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TRANSFORMING THE ARMY BY MANAGING KNOWLEDGE AT PEO C3S

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Introduction

Knowledge Management has taken a prominent role in the Army's transformation. This was best expressed in a memorandum signed by both the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army in August 2001. In it, these leaders state "Army Knowledge Management (AKM) is The Army strategy to transform itself into a network-centric, knowledge-based force." Prior to this memo, the Program Executive Office for Command, Control and Communications (PEO C3S), experimented with knowledge management methods and successfully applied them in its workplace.

This effort started back in 1997 with a request from LTGs Kern and Campbell, the Military Deputy to the former Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics & Technology) and the former Director of Information Systems for Command, Control, Communications and Computers (DISC4). A PEO C3S pilot was chartered to demonstrate the positive outcome that could result when knowledge management techniques and principles are used within an organization and to provide a process for institutionalizing these concepts across the entire Army acquisition community. Additionally, the pilot team needed to provide the PEO C3S organization including its headquarters, Project Manager sub-organizations, defense contractors, and various supporting agencies, with the automated tools and business processes, collaborative environment and access to information needed to plan, implement and execute its critical missions despite their decentralized locations.

While the tactical Army digitized the Army's battlefield, the institutional arm of this PEO embraced the opportunity to act likewise. The result was the secure intranet/extranet Knowledge Center created to share information and collaborate on areas such as: program planning & scheduling; budgeting; Congressional briefings; maintaining configuration management; resolving interoperability issues among the products; and developing new training and logistics strategies.

Since its inception, the Knowledge Center has met both of the chartered objectives and has extended beyond the borders of PEO C3S, as a consortium of functional business partners formed. Following a briefing to Army leaders and OSD sponsors in Spring 2001, the PEO C3S Knowledge Center team was asked to take on additional members and initiate another pilot. This time, the plan was to establish the Acquisition Portal on Army Knowledge Online (AKO), in concert with AKM goals. The intention was clear: integrate the functional tools a PEO community needs into the enterprise portal everyone will use.

"Adapt or Perish!"—Charles Darwin

This timeless and prophetic phrase calls us to remain relevant despite the constancy of change—a true challenge as the speed of technical advances rapidly increases and the slope of the curve describing Moore's Law grows ever steeper. Creative imperatives have always driven us to

adjust in order to survive, and in this respect, times have not changed.

During the 1990's the Army experienced significant workforce downsizing at the same time that the number of missions and responsibilities for active soldiers increased. Knowledge Management was seen as an enabler to transform the Institutional Army into an Information-Age, networked organization that can leverage its intellectual capital to better organize, train and equip a strategic land combat force. As the Army continues to transform, the Army's personnel will need to undergo yet another cultural change to succeed in the new environment that results from this direction.

The collaborative tools utilized by industry are repackaged for use by our Project Manager Offices (PMO) as they develop Acquisition Requirements Packages, conduct source selections and communicate with their industry partners. Processes remain true to the regulations to ensure 'repeatability', while the technical solutions are flexible enough to meet the needs and style of individual teams. Technologies that assist the self-aware and adaptive leaders in the field are now available in the business office that supports them. This permits us to "eat our own dog food" or better understand our users, and take advantage of technology insertion when possible. Formation of the acquisition portal and further integration with AKO presents this possibility.

Evolution or Revolution?

When presenting a fair depiction of the situation, we need to describe the barriers to implementation that were faced and conquered as the Knowledge Center was developed and deployed—those ever-present cultural issues. Although it sounds sophomoric, people have to learn to share. Any natural inclination not to disclose information was stamped out by staunch general-officer level leadership support, reinforced over three years worth of time. Slowly, the organization moved up along the curve depicting the IBM Consulting Model. The 'knowledge laggard', displaying no effort, became the 'knowledge leverager' when employees start understanding and leveraging the intellectual capital that the Knowledge Center offers. Currently, the collaboration tools provided by the Center are central to accomplishment of the organization's acquisition mission, earning the 'knowledge innovator' title and shifting us even closer to the overall goal of building a knowledge enterprise.



Throughout the years, we have tried a number of incentive programs to reward and recognize our contributors. We feature their success stories and photos on our site and presented awards whenever possible. However, in September 2001, leadership once again provided an even stronger motivator to ensure participation. The PEO for C3S directed each of his PMOs to establish Knowledge Managers, responsible for managing useful, relevant and current content. At that same time, he approved the ultimate incentive—knowledge contributions that affect individual performance appraisals. This novel concept will be enacted during the next rating cycle.

Charting the Knowledge Map

The first step is the typically the hardest, but in this case it was the second. After quickly gaining the PEO's support, the challenge was identifying, collecting and organizing the information that should be preserved. 'Less' may not seem like 'more'. However, by focusing on what sets the organization apart early on, we can harness the key knowledge essential to our successful survival in the future. This may seem straightforward, but it is anything but simple. It was an idea presented by John Voeller, Chief Knowledge Officer of Black & Veatch, at the Center for Army Lessons Learned's (CALL) May KM symposium. This is powerful advice, so take it. Years of gathering information left us with the daunting task of constantly maintaining and arranging it in a user-friendly, searchable format. We have adopted the AKO's search tool for the sake of uniformity within the Army enterprise. Our taxonomy has centered-around the acquisition process and our programs. Still, to this day there is work to be done. Focus energies on your core mission upfront, collect related knowledge and learn from your predecessors to take courage and forego what is less important.

Where are we going from here?

Our immediate plans for the future are to integrate with our PEO counterparts and the Research, Development, and Acquisition Information Support Activity (RDAISA) to complete our acquisition portal within the AKO. This will avail our users of personalization and AKO web-mail in addition to the acquisition offerings. We are further enabling Communities of Practice through collaborative automation tools and e-learning on a local level. And, through an improved relationship with Human Resources, we are identifying the assets that will be lost through retirement, so we may capture the 'tacit' knowledge embedded in their experience via video archives before they depart. Overall, we strive to impart knowledge that provides consequence and ensure successful missions with the other members of the Army's knowledge enterprise. Join us. For more information on this project, you may contact Emerson Keslar, PEO C3S Chief Information & Knowledge Officer at Emerson.Keslar@c3smail.monmouth.army.mil or Jodi Santamaria at Jodi.Santamaria@c3smail.monmouth.army.mil.

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