WRITING FOR
ARMY AL&T
MAGAZINE

WHO is the audience? Army acquisition workforce. Senior leadership in Army acquisition, logistics and technology. People in industry and in Congress.

WHAT is Army AL&T magazine? It is the award-winning quarterly professional journal written by and for the Army Acquisition Workforce and the many stakeholders in Army acquisition. Its purpose is to educate, motivate and instruct readers through in-depth, analytically oriented articles featuring lessons learned, best practices and innovation across the Army acquisition enterprise. Authored primarily by subject-matter experts, the magazine is the Army's premier information resource on acquisition, logistics, technology and contracting—in other words, it provides the inside story on the products and services that Soldiers depend on.

WHERE can you reach the editorial team? At 703-805-1036/DSN 655-1036 or 703-805-1038/DSN 655-1038, or **armyalt@gmail.com**. View the current issue at **http://usaasc.armyalt.com/**, **http://asc.army.mil/web/publications/army-alt-magazine/** or **https://www.milsuite/book/groups/army-alt-magazine**. View archived issues dating to 1960 at **http://asc.army.mil/web/magazine/alt-magazine-archive/**.

WHEN should you submit articles? Deadlines are January 15 for the April – June issue, April 15 for the July – September issue, July 15 for the October – December issue and October 15 for the January – March issue. View themes for upcoming issues at **http://asc.army.mil/web/publications/**.

WHY should you write for Army AL&T? Because you've learned lessons that are helping your organization serve the Soldier better, and other organizations could learn from your experience. You've got a great idea. You've analyzed a problem and come to an innovative solution. You've got an opinion or experience that is vital and relevant to the workforce.

HOW can you submit articles? Upload your stories, photos, graphics and advertisements at **https://usaascalt.info/stories/**.

Most of Army AL&T's articles and commentary are written by readers. We welcome your stories, ideas, opinions, photos and graphics. We ask only that you follow the guidelines in this booklet.

Guidelines for Writers

Before You Start Writing

Can you sum up the point of your article in one or two clear, specific sentences?

Is there a "how" or a "why," not just a "what"? In other words, does the article tell a complete story? "PEO Widgets has launched a new process" is a what. Without a detailed explanation of how the new process came about, why it was chosen, how it was launched, and what its return on investment or result is, the article is not a story.

Are you an authority on this subject or collaborating with someone who is? In general, we publish articles written by AL&T professionals and subject-matter experts. Subject-matter experts and public affairs officers can share a byline, with the expert's name first. Public affairs writers can report an article, with subject-matter experts as quoted sources, and have the byline.

Does your article fit AL&T's theme and areas of focus, which include analyses of AL&T innovations, processes, procedures, techniques, policy, doctrine and management philosophy? Review past issues to see if your article is a good fit for Army AL&T.

As You Write

Do not assume that readers are Soldiers, Army civilians or specialists in your field. Write for a broad audience that includes people who have never heard of your specialty, or the product or process you're describing. Elegance is often simplicity, but simplicity is rarely "dumbed down." Indeed, it's substantially harder than being overly technical. As Mark Twain said, "I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead."

Keep your writing simple. Avoid jargon. Translate the highly technical. Use short, declarative sentences. Use strong verbs, fewer adjectives and shorter words. This is not "dumbing down"; it's a service to readers and a hallmark of the very best writing.

Be specific. *Abstract*: "The Army can realize many benefits, including cost savings." *Specific*: "The new water delivery system weighs 30 percent less than previous systems, saving fuel, shortening convoy trips and letting Soldiers set up outposts in ever more remote locations."

Identify all acronyms, technical terms and organizations/offices/entities. Better yet, reduce the number of acronyms and see if the technical terms are necessary. (We know they sometimes are.)

Prefer the active voice. Passive: "The program was selected for an audit." Active: "The deputy secretary selected the program for an audit."

