



A Successful Conference for DCMA's Group Leaders

By Katherine H. Crawford, Staff Writer

Group leaders from the Defense Contract Management Agency met in Reno, Nev., July 16-19 for their annual conference. The event kicked off on a festive note with a reception Monday evening, July 16. The following three days were extremely busy, with sessions beginning early in the morning and continuing into the early evening with short breaks for coffee and lunch.

The conference included presentations and breakout sessions about a variety of hot agency topics and initiatives. Presentations included a director's message; updates from contract operations and customer relations, information technology, financial and business, and each of the six divisions; supplier issues and earned value management; acquisition law; ethical leadership; human resource

frequently asked questions; and closing remarks.

Breakout sessions included topics as diverse as forward-pricing rate agreements; performance-based management mission review team; the strategic plan for managing the contract management office product assurance certification program; sustainment support; Cognos/reporting management overview; the workforce shaping process; earned value management; "Extreme Makeover: Manufacturing and Production

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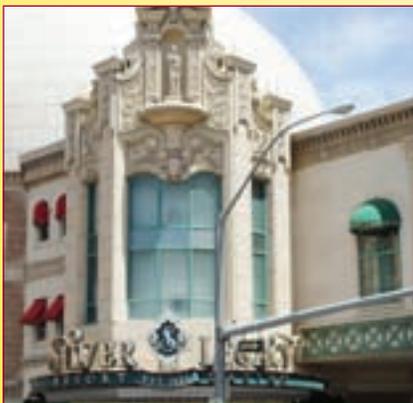
Workforce Edition;" and directors' perspectives for four of the six divisions.

The question-and-answer format of the breakout sessions allowed for particularly lively discussions. Certain topics evoked strong emotions and opinions from participating group leaders, who often held speakers accountable for answers and direction that they could take back to their organizations.

One of the most popular presentations was Ernst's director's message. Ernst began his remarks by thanking the assembled group leaders for their commitment to customers: "I think the customers really appreciate what you do on a day-to-day basis. ... We don't take the time to give you the accolades we should for the things that go well, and there's an awful lot that goes well every day, day after day, after day."

Throughout his presentation Ernst emphasized the importance of maintaining and intensifying the focus on customers, reminding group leaders that the agency needs to “... [shift]our focus to high-consequence work — not what we determine to be high consequence but what our customers determine to be high consequence.” He later reiterated, “If you’re a DCMA employee, your responsibility is to take the skills that we have and, in the best way, use them to accomplish the mission for the customer.”

Ernst also reminded the audience that performance-based management is a long-term initiative — the idea is here to stay. “I know sometimes people get frustrated with PBM, and they look at it as a way to justify resource cuts,” he told those assembled. “But the bottom line is we would be doing this whether we had 30,000 people or ... 2,000 people. Because it really is, very simply, a way for understanding what the customers need from us and then being able to identify what it is that DCMA can bring to the table to help them achieve what they need to achieve.” He urged group leaders to reinforce to their employees that “PBM is not a tool to help us cut more — these cuts



The Silver Legacy Resort and Casino, Reno, Nev., the venue for the 2007 Group Leaders’ Conference (Photo by Katherine Crawford, BRTRC)



Keith Ernst, DCMA acting director, addresses conference attendees. (Photo by Katherine Crawford, BRTRC)

have already happened. It’s a tool to help us manage accomplishing what is really important to our senior customers given the resource constraints that we have.”

Ernst concluded with an overview of various ongoing agency enterprises such as the creation of centers, earned value management, the “Tomorrow’s Leaders” initiative and the importance of the contingency contract administration services mission.

One of the conference highlights was guest speaker retired Air Force Col. Carl Wolz’s presentation on the international space station and the vision for space exploration, which followed a buffet lunch on July 18. Wolz, a NASA astronaut who currently works in the exploration systems mission directorate at NASA headquarters, is an engaging speaker who captured the audience’s attention and imagination.

The successful conference ended with Davies’ presenting DCMA conference planners Mary Bruno, DCMA Headquarters, and Deborah DeCoste, DCMA Boston, with certificates of appreciation

for their hard work. Davies then made closing remarks, reminding audience members about the importance of disseminating a consistent message across the agency, particularly with regard to important topics such ethics, accountability and PBM. Davies also underscored the importance of every team member to the agency’s success and the need to help individuals find their career passions. She concluded by thanking group leaders for their contributions to the agency, declaring that they represented the future of DCMA.

The early feedback from attendees is very positive. They found the presentations and breakout sessions extremely informative and enjoyed the opportunity to meet with peers. Even with the full work days, attendees found time for networking with colleagues in the evenings, as people met up in the hotel’s various establishments.

To view the Group Leaders’ Conference agenda and presentations, visit the Group Leaders’ Conference 2007 Web site at: <http://home.dcma.mil/registration/GLC/2007/generalinfo.cfm>. 