



The Keystones contracts solution team at Defense Contract Management Agency Twin Cities works on a root cause analysis of performance indicators 18 and 19 as part of their implementation of the agency's strategic plan. The team was successful in developing an executable plan while also bringing the team together to tackle an agency-wide issue.

Central Contract Management Office Commanders Discuss Strategic Plan Implementation

Jo Adail Stephenson | DCMA Public Affairs

Defense Contract Management Agency Twin Cities Commander Air Force Col. Rebecca N. Seeger and DCMA Dayton Commander Air Force Col. Douglas E. James were recently polled on their respective contract management offices' progress, success, strengths and best practices since implementation of the agency's strategic plan last November.

Progress

Using the agency's balanced scorecard approach to management, Twin Cities conducted a self-assessment gap analysis

from March 30 to April 30, 2009, identifying areas within each of the strategic plan's four perspectives needing special attention within the CMO. They used the newly refined management review team guidance as a framework for conducting the gap analysis.

Following the gap analysis, they developed corrective action plans to address gaps. Developing local standard operating procedures, compliance instructions and management instructions was a major part of their overall corrective action strategy.

"We've done an outstanding job over the past several years in implementing a more customer-focused approach, and now we need to add more discipline and compliance focus to our processes," Seeger said. "That shift in emphasis comes with a need for more structure and definition on how we conduct our work to ensure we are getting consistent results for our customers across the acquisition system."

DCMA Dayton cited progress in developing long-range objectives and outlining strategies to clearly define the CMO's goals and objectives to meet the

strategic plan. “Our strength is in our employees and their dedication and drive to achieve the performance indicators,” James said. “While we have experienced two of the four important challenges — loss of personnel and increased customer demands for DCMA-specific skills — we have been successful at minimizing the erosion of current employee skills and have utilized our resources to maximize our efficiencies.”

Success

Twin Cities accomplishments:

- Developed effective SOPs that are reviewed regularly and updated or rescinded as necessary. The SOPs are being used by the workforce, resulting in a consistent CMO approach to accomplishing work.
- Put deliberate CMO focus on the perspectives and DCMA director’s focus items in the strategic plan. On a monthly basis during CMO staff meetings, each competency area, such as contracts, engineering and quality, along with the management support office, briefs their status and corrective action on the initiatives in each of the perspectives. They then brief their progress on the PIs, focusing on the CAPs and burn down plans.
- Achieved significant success in implementing Human Capital Initiative #5 on leadership development programs at the CMO level. In addition to maintaining a strong Tier II Leadership Development Program, Twin Cities established two forums to develop leadership skills across all echelons of the organization. The first is a day-and-a-half nonsupervisory leadership conference focused on nonsupervisory leaders such as administrative contracting officers, senior quality assurance specialists (formerly known as acquisition technical leads) and program integrators. The second is a monthly brown bag lunch leadership series with facilitators from across the CMO using commercially available leadership courses and locally developed courses.
- Got buy-in from workforce on CAPs. For PI 18, proactive delay notices, and PI

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19, revised delivery forecast, Twin Cities commissioned an integrated product team of four keystones to accomplish the root cause analysis, CAP and burn down plan. Two ACOs were part of the team to mentor and advise, but the IPT had full authority to develop the plan on their own. The team was very successful in developing an executable plan, but an even greater success was bringing the keystone team together to tackle an agency-wide issue.

Dayton accomplishments:

- Tracked QA surveillance plans during individual reviews prior to implementing the strategic plan. The CMO had never rolled up the results to determine overall health. When the metadata sheet became official, Dayton looked at different approaches to measure this using current systems and tools at their disposal. They adopted an approach that enables a quick tally each month based on adding a column in the CMO’s standard QA workload report. They also standardized a way of documenting the surveillance plans, which has recently been updated to meet the requirements of the new QA processes.
- Reduced number of overage undefinitized contract actions, increased the number of reportable audits closed on time, reduced the number of overage reportable audits and reduced the number of overage contracts. Dayton’s number of 180 days past final delivery date or contracts had continually grown for a couple of years. This was a measure they had on their control panel but had downplayed because most were surveillance criticality designator C

contracts. Once the metadata sheet was finalized, they slowed down the growth and pinpointed the low-hanging fruit, resulting in already surpassing the target for reduction in fiscal 2010.

- Improved proactive delay notices in the industrial specialist area. They participated in a tiger team with the PI owner and other CMOs to help validate the level of accuracy of the current data set. Despite data issues, they pressed on and continue to show improved numbers for each month reported.

Strengths

Both commanders talked about their CMOs’ strengths in implementing the strategic plan and tracking the 47 strategic indicators in Metrics Studio.

“I believe [our strength] is the disciplined approach we are taking to institute performance management as our philosophy in the way we manage our business and to address the perspectives in the strategic plan and our monthly review of all PIs to assess the progress and quality of our applicable CAPs,” Seeger said.

“We took a proactive approach populating Metrics Studio with proposed measures, where possible, giving Twin Cities the opportunity to review and develop our strategies early in the process. In some cases, this gave us a four- to six-month jump on the issue before the indicators were finalized and posted by DCMA Headquarters to Metrics Studio,” she said.

