FY04 Worldwide Contracting Training Conference Newsletter

5-8 Oct 2004

Special Interest Articles:

- The Perfect Storm
- Emerging Policy Issues
- Just in Time "Warfighter" Training

Focus on the Buyer

The conference theme, *Focus on the Buyer*, centered on the changing buyer environment, expanding buyer roles and the buyer's career development.

Mr. Williams, SAF/AQC, opened the conference by highlighting some challenges, accomplishments and gotcha's for the contracting buyer. Despite the challenging acquisition environment, contracting plays an ever-increasing critical role in support of the warfighter – our #1 mission. Our contingency contracting support for deployed forces is second to none! Mr. Williams, stated emphatically, "we're the best at it and we're the best trained!"

"In contracting everything is negotiable except the level of support we give our troops. In this there is no compromise, no substitute, no excuse. We give our all…end of story." **– Mr. Charlie E. Williams, Jr.**

Buyer Roles

Ms. Deidre Lee, Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, focused on buyer roles and emphasized that the most important thing going on in DoD acquisition is the war in Iraq. She mentioned that policy must support the buyer and the buyer must support the mission. We're the "business engine behind the warfighter." She thanked everyone for the outstanding job we do every day and said "well done…keep it up!"

Force Development

Mr. Williams presented his keynote presentation on Thursday, once again focusing on military and civilian Force Development and why it is so important to Air Force contracting. As he said, "People are our most important asset…it is what Contracting brings to the fight—it's our competitive advantage." He also discussed the " The Road to Professionalism" over the last fourteen years and noted that we are currently on the "Road to Force Development." He said that it is critical that we embrace rapid culture change as we implement the tenets of Force Development.

The Perfect Storm

According to Dr. Steve Kelman, Professor of Public Management at Harvard University, the procurement environment is facing a "Perfect Storm."
We (Contracting) find ourselves in a situation where a powerful interest group in Washington, DC has an interest in seeing the contracting system/process fail. In Iraq we are being consistently looked at and targeted with accusations of money wasted and sweetheart contracts to Halliburton, creating a damaging perception of Contracting in the public eye. In the past, contracting goals were *transparency* and *integrity*. While we must not loose site of these, *best value* contracting, being an effective *business advisor*, and *supporting the mission* are the new goals for contracting and must be our focus today.

"Just In Time"

What does the AF need to do to better prepare AF Contingency Contracting Officers (CCOs) for deployment environments being faced today? The Contracting crowd seemed to be in violent agreement on the idea of JIT training for our CCOs heading for contingencies. Appropriate and timely training is critical. Current training is available, but the timing is often not best suited to ensure success.

JIT training should begin just prior to deployment in which the CCO can be brought "back up to speed" relative to functional competencies, as well as survival skills critical in combat operations.

What do we mean by the term "survival skills?" There is an increasing tendency for AF CCOs to find themselves deployed as part of a Joint acquisition team providing support on the forward edge of the battlefield. As a result, the need for additional capabilities on the battlefield, as frontline combatants, is becoming crucial to customer support. First aid, appropriate weapons training, land navigation, escape & evasion, combat driving skills, and basic infantry skills are some of the "warfighter" skills that our CCOs need to master in order to more effectively support today's DoD missions. Mr. Williams expressed his concern as well and indicated later that he plans to work on possible solutions.

Panel Discussions were held throughout the Conference:

Contingency Issues

Strategic Approaches to Mission Support

Multiple roles for Contracting Personnel

Services Multi-Functional Teams

Military Career

Civilian Career

Survive and Thrive!

Coolio GF! ROFLOL! GTO POS---Does your 16 year old speak a foreign language? Tuesday at lunch Rita Murray entertained us with a presentation on the impact of generational gaps in the workplace. Rita identified four very different and distinct generations in her presentation: Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millenials. In today's workplace we will interact with all four of these generations so understanding each generation can help greatly in day-to-day interaction. What generation are you associated with? Do these generalizations fit you? Take a look-- it may surprise you!

Do you know what "Coolio GF ROF LOL GTO POS" means?

Coolio: Girl Friend! Rolling on the Floor Laughing Out Loud! Got To Go Parents Over Shoulder!

GOT MONEY?

The DoD sure doesn't and the future looks pretty grim! Commodity Councils may alleviate some of the pain. Through Commodity Councils, the Air Force is adapting corporate best practices to leverage our scarce resources. Commodity Councils are strategic approaches that emphasize proactive engagement with suppliers, simplify the number of configurations used to meet user needs, and leverage our buying power. As a result, we can simplify the number of contracts we have and reduce the number of transactions required to procure a particular commodity.