Fact-check: back up (substantiate) every claim you make. Tell us how or why you know it's true; if there are numbers (money saved or costs avoided), tell us who calculated the amounts and how. "The new process saved money" or "steel-reinforced widgets are a game-changer" is essentially meaningless. What we're looking for is: "The new process saved $4 million, which we know because…" or "steel-reinforced widgets are significantly more durable than their predecessors. Soldiers previously broke 10 widgets a month on average; now that average is down to four, as documented by automatically generated incident reports."

Verify that all information in your article is technically accurate.

Check the themes of the upcoming issues; if your article fits a specific theme, tailor it accordingly. Upcoming themes are at **http://asc.army.mil/web/publications/**; click on "Magazine." Each issue mixes articles that address the issue's theme as well as others that don't, so it's not a deal breaker if yours doesn't. Articles on the theme do get better play, however.

Send us a preview. Two to three weeks before the issue deadline, send the first few paragraphs of the article to **armyalt@gmail.com**. This gives us time to gauge where the article will fit in the upcoming issue and to get back to you with suggestions on how to focus your article before it has reached your leadership for final review.

What We Want

Feature articles. News of interest and utility to AL&T Workforce, generally in a problem-solution framework, with an issue presented crisply at the outset. The problem and solution may relate to innovations, processes, procedures, techniques, policy, doctrine or management philosophy. Many good articles are adapted from theses and dissertations. The best articles describe solutions in one domain of acquisition, logistics and technology that can be applied in another.

Career-related articles. Timely news on subjects related to Army acquisition careers; such articles often do not follow a problem-solution framework.

Length. Articles can be short (500-800 words) or long (up to 1,600 words), so long as they address an important topic in sufficient detail to be of practical use to Army AL&T readers.

Format and approach. Aside from commentaries, Spotlight profiles and On the Move, most articles in Army AL&T follow one of three narrative approaches.

- **Subject-matter expert articles.** The majority of our articles concern best practices and lessons learned. As such, they are written—often with PAO assistance—by subject-matter experts in acquisition, logistics, science and technology, contracting, finance and other domains. An article can have as many as four co-authors.

- **Reported articles.** Some articles are written by people other than subject-matter experts and are reported using subject-matter experts as quoted sources. These also largely concern lessons learned and best practices.

- **Q&A articles.** Question-and-answer articles are often written by AL&T staff, but not always. We welcome in-depth interviews with acquisition VIPs when the subject of the interview is an expert in the issue's theme.

Focus and scope. We look for articles about **"how," not "what"—an Army AL&T article is not a public affairs press release or a portfolio write-up.** We are looking for articles with a level of specificity and detail like that of a white paper on best business practices, innovations and other information of value to the workforce.

Take, for instance, a 1,500-word article that describes a procedural change undertaken at your organization, PEO Widgets, that streamlines processes and saves money. The article should describe how you did it; the concrete difference(s) it made, including how much money you saved; lessons learned in making the change; and what additional improvements the PEO is contemplating. The more applicable these details are to other program managers at other PEOs, the better. Note: Claims of cost savings or avoidance must be backed up with evidence as to how they were calculated and by whom, e.g., "The new widget saves $110 by bulk-ordering parts, according to calculations by the PEO Widgets chief of accounting."

Commentaries. Opinion pieces can be on any topic of interest to the Army AL&T Workforce and offer more flexibility than feature articles to venture into the hypothetical. Our key requirement is that the commentary state an opinion clearly and back it up with salient details.

What We Don't Want

History. We do not want exhaustive detail on how a program came to be. Some background on how an issue came to light is fine—as part of a broader article. Articles written in chronological order tend to read like English papers and are therefore not of interest to Army AL&T.

To use the PEO Widgets example at left, Army AL&T would not be interested in an article relating the history of a widget program and culminating in the money-saving procedural change with no further detail. Such an article would be of no use to other program managers.

Program overviews. Articles on what a program does, just to inform people that it exists.