Another strength cited by Seeger was using the skills and abilities of all CMO members to address deficiencies. “We have contract administrators as process owners for some PIs; we had keystones develop the CAP, etc. This sends the message to the CMO that we are all responsible for making improvements and strengthening the CMO not just the supervisors and leaders,” she said.

For Dayton, James said, “We just had to make a few minor tweaks to how we were capturing the data in order to match the official metadata sheets. We also broke out the 47 indicators into the functional areas, which made it much easier to view/manage in Metrics Studio.”

James said another Dayton strength was being able to recognize that some PIs were going to be tougher to accomplish than others. “To meet the goals, we were not going to be able to just do business as usual. Many of the manufacturing industrial specialist metrics fell into this category,” James said.

Dayton brought together the whole CMO industrial specialist community by video teleconference to go over the metadata sheets and answer questions about the PIs. This gave the group a better understanding of the reasoning/intent behind the measures and an opportunity to share ideas of how to improve. They had the agency indicator owner attend the meeting and share information about his indicators.

Best Practices

The two commanders cited processes they have in place to assist them in effectively and efficiently managing their CMOs.

Twin Cities

- Compliance working group — This group actively manages the CAP for their gap analysis regarding the four perspectives and DCMA director’s special focus items. It is run by the deputy and consists of the CMO executive board.
- Monthly PI review — After the data is posted to Metrics Studio, they review each red or yellow PI and the CAP during CMO staff meetings. This ensures proper focus on the PIs,

provides the entire leadership team with insight into how they are progressing as an organization, allows for discussion on CAPs as to their effectiveness and gives them an early look at PI trends.

- Surgical IPTs — Twin Cities developed IPTs where they have significant issues or the issues cross competencies. They also provide opportunities for the workforce to engage in developing solutions.

Dayton

- Monthly management reviews — Conducted with group and team leaders from both primary and streamlined commands. They review the 47 indicators and corresponding CAPs, any open CAPs from staff assistance visits, mission review



Employees at Defense Contract Management Agency Dayton’s Mission Support Office pose for a picture inside their office. Dayton leadership says their office’s strength is in their employees’ dedication and drive to achieve the agency’s strategic plan performance indicators.

teams, self inspections, management internal control reviews, resource reviews, etc., plus specific program status on the programs for which the Dayton commander is lead commander.

- Team meetings — Team leaders meet with their teams once a week to review the delivery schedule manager workload report, PI CAP status, etc. These meetings have helped tremendously to focus their efforts to improve proactive delay notice coverage and issuance of revised delivery forecasts.

The commanders had similar approaches to color-coding their progress. “One thing we need to guard against is focusing only on the red and yellow PIs and ignoring the green PIs. We are in the process of developing sustainment plans for the green PIs to ensure we keep them green,” Seeger said.

James said, “Dayton takes a look at all metrics: green, yellow, red or gray. We look at trends. Even if we have been green for a year, we analyze, and questions are raised when an anomaly appears in the data. We require CAPs for those metrics where we are red or yellow. As part of the CAP, a burn down/up plan is included, and the PIs are briefed at the MMR against the goal and burn plan.”

“Additionally, we have begun to track the PIs where we may be green against our goal of annual percent reduction or improvement but are still a major PI driver for the agency overall. In those cases, we can help improve the overall agency’s PIs if we are aggressive in exceeding our goals,” he said.

Twin Cities also uses management forums to give them a compliance-based focus using Metrics Studio, the PIs and their internal gap analysis as the driver for issue resolution and resource decisions. When they do have a resourcing issue, they manage it at the group level, thus ensuring the most effective and efficient resolution to manage the workload successfully without one team failing while another succeeds.

“Team leaders have to stay closely involved with their functional specialists in reviewing, analyzing, investigating and discussing PI results. Regular meetings and communication are a must. We hold

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weekly team leader meetings to review/discuss the status of all PIs, corrective action and burn down plans,” James said.

In addition, each team leader has a weekly meeting to discuss and review the status of their PIs. They review team performance with the team and make adjustments as needed.

Looking Ahead

“The biggest challenge we see now is integrating the new organizational gains to the CMO into the CMO way of doing business. This will truly require the development of a disciplined culture across the CMO and will also require a significant change to legacy cultures. Change is not easy, but it is necessary. We have to effect the change while not negatively impacting the morale and enthusiasm across the organization,” Seeger said.

Dayton is encouraged with the direction the strategic plan has taken. “In a year where the agency is realigning both functionally and geographically, both

of which will improve efficiency and effectiveness in our opinion, performance management implemented through the strategic plan has given us the ability to compare ourselves with our peers with a consistent set of data,” James said.

Additionally, the new set of PIs provides CMO senior leadership with a toolkit to determine how the CMO is performing and where to spend scarce personnel resources. “As more processes and procedures become standard across the agency, knowledge transfer among our workforce members will be improved. With our aging workforce issues, this will become more important in the years to come,” James said. 📍

To see further responses from the two commanders about their implementation of the strategic plan, go to the DCMA Express website at <http://home.dcma.mil/express>.