With every good idea, however, comes challenges! These include training, change management, legal issues, and small business considerations. Acquiring the manpower necessary to prepare and execute the commodity council strategy also presents a challenge.

Despite these challenges, it is critical that we continue to pursue ways to optimize our buying power. Commodity Councils just may be one of the most important ways we can save money in the future.

Emerging Policy—*HOT TOPICS*

Key emerging policy initiatives, changes and staff accomplishments were highlighted in the breakout sessions. Topics included the Proper Use of Non-DoD Contracts, a new draft DFARS clause on Contractor Personnel Supporting a Force Deployed, changes in the Services Program and an upcoming revision to AFI 63-124 in Jan '05, revised Source Selection Procedures, Competition in Multiple Award Contracts, a pilot program on Contractor Criminal Background Checks and Commercial Pricing Requirements.

Properly justifying and documenting commercial prices as fair and reasonable continues to be a challenge for the field, particularly when no real active competitive marketplace exists. Hang in there - training tools are being developed by SAF/AQCP and their virtual team in the field!

Lt Col Roger Westermeyer demonstrated SAF/AQC's new restricted (.mil) webpage. The website contains focused information not available to the general public. Check it out! **www.safaq.hq.af.mil/contracting/restricted/transformation**

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Develop "Warfighter" Training

Develop "Business Advisor" Training

"Spread the Word" on Force Development. It is our Future!

Get our civilians to volunteer for Career Broadening and Advanced Educational Programs

Find a way to Career Broaden other acquisition functionals into Contracting

Convince Air Force Manpower to increase grade structure in Operational Squadrons

Stiglich Awarded Bronze Star

Mr. Williams pins on Bronze Star

During Opening Comments, Mr. Williams awarded the Bronze Star to Lt Col Jill Stiglich. Lt Col Stiglich, previously worked in SAF/AQC before volunteering for deployment to Iraq in support of the Combined Joint Task Force (CJFT) 7. Returning from Iraq, LTC Stiglich was assigned to SAF/LL (Legislative Liason). Mr. Williams also recognized the other Bronze Star award recipients in the audience. We salute all of our Contracting medal winners for your dedication, professionalism and courage under fire. Job well done!!!

Who is Telling our Good News Stories?

Knowledge Management, Communities of Practice, Commodity Councils, Services Multi-Functional Teams, Military and Civilian Development Teams, Contingency Support...The list goes on and on!!!! Our Contracting professionals consistently support the Air Force mission and they DO IT RIGHT! Our folks are truly expeditionary, agile, and innovative. This became extremely clear at the panels and breakout sessions as our people shared their initiatives with others eager to learn. This is a good news story that needs to be told!

Mark Mayfield and Charlie Williams "high five" following Mr. Mayfield's luncheon presentation!

MGen (Ret) Richard Smith Guest Dinner Speaker

The conference dinner speaker was MGen (Ret) Richard Smith, former Commander of the San Antonio Air Logistics Center and Director of Logistics of HQ AFMC. Gen Smith told us he was very glad to be able to address a group of contracting folks where the focus was not on Acquisition Reform! Gen Smith said that he could very easily embrace "Transformation." He challenged everyone to understand that a good contract is one that meets the needs of the customer. He said that we should both enjoy and take pride in what we do..."You are a critical part of the strength of the Air Force." Gen Smith also emphasized that, for the first time, Contracting folks are not just supporting the Warfighter, we are closer than ever to the flight line. We now <u>are</u> the Warfighter!

Interview with a Conference Attendee

"We are business brokers. We must know how the business process works. We must broker performance and business behavior."
Ms Diedre Lee

Mr. Bill Krause, DBO at 509 CONS, Whiteman AFB, had no travel problems getting to San Antonio with his experienced tourists along--wife Peg and son Josh (age 15).

This is Mr. Krause's second Worldwide Conference. He told us that he has enjoyed the interaction and cross talk with the other attendees. Bill feels it brings the discussion to a level above your standard "death by view graphs" approach.

Mr. Krause noted the biggest challenge for him is translating and accomplishing the strategic DoD and Air Force-level issues to the grass roots level, the Contracting squadron. Mostly, he's concerned about the additional manpower and resources needed to "get things done in the trenches."

Mr. Krause plans to use several media to clearly communicate the information he's gleaned from the conference: commander's call, leadership meetings, and email, just to name a few.