthly message from the USAASC director linking to existing articles and hot issues affecting the workforce; *Faces of the Force*, a monthly feature highlighting military and civilian members of the Army Acquisition Workforce; and *Faces of the Force @ Work*, weekly images demonstrating the diversity of jobs available in Army acquisition.

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To maintain and continually update the site, bi-monthly web content manager meetings comprised of representatives from USAASC's eight divisions was established to engage agency stakeholders on current website trends, needed improvements, and content update. Additionally, a two-page online impact report is generated monthly providing USAASC leadership and web content managers a means to stay informed on website and social media platform performance.

***EVALUATION:** In a word — Impressive! Overall, the extensive overhaul improved navigation, enhanced aesthetic appeal, while the redesigned content, and integrated outreach efforts have drastically increased traffic, functionality, and restored credibility to the USAASC website:*

The visual, content, and navigation improvements proved very effective. As of September 2013, the website received a **125 percent** increase in visits over the previous six months resulting in the highest visit rate ever. Integrating the communities' preference for email updates through strategic 'e-blasts' resulted in **32,703 site visits** alone.

In addition, metrics show that **52 percent of unique visits are new** visits, suggesting that awareness efforts across the workforce are working. The page-visit duration of more than two minutes demonstrates that users are finding what they need and are engaged. Leveraging social media to drive the community to the site has also proven effective, with Facebook and mobile Facebook among the top ten referrers and increased 'like' growth by **158 percent** within the target audience, exceeding the objective of 1,000 followers (148 percent). Focused effort on Twitter to share acquisition news resulted in a **50 percent increase** in followers, meeting the objective. Content updates resulted in a **353 percent increase** in the use of the FAQs page and a 28 percent decrease in the bounce rate, suggesting that the updated, relevant content was easier to find and being used. Even more telling, the help desk noted a **50 percent decrease** in call volume with the improved FAQs. Since the launch of the career-focused DACM page, it has become the second most-viewed page on the site making it easier to find career-related information.

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HIGHLIGHTS FY13

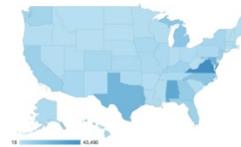
279,732 WEB VISITS / 629,399 PAGE VIEWS



1
AWARD



18 EBLASTS =
32,703
WEB VISITS



262,216
VISITS FROM THE U.S.

3,732

VISITS FROM GERMANY

2,552

VISITS FROM SOUTH KOREA

1,205

VISITS FROM JAPAN

981

VISITS FROM AFGHANISTAN



130
WEBSITE UPDATES



353%
INCREASE IN VIEWS TO
STREAMLINED
FAQS



257
STORIES VIEWED
33,802
WEB VIEWS



635
SUBSCRIBERS



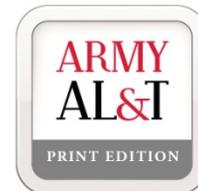
1,047
FANS



433
FOLLOWERS



8+ %
MOBILE
WEB VISITS
6+ %
MOBILE
REFERRALS



299
APP
DOWNLOADS

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Updated Homepage

PLANNED EVOLUTION
How the workforce of Corpus Christi Army Depot repositioned itself for tighter times. By Mr. Curtis Titus and Ms. Brigitte Rox. Since 2011, Corpus Christi Army Depot (CCAD) in Texas has made sweeping [khalip]

Acquisition Education and Training Corner
Education and training opportunities. By USAASC Acquisition, Education and Training Branch. Defense Acquisition University-Senior Service College Fellowship (DAU-SSCF): The DAU-SSCF Announcement opened Jan. 29 and closes April 2, 2014. This Military Education Level [khalip]

What Really Matters in Defense Acquisition
From the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Frank Kendall. My first inclination for this issue's article was to discuss the newly released DODI 5000.02. We recently implemented this new acquisition [khalip]

Knowledge of Power Is More Power
Assessments enable commanders to optimize energy, operational effectiveness. By Edric Thompson. When it comes to power and energy, Army research and development (R&D) continually seeks to develop solutions to increase performance, reduce consumption, [khalip]

Acquisition News

- An Empire of Drones and Robots
- US Contract Notice: Department of the Army Issues Solicitation for "FIREWALL ASSY- SEE THE FIRST PARAGRAPH OF THIS GOVERNMENT REQUIREMENT FOR THE PERSON OF CONTACT"
- Army Sneaks Information On Air-Droppable Ultra Light Combat Vehicle
- Army Vice Chief visits Redstone Arsenal | Article
- Army faces tough acquisition decisions, struggles with maintenance
- Army Testing Tracking Point Smart-Rifle Tech
- The Case for Cyber | Small Wars Journal
- JLTV Update
- Pentagon Announces \$242 Million Environmental Engineering Contract

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New Career-focused page

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Updated FAQs page Resulted in 353% increase in visits!

All FAQs

Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) Membership and AAC Management System:

- AAC-8 Q: I no longer work for Department of the Army and would like to obtain a copy of my Corps Membership documents, what is the process?
- AAC-9 Q: I received a copy of my AAC-8 A: Please see and [https://rta.ada.army.mil]
- AAC-10 Q: What is [https://rta.ada.army.mil]
- AAC-11 Q: Critical Acquisition Component Acquisition [https://rta.ada.army.mil]
- AAC-2 Q: What is [https://rta.ada.army.mil]
- AAC-3 Q: What is [https://rta.ada.army.mil]
- AAC-4 Q: Who can [https://rta.ada.army.mil]
- AAC-5 Q: How do [https://rta.ada.army.mil]
- AAC-6 Q: As a non-acquisition workforce employee can I apply for AAC membership?
- AAC-7 Q: How can I obtain a copy of my AAC membership documents?

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