

# Innovative Training Program in Tight Budget Year

By Ann Jensis-Dale, DCMA Public Affairs

Defense Contract Management Agency Syracuse Team Leader Dan Caterisano never thought a fall 2007 *Communicator* article addressing the subject of an austere budget would become a source of inspiration. However, according to Caterisano, the article brought attention to the lack of training funds allocated for fiscal year 2008 and also emphasized the importance of continued training for DCMA employees. Since money is tight, Caterisano developed a local training program to certify new quality assurance representatives in the various commodities they require to perform in their jobs.

“Things have certainly changed since I became a [Defense Contract Administration Services quality assurance representative] in 1987,” said Caterisano. “At the time I joined DCAS, I knew little about how to perform the duties of a quality assurance specialist within the organization and had to start from scratch.”

Caterisano was hired by DCAS as a nonresident quality assurance specialist with 10 years of specialized experience in ammunition at various Defense Logistics Agency activities. He had no experience working with government contracts or suppliers. “I was required to take all the DCAS commodity certification training in DLA manual *DLAM 8220.4, Quality Assurance Technical Development Program* to become certified to accept product. My supervisor at the time assured me that the training would teach me everything I needed to know, and he was right!” Caterisano said.

The quality assurance technical development program offered in 1988 was very impressive, according to Caterisano. He was certified in both mechanical and electronic commodities within eight months of being hired. A large staff was dedicated to the program, which provided both initial and refresher training for 10,000 quality assurance personnel. “The classroom training was excellent, and I was able to meet other new hires while taking these courses. I also learned a great deal on the job,” said Caterisano.



From left: Dan Caterisano, DCMA Syracuse team leader, reviews some training material with Kirk Allen, DCMA Syracuse quality assurance specialist. (DCMA staff photo)

# m Certifies new QARs

The need for a training program became apparent when Caterisano hired Kirk Allen as a quality assurance specialist in August 2007 to fill a critical position at a bearing manufacturer. The Quality Assurance Technical Development Program is no longer available to DCMA employees; it was suspended in December 2006 with plans for a new program to replace it by December 2007. The new program has experienced delays and remains under development. Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act courses are available, but specialized quality assurance commodity classroom training is no longer available. As a result, “I was concerned that Kirk was not going to get the necessary training to be successful in the quality assurance function,” said Caterisano. “The only available option was to develop on-the-job training and equivalency packages. Even though I had to deal with staffing issues and a lack of experience at my [contract management office] in this type of program, I thought, ‘I’ll give it a shot.’”

Caterisano developed training criteria for the course, performed the training and testing and submitted the equivalency package to DCMA Headquarters for “Calibration Course – S07”

in December 2007 and received approval. “Developing an equivalency package is very time consuming,” he noted. “We are not only providing training and on-the-job training but also documenting the effort and preparing and administering the test.”

Once Caterisano and Allen completed “Calibration Course – S07,” they decided to involve fellow DCMA Syracuse Quality Assurance Specialists Dave Haist and Kara Koziol-Bennett to assist in developing additional commodity certification courses. Haist is developing “Specifications and Standards – S60,” and Koziol-Bennett is working on “Measuring Techniques – S06.” The S06 course has been completed recently, and the S60 course is in progress as of April 2008. “I believe this is a great way to develop future leaders within our organization and get the most out of our limited labor resources,” said Caterisano. “It also serves as an opportunity for some of our [veteran] employees to get involved with our new employees and build relationships with them.”

Training funds may continue to be tight for 2008, but Caterisano believes DCMA can find innovative ways to ensure employees receive required training. “I hope my

experience can help other CMOs realize that alternatives exist to train new employees. I found it very gratifying to be involved again in more detail with the [quality assurance] commodity requirement,” said Caterisano. 

## Summary of Equivalency Training for “Calibration Course – S07”

- One-on-one training to review International Standards Organization, American National Standards Institute and military calibration specifications
- On-the-job training in review of supplier calibration procedures and use of calibrated equipment
- Trainee observation and instruction in a calibration process review performed by a certified quality assurance representative
- Trainee performs on-the-job training assignment for calibration process review at two additional suppliers under supervision of certified quality assurance representative
- Final written examination developed and administered to trainee
- Entire effort is documented and submitted with DCMA Quality Assurance Technical Development Program Equivalency Request Form. Documentation includes a detailed summary of training and amount of time spent for each phase plus documentation of process reviews performed and a copy of the scored final examination.