

Charlie Williams, Jr., Defense Contract Management Agency director, discusses the agency's strategic plan with Steve Herlihy, DCMA Strategic Effects executive director, in his office at the headquarters building in Alexandria, Va., recently.



Strategic Plan Straight Talk

Mark Woodbury | DCMA Public Affairs

'If you fail to plan, you plan to fail' — an adage that is synonymous with the military and the importance of planning missions. It's also a strategy successful leaders and businesses apply. Charlie Williams, Jr., Defense Contract Management Agency director, is a strong advocate of setting a clear, unified direction for the agency.

Shortly after taking over as agency director in 2008, Williams and the agency's senior leadership team held two off-site sessions to focus on defining new mission and vision statements for the agency. As a result of the off-sites and many planning sessions soon after, DCMA unveiled its

Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2009–2013 in summer 2009.

Almost a year later, the *Communicator* had a chance to catch up with Williams and discuss the progress the agency has made on meeting the objectives set out by the strategic plan.

Q: What made you take the initiative to create a new strategic plan for DCMA?

A: I think the responsibility of every leader is to establish the strategic framework and vision for where you want to take the organization. I wanted this organization to have a clear strategic direction and focus on what we do.

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Defense Contract Management
Agency director

Q: Can you share some of the insights and strategy to the four quadrants of the strategic plan?

A: The four quadrants of the strategic plan are fairly simple, and they are

the basics from a strategic planning perspective. *Acquisition Enterprise* reflects the customer. What our agency does is bigger than a program office or an individual contracting officer. Our responsibilities within DCMA cut across the acquisition enterprise to include those that are above us, below us and outside of the Department of Defense in other federal agencies. DCMA is not a singularly focused organization; it operates within a much larger enterprise.

For *Policies and Processes*, the idea of getting back to the basics kept surfacing during the strategic planning sessions. We have to ensure policy is accurate, current and streamlined so that we don't have a lot of miscellaneous operating procedures that people are living off of as opposed to a consistent agency policy.

For *Human Capital*, the focus is on taking care of our people. At DCMA, people are not just our most important asset — they are it. We must ensure that the dedicated men and women of DCMA have the tools, training and resources they need to be successful. We need to develop effective strategies to recruit, develop and retain our workforce now and in the future. If we don't get the people equation right, then we are going to fail in every other endeavor.

For *Stewardship*, it's about being accountable for what we do. We have to be accountable for the taxpayers' dollars. We have to be accountable, both as an agency and individually, for how we manage our organizations and people.



Q: Where do you see the areas of success in meeting our strategic plan milestones one year later?

A: I think we have had quite a bit of success. For instance, we have certainly had successes in hiring people. What the agency has done to hire people to support the reestablishment of the cost and price function within the agency has been remarkable. We have also reenergized our intern program through the use of the Section 852 funding source. We are hiring more journeymen. Now, it is about getting those people in the right places as we realign the organization. That was absolutely priority number one, and I think we have been successful in moving down that path. We have also made sure we consider diversity in our hiring practices and everything we do.

Q: Where do you see areas for improvement?

A: I am optimistic about where we are heading, but we are not where I would like us to be. For example, while we have done a remarkable job in bringing people into the agency, having enough people isn't good enough. You have to have the right people with the right skills and competencies to do the work. Along those lines, training is one of those areas that we need to get better at faster. Honestly, we're just not moving fast enough. I am very interested in looking at how we ensure we have a learning organization, and we are thinking right now through this concept and developing a model that allows us to exemplify this in a consistent way.

Also, I am still not pleased with our ability to produce analytical results and predictive information. I think there is a whole lot of work that can be done, and our new alignment is starting to allow us to get there. We need to do this to enable and support the decisions of our acquisition executives.

In addition, we need to do better on our end of the contract value chain. This is primarily in the area of forward pricing rates. We simply have to be better at rate negotiations. We have to really think through that whole process — along

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with the department, the services and the Defense Contract Audit Agency — to make sure we are doing the best we can to negotiate rates and recognizing that they affect a significant part of the cost/price on a contract.

Q: How do you see the strategic plan evolving from here?

A: I plan on going to our next off-site and looking at where we go beyond this current plan. We need to look at the priorities that we have laid out for ourselves and the execution plans against those priorities and determine where we have been successful. Which ones can we say, “Yep, done it and got it nailed down,” and where do we move from here? We can't say everything we did up to this point was good, let's just keep doing it. Let's relook at what we said we wanted to do and see if the current environment says we should be doing something different.

This is not an overnight trip. This takes us a while to get to where we need to be. It's a journey. We have to stay on the path. We have to stay true to our mission, vision and the strategic plan that guides our steps. I think if we do those things and have open communications and strong leadership throughout the agency, we will be successful on getting to where we need to be from the perspective of our strategic plan and from what we said we were going to do. ©

To read over the agency's strategic plan, visit: https://home.dcma.mil/Command/strategic_plan/index.cfm.