Footnotes or endnotes. Such information should be worked into the body of the article if it adds value.

Articles scheduled for publication in other outlets (with rare exceptions).

Required Elements to Submit With Your Article

Images. All articles should be accompanied by 4 to 5 images—photographs and graphs, figures, charts or other illustrations—that add value and interest to the words on the page. Send all photos and graphics as a separate file, not embedded in your article. All images should include a descriptive caption or cutline with details of the who, what, where and when, plus a photo credit (photographer name, rank or title, and unit affiliation) or source for graphics (who created the graphic). All images should be high-resolution, preferably no less than 3,600 pixels wide or tall. For graphics or figures in PowerPoint or Excel, please submit the original, editable source file along with the article. Figures, tables, graphs or charts should include a key that spells out acronyms and initialisms.

For more information. Each Army AL&T article, with the exception of some commentaries, ends with either a website link or an individual's contact information so that readers can get further information on the topic at hand.

Headlines, précis and bylines. Each article will have a headline (a few words capturing the essence of the article topic); a deck headline (subhead) or précis providing more detail on the article; and a byline. Headlines, deck headlines (subheads) and précis are generally written by magazine staff, but we encourage our contributors to write them. Bylines should include the author's rank or, if not military, Mr., Ms., Dr. or another appropriate honorific.

Author bios. All submissions must include a biographical sketch of each author that includes current position and duty station, educational background—with all degrees, in descending order, by type, field of study and the awarding college or university—acquisition and other key professional certifications, and Army Acquisition Corps membership, if applicable.

Online extras. As the magazine is published in both print and digital formats, online extras provide the opportunity to expand on the article. Extras could be links to images, video, white papers or other online content that would provide more information to readers. These are strongly encouraged but not mandatory.

Functional lead* and OPSEC approval. All articles must have functional lead approval from the leadership of the submitting organization and undergo the organization's operations security review.

* Varies by organization, but generally the command section (Chief of Staff, SES, or CG) of the organization who ensures that the article is in line with current priorities.

Submission and Editing Process

The editor-in-chief reserves the right to accept or reject any article submissions.

We ask to see the first few paragraphs of each article a couple of weeks before our submission deadline. In many cases, authors send us the entire article. This helps both Army AL&T and our authors. That early review gives us a chance to assess how well the piece fits the theme, and to offer guidance not just with respect to pegging it more strongly to the theme, but also to provide comment and advice to make the article as strong as it can be.

When articles are uploaded through our document management system, each gets a preliminary review to assess if it's right for Army AL&T, if it's "there" yet, if it's on theme and, if not, if it's of sufficient interest to publish anyway. This initial vetting informs our murder board so that, when we have all articles in, we have a good idea what's ready for prime time, what will fit in the magazine and what is most appropriate.

When we actually start editing, three editors will review each article in detail and from a variety of angles. Each makes style edits as needed to bring the text in line with our style guides: the Associated Press Stylebook; Webster's New World College Dictionary, Fourth Edition; and our in-house style guide, which covers variations from those references and usage specific to the Army. Editors may make or suggest trims to shorten articles, particularly if they come in longer than 1,600 words.

We also review your article at various stages of editing with the following questions in mind:

- Does the article tell a story of value to the acquisition workforce?
- Is the length appropriate to the topic and its treatment?
- Does the article present clearly the reasons for reading it?
- Is there a clear beginning, middle and end?
- Are claims of savings and the like substantiated?
- Have facts been checked?
- Is there too much inside baseball? (e.g., organizational detail or other information that's either not germane to the article or needs to be "translated.")
- Are highly technical things explained in concrete layman's terms?
- Is the author's bio complete?

After the first and second editors complete their reads and confer, the second editor emails the author or point of contact with their questions, such as on missing details, suggested trims or major changes.

We ask for responses to those questions within three to five business days. Then, after we incorporate the responses into the article, a third editor reviews the revised draft carefully, and the article goes to layout.